

Equipping farming communities for environmental stewardship

The Namaqualand region is one of the regions where Conservation South Africa (CSA) promotes stewardship within communities to support climate-smart livestock production and improved rangeland conditions for the benefit of people and nature. Through a stewardship programme, communities are empowered to take ownership of their rangelands, while also protecting the environment which they rely on for fodder for their livestock, traditional medicines and building materials, and for the health of their water. Communities partner with CSA and sign a conservation agreement.



Jklaasen via [Wikimedia Commons](#) - Goats and sheep leaving a kraal in Namaqualand

This agreement has a set of conservation actions which needs to be executed and implemented by the stewards to receive benefits. CSA currently works within the Leliefontein commonage and the Steinkopf commonage, both in the Namakwa district in the Northern Cape where CSA provides medicine and training in exchange for supporting restoration efforts.

Steinkopf is a village with approximately 7,824 people within the Nama Khoi municipality, Namaqualand, Northern Cape. The Steinkopf commonage encompasses a total of 330,000ha with 529 registered farmers. Steinkopf, although the largest village, is not the only village within the commonage. Bulletrap, a smaller village with 400 people, also lies within the boundaries of the commonage and its residents also farm in the area.

Though 35km apart, there are still many associations between the two villages and many of the farmers that farm close to Bulletrap (and within the Bulletrap ward of the commonage) live in Steinkopf. The Steinkopf Bulletrap Cooperative (SBC) is a community-founded and run cooperative. It is a product of CSA's stewardship programme, whereby farmers are encouraged to form a formal structure. The goal of the cooperative is for farmers to continue supporting each other and build on the foundation set by CSA, particularly when there is climate stress or when market access opportunities arise. The cooperative focuses on sustainable agriculture and provides a platform for upcoming farmers to start community projects to support farming on the commonage.

Workshop on applying for funding

Recently CSA hosted a proposal writing workshop for the managing committee of the Steinkopf Bulletrap Cooperative. The aim of the workshop was to equip the managing committee with the tools and knowledge to apply for funding for future projects. CSA staff members Corlé Jansen (stewardship coordinator) and Rouchet Daniels (green economic development project officer) showed the participants how to apply to the correct donor, how to make sure the organisation is eligible for

funding and how to develop a concept idea into a full-blown proposal. This includes setting out clear goals and objectives and linking those objectives with a project timeline, activities and realistic budget.

During an exercise where each group had to identify a need and a concept idea, the lack of water for household and farming activities was highlighted. In October 2017 the Namakwa was declared a disaster area due to the drought. Currently, Steinkopf is experiencing intense drought and many farmers have been forced to sell livestock – something which impacts the livelihood of people living in the area.

Farmers believe that better management of water resources in the commonage can lead to increased resilience of the people farming in the area. Concepts developed by the managing committee included ideas to upgrade existing water points and to equip inactive waterpoints with solar pumps, water tanks and pipes. There were also ideas to empower the community (not just farmers) by means of job creation to maintain the waterpoints within the commonage.

By providing the managing committee of the cooperative with the tools to apply for funding and the ability to develop and manage projects, CSA hopes that the project ideas that lies with community members to improve sustainable farming and improved livelihoods can grow into functioning projects run by the community. We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing financial support of the Switch Africa Green Project which is funded by the European Union and is implemented on behalf of the Department of Environmental Affairs by UN Environment, UNDP and UNOPS. – *Corlé Jansen, CSA*

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