

# SAVE THE SAND: A RESTORATION OF THE SABIE-SAND RIVER CATCHMENT

FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT REPORT

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## GLOSSARY

| <b>Unit/Abbreviation/Acronym</b> | <b>Definition</b>   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>ARC</b>                       | Agricultural Research Council   |
| <b>ARR</b>                       | Afforestation, Reforestation and Revegetation                                   |
| <b>CCB</b>                       | Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standard                                    |
| <b>CPA</b>                       | Communal Property Association   |
| <b>DALRRD</b>                    | Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development                    |
| <b>DFFE</b>                      | Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment                           |
| <b>EDM</b>                       | Ehlanzeni District Municipality   |
| <b>FAO</b>                       | Food and Agriculture Organisation   |
| <b>FAQ</b>                       | Frequently Asked Questions  |
| <b>FEADT-SA</b>                  | Farmer Empowerment, Agricultural Development and Transformation in South Africa |
| <b>FLR</b>                       | Forest Landscape Restoration  |
| <b>FPIC</b>                      | Free, Prior and Informed Consent  |
| <b>GWF</b>                       | Good Work Foundation  |
| <b>IUCN</b>                      | International Union for Conservation of Nature                                  |
| <b>LCs</b>                       | Local Communities   |
| <b>PDD</b>                       | Project Design Document   |
| <b>PRA</b>                       | Participatory Rural Appraisal   |
| <b>PTO</b>                       | Permission to Occupy  |
| <b>RaTA</b>                      | Rapid Land Tenure Assessment  |
| <b>ROAM</b>                      | Restoration Opportunity Assessment Methodology                                  |
| <b>SANBI</b>                     | South African National Biodiversity Institute                                   |
| <b>SBIA</b>                      | Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment                                       |
| <b>STS</b>                       | Save the Sand   |
| <b>TEK</b>                       | Traditional Ecological Knowledge  |
| <b>UNDRIP</b>                    | UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples                              |
| <b>VCS</b>                       | Verified Carbon Standard  |
| <b>VCU</b>                       | Verified Carbon Unit  |
| <b>VVB</b>                       | Validation/Verification Bodies  |
| <b>WRI</b>                       | World Resources Institute   |



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Save the Sand Project is a Verra VM0047 Afforestation, Reforestation and Revegetation (ARR) carbon project implemented by Sand Catchment (Pty) Ltd. in the Sabie–Sand River Catchment, located within Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, South Africa. Situated in the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Reserve, the project addresses ecological degradation and socio-economic vulnerability by planting approximately 3.5 million trees across croplands, homesteads and rangelands. A combination of indigenous and agroforestry species will be used to restore soil function, increase ecosystem resilience, support food production and generate long-term carbon revenues for participating communities.

To comply with the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standards, the project initiated a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process to ensure transparent, inclusive and sustained stakeholder engagement. As approximately 70% of land in the project area is governed under customary tenure — and lacks formal registration — FPIC is also necessary for navigating land tenure complexity, securing legitimate access and establishing the legal foundations for project implementation.

This report documents the outcomes of Phase One of the FPIC process. Phase One was designed to obtain formal consent from traditional authorities to proceed with community engagement and project implementation, build initial awareness of the project among community members and create the conditions necessary for informed consent. Consultations were held with six traditional authorities, who provided written endorsements to proceed with community engagement and project implementation. Additionally, community members indicated strong support for the project's ARR objectives, with participants noting alignment with existing land-use practices, particularly smallholder farming and the cultivation of fruit and nut-bearing trees. No objections to the project proceeding were raised.

Community feedback focused on five priority areas: i) species selection and suitability; ii) protection of seedlings from livestock; iii) access to water for sapling establishment; iv) short-term support for subsistence agriculture; and v) improved access to markets. These five areas were discussed and prioritised through follow-up discussions with traditional authorities and participating community members. The project team is progressively integrating these areas into project design and implementation planning, with support from partners including FEADT-SA, Londolosi Ripple Fund and Sabi Sand Pfunanani Trust NPO Forum. Planned interventions include training on drought-tolerant species, distribution of vegetable seed inputs, low-cost fencing strategies and entry-level enterprise development.

The FPIC process will continue through Phases Two and Three. Phase Two will involve: i) targeted consultations with women, youth and marginalised groups; ii) integration of traditional ecological knowledge; iii) finalisation of the benefit-sharing framework; and iv) activation of a formal grievance redress mechanism. Consent at the individual and family level will be formalised during this phase through signed consent forms and land-use agreements. Phase Three will maintain engagement during implementation — including training delivery, regular project updates, stakeholder involvement in validation and verification, and the reaffirmation of consent should project activities evolve. Together, these measures will uphold transparency, enable equitable participation and support sustained community co-benefits across the project lifecycle.



# SAVE THE SAND FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT REPORT

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Save the Sand Project — implemented by Sand Catchment (Pty) Ltd. — aims to restore degraded communal and state-managed land through agroforestry-based Afforestation, Reforestation and Revegetation (ARR) interventions. Approximately 3.5 million trees will be planted across croplands, homesteads and rangelands using a combination of indigenous species. These activities are expected to generate long-term environmental and livelihood benefits, including improved soil health, food production and access to carbon finance.

