

Partnerships in IA (II)

Partnerships towards sustainability in a strategic infrastructure project in South Africa.

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Partnerships between companies, government institutions and communities are progressively used to ensure responsible project delivery. Impact assessment plays an important role in facilitating sustainable outcomes, involving more than just environmental role-players. When various role players work together towards a common goal, projects can be delivered that benefit not only the environment, but also the local community and the economy.

This presentation focuses on a case study where a strategic infrastructure project in South Africa with the potential to negatively impact on a threatened terrestrial ecosystem and a prime habitat for a prominent indicator species was approved on condition that a biodiversity offset was implemented as part of the mitigation hierarchy. This requirement from the biodiversity conservation government institutions, however, held negative consequences for the local subsistence farmers on the municipal commonage earmarked for the biodiversity offset, as well as for the future development proposals of the local municipality.

It highlights how environmental concerns can encroach on the social needs of society. It also elaborates on the approach adopted to involve various stakeholders, including the company undertaking the development, the affected local community, and various government institutions responsible for conservation, rural development and local economic development, and the challenges faced in this regard.

It then describes the proposed solution that was developed to facilitate a sustainable solution, taking cognisance of the environmental concerns, social needs and economical imperatives and conclude by highlighting the lessons learned.

Summary statement

Partnerships can facilitate the delivery of projects that benefit the environment, local community and economy. This case study illustrates how this was achieved in a project in a sensitive environment.