

Capacity Development of Interns & Mentors

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USAID: RESILIENCE IN THE LIMPOPO BASIN PROGRAM (RESILIM) - OLIFANTS



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



A system under change

Our catchment is the foundation of our livelihoods and development. Yet the river and associated natural resources in the Olifants Catchment are under threat...

Unchecked pollution, inappropriate land resource use, weak and poorly enforced policies and regulations and poor protection of habitats and biodiversity are degrading the Olifants at an alarming rate. What's more, the area is however under threat from factors such as mining for heavy metals, inappropriate land management, rural sprawl and unsustainable use of natural resources. This affects the level of goods and services provided by the ecosystem.

The diverse population groups living in the Olifants Catchment all have one thing in common; they rely on the river and the catchment's natural biodiversity for their livelihoods. This reliance can be direct or indirect. Rural communities rely on it for

things such as traditional medicine, grazing and browse, fuel, food and housing materials. Some people in river-side communities harvest reeds, collect water from the river for washing and drinking and use it for recreational and spiritual practices. Subsistence farmers in Mozambique rely heavily on the catchment's flood plains. There are also large mines and associated industries, large scale agriculture and the wildlife economy, which all rely on a healthy, functioning river system. Often people forget that what they do upstream affects people downstream, sometimes with dire consequences.

The catchment is our home and it is worth investing in its future. The work reported here is part of the activities of the RESILIM- O project under the grant from USAID: Southern Africa

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1 Executive summary

A constant challenge identified in Phase I of the RESILIM-O project was the scarcity of skilled personnel in the climate change, water and biodiversity sectors. For that reason RESILIM-O, as part of the capacity development phase, embarked on an Internship Programme that aimed at providing an educationally sound professional development programme for new entrants, unemployed or underemployed graduates in NRM related positions. It also came to our attention that some key partners who have interns in their organisations were struggling to come up with a coherent, well-structured mentoring programme. RESILIM-O therefore offered to (1) open up aspects of its internship programme to other NRM organisations in the ORB, and (2) to host a series of mentoring capacity development workshops for both AWARD mentors and partner organisations. Thus a new project was born, Capacity Development for Interns and Mentors (CapDIM). The project operated for two years from May 2016 to June 2018.

The CapDIM project developed and implemented a professional development programme for young professionals that ran from June 2016 to June 2018. Complementary to that, a mentors capacity development

programme was also developed and implemented. A mentors learning network was established as a result of these two initiatives. A total of 13 interns benefited from the AWARD internship over the two year period. 11 young people from four partner organisations also benefited from the internship programme. All in all five organisations were consistently involved in the CapDIM project. There were also indirect beneficiaries, for example the six Legalameetse CPAs and their 24 youth forum members who got training from the AWARD interns over the two years. With the evidence provided in this report and other reports we can testify that through this project, RESILIM-O was able to mobilise, enthuse and equip interns to successfully take up careers in natural resources management. 75% of the interns who graduated from AWARD more than a year ago are still in the NRM sector.

There is also confirmation that the learning design enabled young people to develop skills, attitudes and values related to asking critical questions, clarifying their own values, envisioning more positive and sustainable futures, thinking systemically, reflexivity and responding to issues through applied learning.



2 Project objectives

2.1 RESILIM-O KRA objective

The CapDIM project operated under Key Area 1, whose objectives is: To institutionalise systemic, collaborative planning and action for resilience of ecosystems and associated

livelihoods through enhancing the capacity of stakeholders to sustainably manage natural resources of the Olifants River Basin under different scenarios

2.2 Project objectives

The aim of this project was to enthuse, mobilise and equip interns and young professionals with social and natural science backgrounds to successfully take up careers in natural resources management. RESILIM-O's intention through the internship initiative was also to strengthen organisational capacity to work with young people entering the field; encourage them to stay and to be not only effective functionaries, but also dynamic, transformative leaders in the workplace - thus improving resilience in the face of challenges like climate change.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Provide an educationally sound professional development programme for new entrants, unemployed or underemployed graduates in NRM related positions.
- Establish a mentoring network between organisations in the NRM sector.
- Equip mentors in AWARD and in key partner organisations with the orientation, processes and tools for mentoring.
- Build a strong sense of competence, belonging and pride among young NRM professionals and mentors in the ORB.



3 Approach/process/activities

3.1 Project theory of change

Underlying the CapDIM project is RESLIM-O's goal of reducing vulnerability to climate change through building improved water and biodiversity governance and management of the Olifants Basin through the adoption of science-based strategies that enhance the resilience of its people and ecosystems through systemic and social learning approaches. The situation on the ground was that many young graduates have inadequate knowledge and skills to deal with governance and resilience challenges in the NRM sector. In addition, key partners who had interns in their organisations were struggling to come up with a coherent, well-structured mentoring programme.

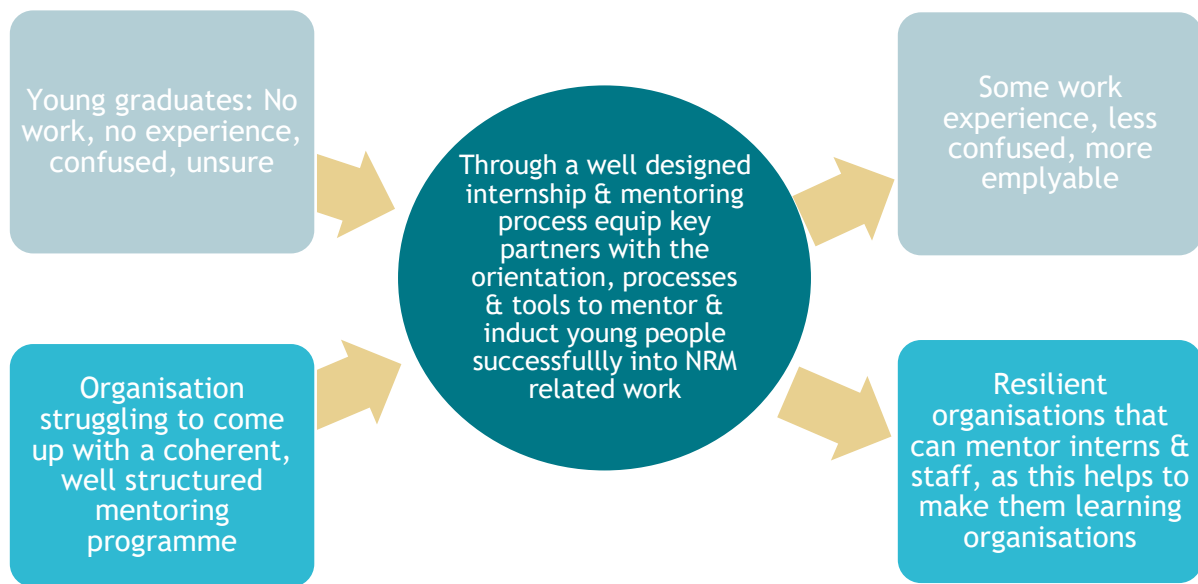
The main assumption of this project was that a systemic approach to mentoring was needed, focusing on (A) providing an educationally sound professional development programme for new entrants, unemployed or underemployed graduates in NRM related positions, and (B) supporting the capacity development of both AWARD mentors and partner organisations. The intention was to institutionalize and expand the learning culture in organisations, contributing to the concept of resilient organisations that can mentor interns and staff. *Resilient* organisations are *learning organisations* and mentoring of interns and staff is key in this process. This was appropriately put across by