This report presents the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process undertaken to engage communities before implementation. FPIC is a core requirement under both the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and the Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standards, which together mandate the full and effective participation of all stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle. Given the project's landscape-scale targets — and the prevalence of unsurveyed or communally governed land — an FPIC process is required not only for standard compliance but for securing project legitimacy, mitigating risks and ensuring long-term community support.

The FPIC process facilitated informed, inclusive and iterative engagement. A phased approach was adopted, beginning with early sensitisation meetings to introduce the project, gather initial feedback and establish consent pathways. This document outlines the steps taken to develop and implement the FPIC framework, identify and engage stakeholders, document consent and respond to the perspectives and concerns raised. It also outlines the mechanisms that will ensure FPIC is maintained and reaffirmed as the project progresses.

## 2 FPIC RATIONALE

The Save the Sand Project operates within a complex socio-ecological context characterised by customary land tenure, overlapping governance systems and reliance on natural resources for livelihoods. Within this setting, FPIC is not only a regulatory requirement but a necessity, enabling inclusive, legitimate and sustainable project implementation.

Under the VCS methodology VM0047 and the CCB Standards, FPIC must be secured before project activities commence and reaffirmed across all stages of the project lifecycle. These frameworks require that Local Communities understand the purpose, scope and implications of project interventions — particularly where land and resource use may be affected — and that they participate voluntarily and without coercion.

For a landscape-scale ARR initiative such as Save the Sand, which depends on sustained community participation across multi-decade timelines, FPIC is required to secure land access, clarify benefit expectations and mitigate conflict. Most project areas fall under customary tenure or contain unresolved land claims, where formal land rights are often undocumented but socially recognised. Without consent based on a clear understanding of carbon finance mechanisms and long-term stewardship responsibilities, there is a risk of undermining both project outcomes and



community trust. The FPIC process, therefore, supports the project’s commitment to transparent, culturally appropriate and rights-based engagement. It ensures that environmental and livelihood benefits are co-developed with communities, that risks are identified and addressed early, and that the project’s social legitimacy is maintained through continuous dialogue.

## 2.1 OBJECTIVES

The Save the Sand Project’s FPIC process has been designed to support inclusive, transparent and sustained engagement with local stakeholders. The process was initiated through structured consultations with traditional authorities — followed by ongoing outreach to land users, families, and community groups — to ensure culturally appropriate, well-sequenced and locally relevant engagement. Communication materials were developed in local languages and multi-channel platforms were introduced to ensure broad access to project information, while disaggregated participation tracking enabled more equitable representation.

The FPIC objectives are to:

- ensure clear and accessible communication on project goals, activities, risks and expected outcomes;
- integrate traditional knowledge, land-use practices and cultural values into project design;
- provide transparent information on carbon credit mechanisms and proposed benefit-sharing arrangements; and
- build trust and accountability through consistent, multi-channel engagement throughout the project lifecycle.

## 2.2 APPLIED STANDARDS

The Save the Sand Project’s FPIC process was designed under international best practices and aligns with the VCS methodology VM0047 and the CCB Standards. These frameworks require FPIC to be demonstrated through well-documented, inclusive and transparent engagement — with consent sought and sustained throughout project design, implementation, monitoring and verification phases<sup>1,2</sup>.

To operationalise these principles, the FPIC process also incorporated the following guidelines:

- **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) FPIC Manual (2016):** Provided actionable steps for securing FPIC in rural contexts, guiding the sequencing of consultations and the development of materials tailored to local stakeholders<sup>3</sup>.
- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Guidelines on FPIC (2020):** Informed culturally appropriate engagement approaches, with specific emphasis on gender equity, power dynamics and fair benefit-sharing<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Verra. 2023. VCS Standard, v4.4. Available at: <https://verra.org/project/vcs-program/rules-and-requirements/vcs-standard/>

<sup>2</sup> Verra. 2023. Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards, Third Edition. Available at: <https://verra.org/project/ccb-program/>

<sup>3</sup> FAO. 2016. Free, Prior and Informed Consent: An Indigenous Peoples’ right and a good practice for local communities. FAO, Rome. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/i6190e/i6190e.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> IUCN. 2020. Guidelines for applying Free, Prior and Informed Consent. International Union for Conservation of Nature, Gland, Switzerland. Available at: <https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/iucn-guidelines-fpic-2020-en.pdf>



These standards and guidelines were synthesised into a formal FPIC implementation framework. This framework included compliance checklists and culturally adapted tools to guide consultations with Local Communities. The framework ensured that core FPIC requirements — including inclusive decision-making, traceability of consent and ongoing stakeholder engagement — were embedded and documented across all project phases.

## 3 STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND ROLES

### 3.1 STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

Stakeholder identification and mapping involves collecting and organising information on individuals, groups and institutions that affect — or are affected by — the project activities<sup>5</sup>. This includes an analysis of their proximity to the project area, interest in project activities, expectations regarding outcomes and relative influence over project success. In the Save the Sand Project, this process combined participatory methods with institutional reviews to inform stakeholder classification and guide engagement planning.