the former minister of Higher Education Dr Nzimande; “*Make every workplace a learning space*”. On the other hand, the project was designed to contribute to the RESILIM-O goal of strengthening the institutional capacities and expand the intellectual capital in the Olifants basin to transform relevant governance systems and enhance community adaptive capacities.

All this inspired the conceptual thinking of mentoring being synonymous with development, focusing on professional development of individuals (mentor and mentee), and the development of organisations and their capacity to deliver on NRM practices. As Raven (2011) argues, mentoring, whether deliberate or incidental, has developmental outcomes for both the mentor and the mentee. Our approach to supporting the capacity development of both mentors and mentees was adopted from a collective of developmental approaches such as coaching, counselling, peer learning and training, and what is appropriate to use and when. A compendium of learning methods including contact group sessions, job shadowing undertaking practical tasks, receiving feedback, sharing and networking as well as personal self-reflections were designed and planned to achieve the above objectives.



Theory of change



The Activity System (Engeström, 2001) also provided us with an analytical lens through which to view the mentoring activity in an organisation. The lens helped us to move away from the traditional linear viewing of mentoring to a systemic approach of reflecting on the different components of the mentoring activity and analyse the interactions and interconnections between these various components that make up and shape the mentoring activity.

Tools & artefacts in the organisation to support mentoring

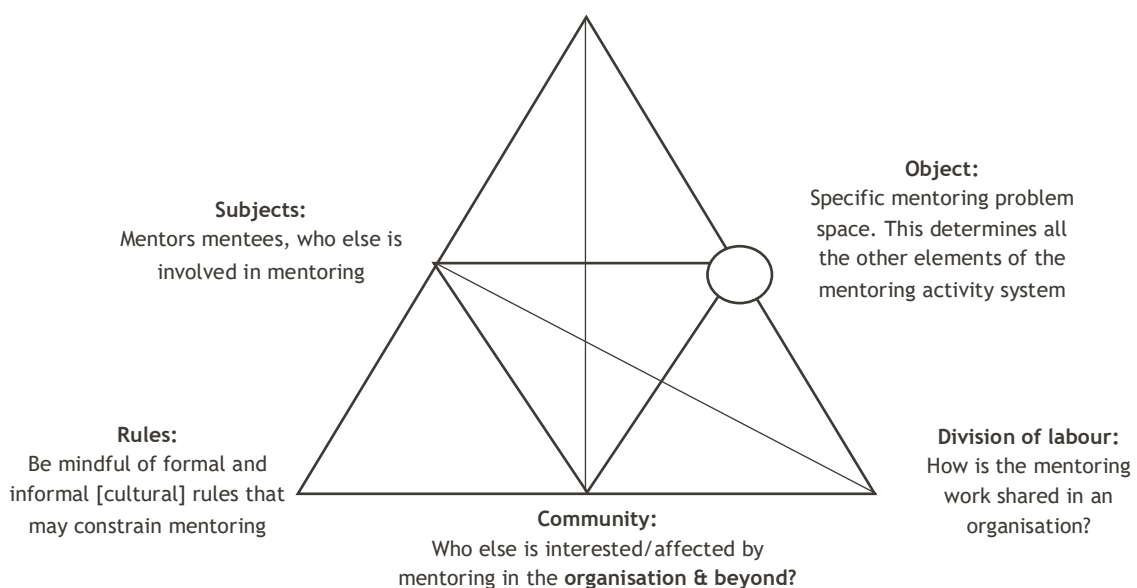


Figure 1: Tools & artefacts in the organisation to support mentoring
Interacting components of the mentoring activity [adapted from Engeström 2001]



To achieve the desired outcomes, we carefully designed a process methodology that included interdisciplinary and holistic approaches, inculcation of values, critical thinking and problem-solving pedagogy, multi-method approaches, participatory decision-making, applicability to learners' lives and contexts and being locally relevant (UNESCO, 2006). Guided by the project objectives (section 2.2), we designed learning activities that ensured that, in addition to gaining knowledge, values and theories related to sustainable NRM, learners (mentors and mentees) were also able to:

- ask critical questions
- clarify their own values
- envision more positive and sustainable futures
- think systemically

- respond through applied learning
- explore the dialectic between tradition and innovation

(adopted from Tilbury, 2011, p. 104)

In this case the CapDIM project was inspired by the Education for Sustainable Development learning that links *being* to *becoming*. The distinction between knowledge, understanding and expression of valued beings and doings deepens our grasp of the layering of learning. The conviction is that as young people are given a chance to express their valued beings and doings, and expand their knowledge, values and action competence through learning, they can engage in a wider range of debates, think more critically and participate in the world differently.



4 Results

4.1 Summary of activities

Most of the learning activities for the AWARD interns took place in their specific projects, using a combination of learning methods such as job shadowing, undertaking practical tasks and receiving feedback. In addition, interns had the opportunity to be involved in other

learning activities such as contact group sessions, sharing and networking as well as personal self-reflections. The table below gives a summary of some of the additional activities that were done under the CapDIM project.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CAPDIM ACTIVITIES

| Year | Event | No. Award people | No. Stakeholders | Institutions |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|---|
| 2016 | Legalameetse Youth Engagement | 7 | 21 | LNR 6 CPAs |
| 2016 | Interns Week | 9 | 11 | LEDET; K2C; SAWC; SANParks |
| 2016 | Mentors Workshop | 12 | 11 | AWARD; Maruleng LM; SANParks K2C; LEDET; Green Anglican SAWC; Baatlile Waste Management |
| 2016 | Mentors Workshop | 11 | 23 | AWARD; LEDET; K2C; SAWC; SANParks; Maruleng Local Municipality |
| 2017 | Legalameetse Youth Forum | 13 | 29 | LNR 6 CPAs |
| 2017 | Legalameetse Youth Forum | 7 | 22 | LNR 6 CPAs and K2C |

4.2 Project outcomes & sustainability of impact

As highlighted in earlier sections, the CapDIM project focused on professional development of individuals (mentors and mentees), and the development of organisations and their capacity to deliver on NRM practices. The learning outcomes, impact of the project and sustainability of impacts will be measured in preparing individuals especially young people

and institutions to face future challenges, such as those posed by social-ecological risk, like climate change. The learning activities described below are some of the highlights that the project embarked on in strengthening organisational capacity to work with young people entering the field.



4.2.1 Capacity development with interns

Activities with interns can easily be unpacked into; recruitment; orientation; learning and formative feedback. Selection, recruitment and orientation of AWARD interns involved practically everyone in the organisation. The idea was to have every member of the AWARD staff taking part in the project true to the African belief, 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Child'.

In brief project leaders who needed interns in their team came up with a scope of work that was advertised by the admin staff. Shortlisting and final selection was done in a similar collaborative manner.



The arrival of the first cohort of interns caught the eyes of the Hoedspruit media

The project started in June 2016 with 9 interns joining AWARD, with contracts running up to May 2017. A professional development programme has been running since then until the close of the project on the 30th of June 2018. From May 2017, some of the 2016 interns were elevated to 'senior'

intern positions. They still got mentoring support from their mentors, at the same time they were also getting opportunities to learn to be mentors and facilitators. Another cohort of four interns was recruited in May 2017.

Learning through orientation

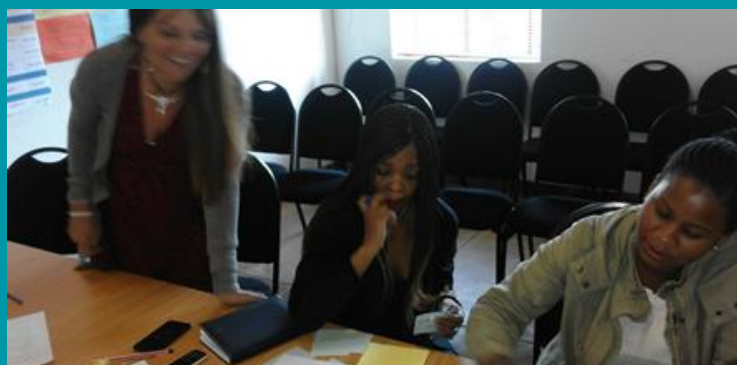
Orientation of new interns was taken seriously as a learning component in the organisation. Everyone from support staff to project leaders were involved. Orientation sessions aimed at easing the emotional, social, and practical transition; exposing interns to the learning and work opportunity that is AWARD and the wider NRM field; and helping them begin to define their professional learning goals.

Specific goals for this process were to prepare interns to be successful by:

- Providing information and resources that will allow them to make informed and appropriate learning plans and healthy social choices;



- Creating a welcoming environment that builds a sense of community among the incoming interns and connect them to their individual projects and other staff members;
- Providing them with information relating to the goals of the RESILIM-O project.
- Encouraging interns' confidence and helping them adapt faster to the organisation;
- Promoting communication between project leaders and the new intern.



The director of AWARD Dr Sharon Pollard in an orientation session with new interns.

Each orientation session was evaluated. The evaluation was designed to track learning and progress. Results show that orientation sessions were greatly appreciated by new interns as shown in by these selected quotes:

"The facilitators are good with their work, which gives me hope that by the end of the year I will leave the organisation in a different way whereby I will also be an excellent facilitator."

"The whole orientation week was structured very well as we were given the basics first, understanding what is AWARD, its objectives, mission and vision. The introduction of all terms to familiarise ourselves with the world of work was just awesome. Getting to know the staff and what they do to, gave us a better understanding on the projects AWARD does. Meeting of the mentors/supervisors gave us an overview on what is expected from us, the whole process was very helpful."

"The week helped me to turn my 'bad characteristics' into good ones, previous interns came and shared their internship experience with us and they were honest with us. They also gave us a few tips on how to be visible at the workplace and how to handle challenges at work."

In addition to exposing interns to the learning and work opportunities, the orientation was also successful in inculcating into interns skills, knowledge, values and attitudes needed for grounding oneself in a career path. This was evidenced by the following utterances:

"After the session I went back to my own drawing board and be specific on my goals. I developed goals in my career as it will guide me and help me throughout the program and also strengthen me to be open to learning and to change."

"I told myself that I need to work on my weaknesses and my fears, and lastly take this as a stepping ladder to great things."

Like any learning process, learning through orientation was not without challenges. The main one was that the programme was congested and in most cases classroom based. Such lessons informed the design of the following orientation session which then included field based learning.



Learn by doing

We can generally describe the learning philosophy of the CapDIM project as learning by doing. The idea was to move away from the conventional theory ridden way of

learning, to a learning process that involves the learner from planning the work, doing the work, to evaluation and reflection.

Learning Methods/activities for interns varied a lot, from induction to field activities



LEARNING BY DOING IN THE FIELD



PLANNING WITH MENTORS



INDIVIDUAL WORK



FIELD WORK

Combination of these learning methods: contact group sessions, job shadowing; undertaking practical tasks, receiving feedback, sharing and networking as well as personal self-reflections proved to be beneficial to interns.

Learning Methods/activities: special courses/conferences



LEARNING ABOUT VARIOUS CONSERVATION METHODS IN UNIVERSITY E.G. BRUSH PACKING METHOD



CLIMATE CHANGE LEARNING NETWORK



INTERACTING WITH OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE DURING WORLD WATER WEEK



INDIVIDUAL COURSE WITH EXPERTS IN THE FIELD

Interns also got the opportunity to attend conferences, university sessions, special individual courses as well as interacting with other young people in networks and forums.



Learning through reflection

Self-reflection can lead to significant personal transformations. Every month interns were given opportunity to reflect on their learning. In this process the coordinator of the CapDIM project acted as a facilitator of meaning making, guiding each intern to approach the learning activity in a strategic way. The coordinator helped each intern to monitor individual progress, construct meaning from the content learned and from the process of learning it, and apply the learnings to other contexts and settings. Learning becomes a continual process of engaging the mind that transforms the mind (Costa and Kallick, 2008).

“A defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience”

Jack Mezirow

In this kind of learning, it becomes essential for learners (interns) to become critically reflective of the assumptions underlying intentions, values, beliefs, and feelings. We transform our frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based (ibid).

In summary learning through reflection has several facets (Costa and Kallick, 2008)

- Building a habit of linking and constructing meaning from their experiences.
- Reflecting on experiences encourages insight and complex learning.
- Fostering own growth when one is in control of own learning.
- Linking a current experience to previous learnings (scaffolding).
- Reflection also involves drawing forth cognitive and emotional information from several sources: visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and tactile.
- Reflection compels one to act upon and process the information, synthesizing and evaluating the data.
- Reflecting also means applying what is learned to contexts beyond the original situations. \

Intern's reflections

“On bio-monitoring, one of the highlights of the month was going back to the sites we sampled a month ago and find new things (Macroinvertebrates) due to the increase of the flow.

As a result I now clearly understand the crucial role water flow plays in supporting Macroinvertebrates. I can now link water flows to the discussions in the Catchment Management strategy workshop that I attended latter. In that workshop I learnt a lot about importance of stakeholder involvement in developing CMS and some of the basic principles used in working with stakeholders, that will lead to better management of river systems’.”



Reflexivity as a learning process went a long way in the capacity development of interns. It became clear that interns thorough reflexivity were not only able to appreciate their own development but also to pinpoint sources of challenges that they faced in their learning and take or suggest ameliorating

measures. Two key reflexive questions “*what was your experience?*” and “*what did you do/should be done?*” enabled interns to go beyond mere complaining to taking control of their learning. The following fragments attest to this:

| <i>Learning challenges</i> | <i>Measures taken by the intern concerned</i> |
|---|--|
| <i>I am finding it difficult to follow the whole process. The reason should be I am not involved in planning, as a result I find it difficult to participate fully.</i> | <i>Complained politely to my mentor about being excluded in planning.</i> |
| <i>Tasks from my mentors is not always clear. No tool for handing the task down to me. I get feedback after a while (month), at times with changed deliverables. Availability of mentors is also a challenge.</i> | <i>I have learnt to do the task the way I understand it and hand in well before due date and then get a bit of clarity on the feedback of that draft</i> |

Gaps identified in this reflexive process were also taken by the mentoring coordinator to enrich the capacity development programme for mentors that is described in section 4.13.

Learning activities with interns from partner organisations

While the project focuses mainly on RESILIM-O project interns, it also supported mentoring in partner organisations operating in the ORBs. A total of 10 young professionals from partner organisations that include K2C Biosphere Region, LEDET, and SAWC were give opportunity to take part in learning activities organised and funded by the RESILIM-O program. Learning activities were done in the form of contact group sessions, bringing together young professionals from partner organisations to Hoedspruit. Learning

for these sessions was designed around the following learning outcomes:

- Applying systems thinking to NRM learning.
- Improved capacity to facilitate workshops.
- Improved understanding of data generating tools.
- Enhanced ability to organise, handle and store data



- Increased ability for planning and reporting work.
- Enhanced aptitude & skills to promote a shared conceptualisation of learning in a work context
- Improved understanding of mapping and spatial awareness.
- Establishing learning networks.

A lot of soft skills (professionalism, workshop facilitation skills, handling & reporting data, among others) were also appreciated. The striking outcome of such learning activities obtained through evaluation and reflections was that that interns overtime showed signs of surpassing linear thinking and embraced elements of systems approach. A combination of learning methods that characterised the interns week, followed by carefully designed field work activities that gave them room to put into perspective what was learnt during the week can be credited for this. For instance, all the interns got involved in the VSTEOP related engagements in their respective projects, it was an opportunity for some to reflect on the skills obtained in the just ended young professionals' week. Some of the reflections were:

"...the presentations from the mentors during the intern's week played a huge role in the work we carried out with the communities, I understood the context of the catchment and was able to facilitate the map exercise and translated and interpreted from English to Sepedi."

"I am convinced that I need patience while working with Traditional Authorities. You plan things now tomorrow they change' and communities are afraid to do things without the chief's approval'...power dynamics in NRM a real thing. And surprisingly when TAs want to help you they will gladly help you."



YPs listening to Jane Burt during the session on interviewing skills

"It is now clear to me that one needs to have 'driving' skills while working with communities like be a team player, create jokes, demonstrate when give them tasks'. During the interns week I thought mentors were saying it for the sake of it...I was wrong. 'You just have to learn to love your work as mentioned by one participant from LEDET."

A lot of these learnings were carefully captured and shared with mentors in AWARD mainly through monthly reports. As the CapDIM team we felt however that a more robust mechanism for sharing could have been developed. This could have enhanced organisational learning in terms of mentoring. Furthermore, it was a challenge to get some insights on how interns from partner organisations were putting into practice the knowledge and skills acquired during the interns week. An attempt was made, nonetheless to have a dedicated mentor in each partner organisation to bring together key learnings from interns experiences. Such learnings contributed immensely to the capacity development sessions for mentors as explained in section 4.2.2.

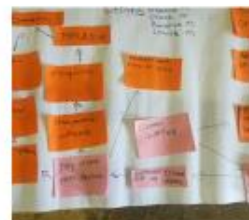


Learning to be a mentor/facilitator

Our interns got the opportunity to learn through what we coined youth-on-youth learning activities. The opportunity was made available to AWARD's interns to improve on their project management and facilitation skills, which most had indicated as essential. An outstanding example of this model was when they were involved in one of AWARD's flagship projects (co-management). Interns were exposed to basic steps in project management: planning; implementing and evaluation. A number of weekly sessions were held with the main purpose of supporting youth ecological agency.

The interns got the opportunity to engage with the newly formed Legalameetse Youth Forum. The youths were drawn from communities that had successfully claimed a protected area, Legalameetse Nature Reserve. Such communities were obliged to form co-management partnership with government and youth involvement was mandatory in this case. The purpose of the engagement was therefore to support 'socio-ecological' identity/familiarity amongst the youth forum members. Interns in this regard acted as facilitators.

Interns Week. supporting mentoring capacity



LNR YF Activities: purpose:

1. Mentors to closely scaffold YPs in planning; implementing and reflections as well as reporting.
2. YPs to have a 'free' room to put to practice the knowledge and skills.
3. Space for the YPs to learn to become mentors/facilitators



AWARD interns, CapDIM team & Legalameetse Youth Forum members



Evaluation really showed that interns benefited from the process from planning workshops to evaluation. The following comments corroborate this.

“I would like to believe that the planning played a crucial role in that it boosted our confidence going into the engagements.

Though there is still a room for improvement, it was helpful to have something to us as a guide and could still adjust now and then as need be.”

“I realized that it is important to include a range of ideas, especially when engaging with the youth, in the planning process.

What was also highlighted is the need for more flexible planning rather than rigidity, as it prepares us for any unexpected shifts in the programme.”

“I feel like I did pretty well when it comes to facilitation of content around climate change and biodiversity. The probes that I used helped to spark and build a conversation around the importance of biodiversity and understanding the interconnections of the system with water as a central or key element that connects the system components.”

“The workshop was very interactive which allowed for more information to be shared with the youth. The activities were well planned and flexible, and the schedule was changed on a day to day basis which allowed for a seamless transition between different activities. Dr Charles Chikunda gave us enough freedom to execute our tasks the way that we had planned, which gave us confidence in facilitating and leading a particular activity.”

Challenges were also highlighted:

“I felt like some senior staff and my mentor were imposing their ideas on my planning, leaving me with little room to try things. More so different opinions and views from senior staff left me in some confusion.”

“I feel the planning was done for me so I didn't pretty feel fully engaged during the planning, this affected my performance during the sessions.”

“It was unfortunate that the change of plans led to dismissing the use of GPSs, as the participants were knowledgeable in geography and mapping and were very eager to work with the tool.”

“The challenge that I faced was knowing the role for the entire week, and for that matter, this affected my preparation and executing my roles or responsibility in the way I see fit.”

The challenges were reflected on in reflection sessions and turned into learning opportunities for both interns and mentors

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4.2.2 Capacity development for mentors

Resilient organisations can mentor interns & staff, as this helps to make them learning organisations

As mentioned above, we saw the need to come up with a programme to support mentors after realising that key some partners in the Olifants basin are struggling to come up with a coherent, well-structured mentoring programme. RESILIM-O therefore offered to host a series of mentoring capacity development workshops for both AWARD mentors and partner organisations. Taking mentoring through a transformative process as highlighted in the director's opening remarks requires will, volition and collaboration. The learning programme for mentors was always collaboratively designed based on the lived experiences of mentors and the challenges that young professionals presented since the commencement of the CapDIM project. At the beginning of the project a number of mentors from partner organisations complained that mentoring work is a lonely activity, and that this was frustrating. Given this challenge, we designed mentors' learning activities focusing on the following outcomes:

- Exploring a methodological framework of analysing mentoring in an organisation (work context).
- Understanding Activity Theory as a methodological framework to analyse mentoring activity in a given work context;
- Improved capacity to explore various components that interact to shape the mentoring activity

- Enlarged capability to collaboratively scrutinise disturbances in daily mentoring work
- Increased ability to interrogate institutional arrangements related to mentoring
- Enhanced aptitude & skills to promote a shared conceptualisation of mentoring in an organisation.

"We are working on a range of projects, we speak about transboundary management of resources. The things we focus on with our interns is climate, capacity development, organisational learning."

What's important for mentors to realise is that we want to take interns through a transformative process, an ability to think out of the box, with that a warm welcome to everybody."

Mentors' workshop opening remarks by Dr S. Pollard (AWARD Director 8 June 2016)



The activity system framing of mentoring work in figure 1 was well received by mentors. It was adopted as the main organising framework for the capacity development for mentors. The diagnostic questions prompted mentors to reflect on mentoring in their organisation, coming up with potential sources of disturbances in mentoring work. A good example was a mentor from a certain organisation who reported that being a government organisation they are required to recruit interns annually but other than that there is no more guides of what to do with them.

“This is frustrating because I have to figure out, try this and that with little support from colleagues”

The framework helped mentors to know what to focus attention on in a bid to make mentoring everyone’s business in an organisation. Mentors also appreciated a lot the learning frameworks shared in the learning process. The second generation Activity System as an organising framework on mentoring was exceptionally applauded.

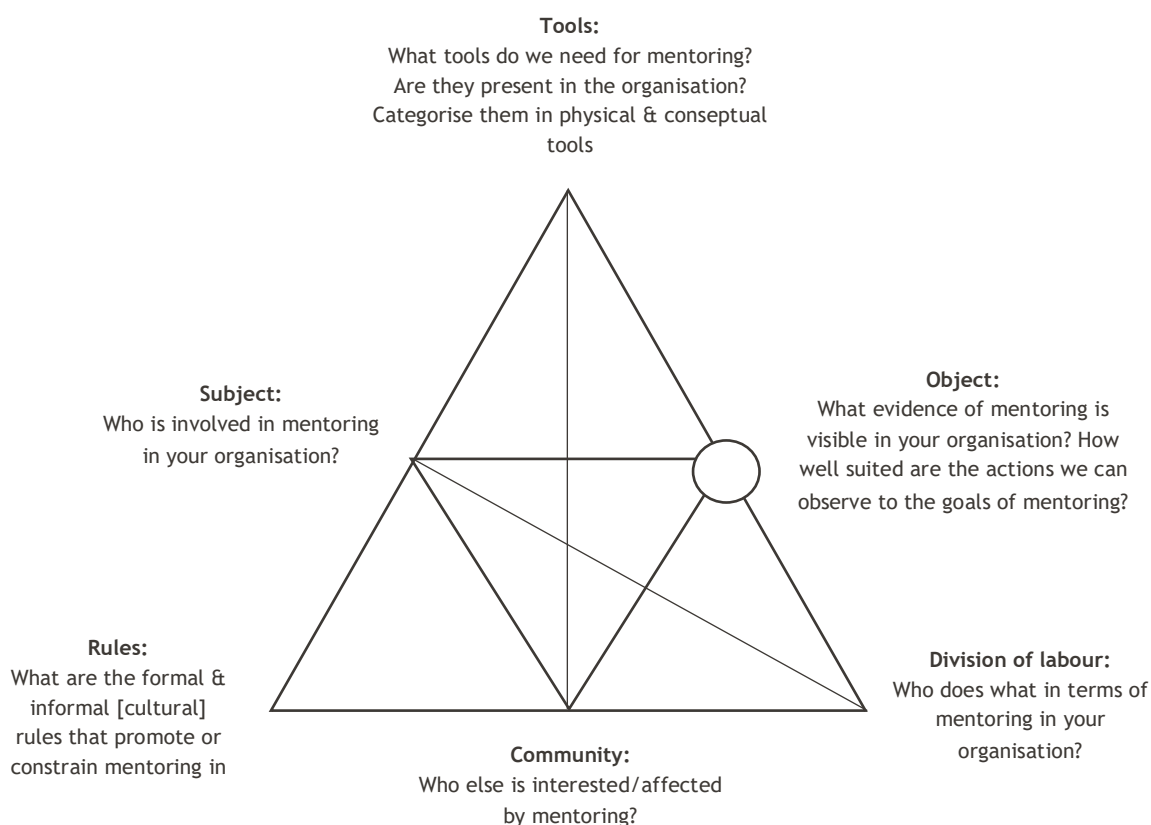


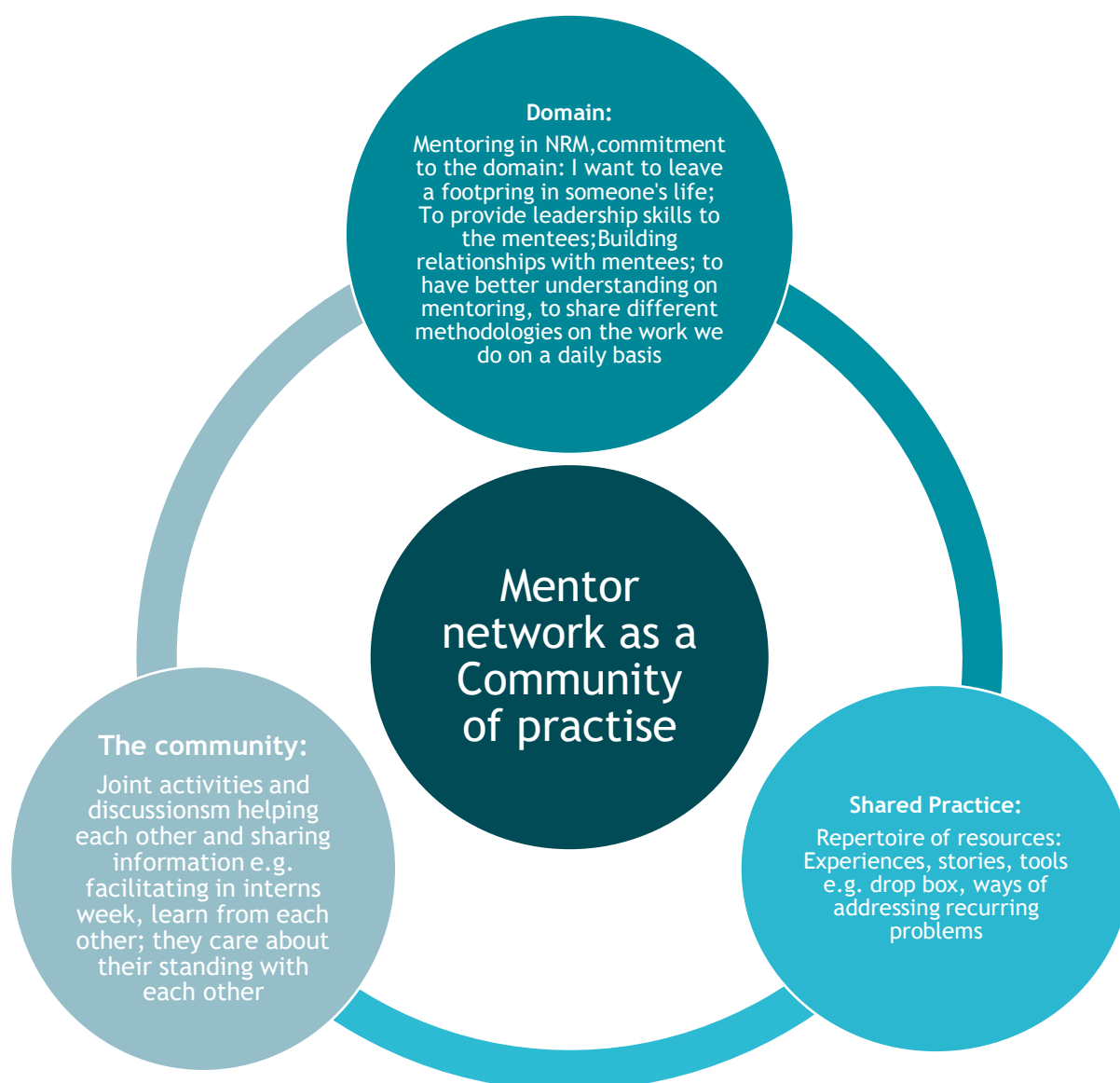
Figure 2: Understanding mentoring in an organisation as activity system.



Mentors network

The mentors workshop initiated by AWARD through the RESILIM-O project led to the establishment of a mentor's network. This was carefully developed following the principles of a community of practice, which is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger & Trayner, 2015). Members of this community of practice were all NRM mentors from SANPARKS; LEDET; K2C; Maruleng; SAWC; Baatlile waste management and Green Anglicans. As shown in the illustration below, the shared domain or identity of this CoP was

mentoring in NRM. Members of this CoP all had interns in their organisations with a reasonable experience in mentoring bringing together a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems. The CapDIM project dedicated resources to initiate and sustain interaction in this CoP. Commitment to the CoP was seen in members engaging in joint activities e.g. facilitating in interns week session; sharing information through an established drop box, building relationships that enable them to learn from each other and many more.





5 Successes & challenges

5.1 Successes

In addition to the qualitative outputs explained above, the successes of the CapDIM project can be further shown by the quantitative indicators in the table below.

TABLE 1: SUCCESSES OF THE CAPDIM PROJECT

| Outcomes | Indicators | Baseline | Target met |
|--|---|----------|------------|
| Young professionals in Resilim-o (and partners) have been equipped through an educationally sound professional NRM development program | Learning programme for YPs | 0 | 1 |
| | No of interns trained | 0 | 13 |
| | Monthly reflection sessions | 0 | 22 |
| | quarterly reviews in projects | 0 | 4 |
| | YPs learning exchange | 0 | 5 |
| | YPs training in specific project skills | 0 | 13 |
| Mentors have been equipped and are functioning as a network to effectively mentor interns in the NRM sector and on some aspects of CC (award and partners) | Learning network for mentors | 0 | 1 |
| | Institutions with increased mentoring capacity in NRM | 0 | 7 |
| | No of mentors engaged | 0 | 40 |

In terms of resilience building at catchment level the project fed into the following RESLIM-O indicators.

TABLE 2: RESILIM-O INDICATORS REGARDING RESILIENCE BUILDING AT CATCHMENT LEVEL

| RESLIM-O Indicators | | |
|---------------------|---|----|
| Indicator ID | Indicator Name | |
| EG.10.2 | EG.10.2 Biodiversity | |
| EG.10.2-4 | Number of people trained in sustainable NRM and/or biodiversity conservation as a result of USG assistance | 24 |
| AWARD | Number of institutions with improved capacity to address NRM and biodiversity conservation issues as a result of USG assistance | 8 |
| EG.11 | EG.11 Climate Change - Adaptation | |
| EG.11-1 | Number of people trained in climate change adaptation supported by USG assistance | 24 |
| EG.11-2 | Number of institutions with improved capacity to assess or address climate change risks supported by USG assistance | 8 |



Underlying the CapDIM project was the RESILIM-O goal of reducing vulnerability to climate change through building improved water and biodiversity governance and management of the Olifants Basin through the adoption of science-based strategies that enhance the resilience of its people and ecosystems through systemic and social learning approaches. With the evidence provided in this report and other reports, we can testify that through this project, RESILIM-O was able to mobilise, enthuse and equip interns and other young

professionals from partner organisation to successfully take up careers in natural resources management. The learning activities were also designed in a way that equipped young people to stay in the field, not only as effective functionaries, but also dynamic, transformative leaders in the NRM setup. The table below shows the number of the CapDIM graduates who are still in the NRM sector and likely to continue in the sector and those operating in the ORB.

| Still in the NRM sector & likely to continue in the sector | In NRM in the ORB |
|--|--|
| 9/12 (75%) | 5/9 (55.6%): 4 of them absorbed by AWARD |

It is interesting to note that out of the three who are currently not in the NRM sector, two of them have social sciences degrees and only one graduated in natural sciences. Although the sample is too small

for us to generalise, the figures seem to be pointing at the conclusion that those with natural sciences qualifications are more likely to stay in the field than those with social science backgrounds.

5.2 Challenges

When RESILIM-O initiated the CapDIM project, the conviction was that mentoring programs can bring many benefits to NRM organizations. Nonetheless we were also aware that running a mentoring process doesn't come without a few challenges. Fortunately, as the CapDIM project team we were mentally prepared to face the challenges and seek for solutions together with both mentors and interns. Here are some common challenges that we faced in the lifespan of the project.

Interns leaving the project midway

Three AWARD interns left the project prematurely and this negatively affected the smooth running of the project. Reasons for the early departure varied: one got a job, the

second one got what she perceived as a better internship opportunity in terms of employment prospects. The third one opted to pursue a master's degree.

Low motivation from some mentors

Mentoring requires time and a positive attitude. Some mentors, mostly beginners, struggled to balance mentoring time and their day to day work. In other words mentoring was in a way seen as an additional burden to their work. Our experience make us conclude that mentors that are not sufficiently motivated to truly share knowledge and experiences with their mentee will be less effective and less engaged.



Goal Setting for Interns

Unfortunately, interns cannot always articulate what they want from their mentoring relationship.

In this regard some mentors struggled, especially at the beginning of the project, to help their interns to set goals by communicating the project objectives, supplying them with the necessary tools, and continuous direction and redirection.

Interns seen as lacking commitment.

The other challenge that we had to face is that some mentors believed that their interns lacked the motivation and commitment to carry out the considerable work required to develop a successful career in NRM. This led to mentors feeling that they were wasting valuable time working with an individual who is not interested.

On the other hand, it also happened that the intern in question misinterpreted the mentor's attitude and started believing that the mentor lacked commitment to his or her career as an intern.

Although such occasions were not many throughout the lifespan of the project, handling such frustrations from the two parties to avoid total breakdown of a learning process was probably the most difficult situation for the CapDIM project team to deal with.

5.3 Key learnings

Well-structured mentoring programme
All the mentors who participated in the CapDIM project testified that a well-structured, organisationally supported mentoring programme is more effective. This in a way is the main reason why the Activity System framing of mentoring got much traction in the mentoring network. As the CapDIM team, we were pleasantly surprised that mentors would want to operate in an environment where there is a shared

Mismatch between mentor & intern.

A challenge that can be categorised as a mismatch between mentor and intern was also experienced. The challenge presented itself in the form of conflicting personalities, differing career areas or scientific expertise, differences in work ethic, and many others. Fortunately, the mismatches were discovered early in the project and some solutions were found with efforts from both parties mediated by the CapDIM project coordinating team.

Dealing with conflicting demands & conflicting advice.

Individual interns, especially at the beginning of the project, showed lack of experience in prioritizing demands and workloads. This affected mostly interns that worked in more than one project. It was also inevitable that interns with multiple mentors and advisors received conflicting advice related to some aspects of their career development. This was worth keeping an eye on as conflicting advice and demands inevitably leads to confusion, fear, and other negative emotions and reactions.

Tracking learning progress

Bearing in mind that most learning for the interns took place in their projects, it was a bit challenging for the CapDIM project coordinators to track the learning outcomes and report on them.

conceptualisation of mentoring (object); clearly guiding organisational policies on mentoring (tools); defined hierarchy and sharing of work when it comes to mentoring and organisational attempts, at all times to do away with any constraining cultural norms that has the potential to impact negatively on mentoring. Participating in a community of practice with other mentors was also highly valued by all mentors including those from partner organisations.



Reflexivity & adaptive capacity

Developing the ability to reflect on one's learning was very helpful. This was nurtured and supported mostly through interns monthly reflections. Mentors too had opportunity for this during their sessions. Key learning in this regard was that the use of reflexivity routinely, helped in many ways:

- reflecting on issues at work and learning from them;
- Designing mentoring learning tasks from issues raised by interns;
- It emerged that interns developed their emotional intelligence to understand their own feelings and emotions as well as those of others around them

Supporting structure & continuous communication

We also learnt that the CapDIM project, just like any other, requires a supporting structure that facilitates continuous communication, dialogue and at times acts as a buffer as well as absorbing shocks from different angles. It was useful to have continuous dialogue with individual mentors and interns, and regular check-ins.

It was also helpful to create a communications plan so that everyone kept being reminded that interns were there firstly to learn and not simply as extra pairs of hands for the job.



6 Conclusions & recommendations

In RESILIM-O, interns were placed in various projects in which they would be exposed to systems thinking and resilience building.

Learning was achieved through the use of a combination of methods including contact group sessions, job shadowing undertaking practical tasks, receiving feedback, sharing and networking as well as personal self-reflections. In order to support institutionalization of mentoring in AWARD and in partner organisations learning processes were collaboratively designed to share methodological frameworks of analysing mentoring in work context; jointly analyse disturbances in daily mentoring work and develop capacity to promote a shared and more developed understanding of mentoring in an organisation. Facilitating establishment and sustenance of a mentoring forum or network that provides a platform where organisations in the NRM sector can network and co-learn was also another way that was used to enhance mentoring in the basin.

If an organisation decides to take up young people as interns, there is need to plan and see mentoring holistically or as an activity system.

The following recommendations can be useful.

- Shared conceptualisation of mentoring: there should be a shared understanding and appreciation of what mentoring is all about across departments or units in the organisation.
- Shared outcome: common vision of the kind of a young professional that the organisation wishes to groom.
- Supporting tools: dedicated artefacts to support mentoring; including discourse, policies, learning material etc.
- Subjects: core people driving the process in the organisation including mentors, mentees and supervisors.
- Be mindful of explicit and implicit organisational cultural norms and values that may constrain or enable mentoring.
- Sharing of mentoring work in the organisation: defined horizontal and vertical allocation of mentoring responsibilities.
- Networking with other partners involved in mentoring.



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The Association for Water and Rural Development

AWARD is a non-profit organisation specialising in participatory, research-based project implementation. Their work addresses issues of sustainability, inequity and poverty by building natural-resource management competence and supporting sustainable livelihoods. One of their current projects, supported by USAID, focuses on the Olifants River and the way in which people living in South Africa and Mozambique depend on the Olifants and its contributing waterways. It aims to improve water security and resource management in support of the healthy ecosystems to sustain livelihoods and resilient economic development in the catchment.

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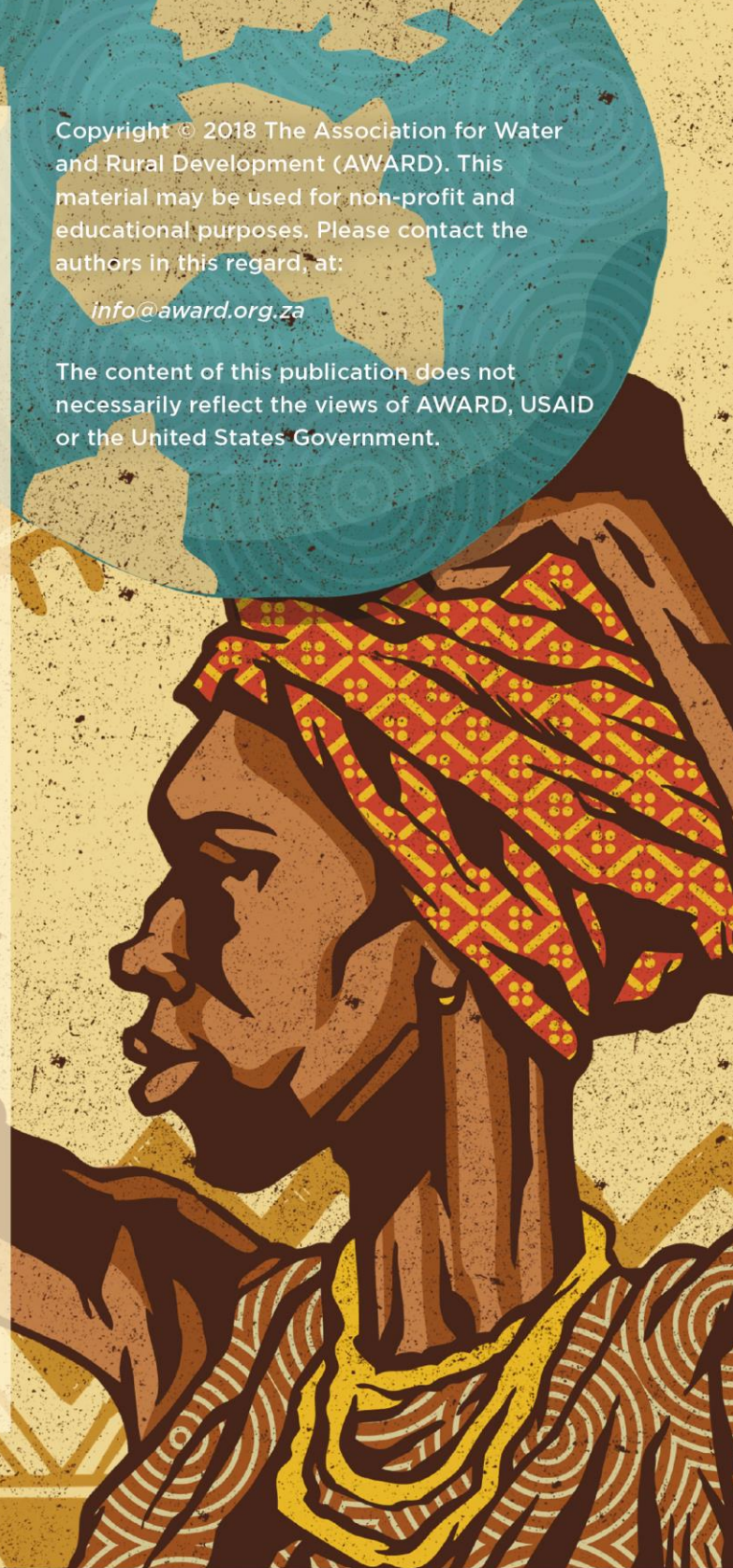
About USAID: RESILIM-O

USAID: RESILIM-O focuses on the Olifants River Basin and the way in which people living in South Africa and Mozambique depend on the Olifants and its contributing waterways. It aims to improve water security and resource management in support of the healthy ecosystems that support livelihoods and resilient economic development in the catchment. The 5-year programme, involving the South African and Mozambican portions of the Olifants catchment, is being implemented by the Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD) and is funded by USAID Southern Africa.

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