Stakeholders were grouped into three categories per VCS and CCB guidance:

- **Primary stakeholders:** Local communities residing within or adjacent to the project area who depend on land and natural resources for their livelihoods.
- **Secondary stakeholders:** Demographic subsets — including women, youth, marginalised groups and culturally distinct populations — with differentiated interests, vulnerabilities and influence.
- **Other stakeholders:** Institutions, private sector actors, academic organisations and regulatory bodies with a formal interest in the project but no direct reliance on local resources.

This classification system enables the project to plan and document consultations in a way that reflects each group's rights, roles and decision-making structures. It also supports transparent monitoring by disaggregating impacts across stakeholder types and informs the design of benefit-sharing arrangements that account for the specific needs, capacities and priorities of each group

#### 3.1.1 Primary Stakeholders

##### 3.1.1.1 Traditional Authorities

The Ehlanzeni District Municipality (EDM) is characterised by several land tenure systems that shape local governance, land management practices and the distribution of project benefits. Four tenure categories are present within the project area:

- **Government-owned land:** administered at a national, provincial or municipal level under legal frameworks governing public assets<sup>6,7,8,9</sup>, including protected areas and state forests;

<sup>5</sup> Saqueira D & Warner M. 2007. Stakeholder Engagement: A Good Practice Handbook for Companies Doing Business in Emerging Markets. International Finance Corporation (IFC). Washington. Available at: <https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/ifc-stakeholderengagement1.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Republic of South Africa. 2007. Government Immovable Asset Management Act (No. 19 of 2007). Government Gazette: 30520

<sup>7</sup> Republic of South Africa. 1961. State Land Disposal Act (No. 48 of 1961). Government Gazette Extraordinary.

<sup>8</sup> Republic of South Africa. 1999. Public Finance Management Act (No. 1 of 1999). Government Gazette: 19814.

<sup>9</sup> The Republic of South Africa. 2003. Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003). Government Gazette: 26019.



- **Privately owned land:** held under formal title with greater tenure security, regulated by legislation such as the Deeds Registries Act 47 of 1937<sup>10</sup>;
- **Communal Property Association (CPA) land:** managed collectively under the CPA Act of 1996, with oversight from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD)<sup>11</sup>; and
- **Customary ownership:** land held collectively under the authority of traditional leaders, as recognised by the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act 3 of 2019<sup>12</sup>.

Customary land tenure is prevalent across rural areas of the EDM, where traditional leaders — including chiefs (*Kgosi*) and headmen (*Ndunas*) — exercise formal authority over land administration, dispute resolution and community representation<sup>13</sup>. Chiefs oversee multiple villages and hold decision-making power over land allocation, inheritance and the acceptance of external interventions, while headmen operate at the village level to facilitate local governance and mediate community issues. These roles are formally recognised under national legislation and are integral to land-use planning, project approvals and local participation. Within EDM, 14 traditional leaders serve on the district council and 26 are represented in local municipalities — reflecting their authority across governance levels<sup>14</sup>. Given that Save the Sand project activities are concentrated in areas under customary tenure, individual consultations with each traditional authority were necessary to secure land access, ensure inclusive community participation and uphold the principles of FPIC<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.1.1.2 Local Government

Municipalities are constitutionally mandated to oversee spatial planning, land-use regulation and service delivery within their jurisdictions — including areas governed under customary tenure. Although traditional authorities retain control over communal land allocation, municipalities are responsible for formalising land use, integrating development priorities and ensuring legal compliance with planning frameworks. As such, municipal approval is often required for any large-scale intervention, including restoration projects<sup>16</sup>. Within the Save the Sand Project, municipalities were involved in aligning project objectives with local development strategies and facilitating coordination between statutory and customary governance systems. Their involvement will ensure parallel decision-making structures are avoided and that FPIC consultations are institutionally recognised across all governance tiers.

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<sup>10</sup> Republic of South Africa. 1937. Deeds Registries Act (No. 47 of 1937). Government Gazette Extraordinary.

<sup>11</sup> Republic of South Africa. 1996. Communal Property Associations Act (No. 28 of 1996). Available at: [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/act28of1996.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/act28of1996.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Republic of South Africa. 2019. Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act (No. 3 of 2019). Available at: [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201911/4286528-11act3of2019tradkhoisanleadership.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201911/4286528-11act3of2019tradkhoisanleadership.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> The terms "Hosi" and "Kgosi" refer to chiefs in different South African languages.

<sup>14</sup> Ehlanzeni District Municipality (EDM). 2020. Ehlanzeni District Municipality's Profile and Analysis District Development Model. EDM. Available at: [https://www.cogta.gov.za/ddm/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Take3\\_Final-Edited-Ehlanzeni-DM\\_07July2020-FINAL.pdf](https://www.cogta.gov.za/ddm/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Take3_Final-Edited-Ehlanzeni-DM_07July2020-FINAL.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Republic of South Africa. 2019. Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act (No. 3 of 2019). Available at: [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201911/4286528-11act3of2019tradkhoisanleadership.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201911/4286528-11act3of2019tradkhoisanleadership.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Republic of South Africa. 2013. Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (No. 16 of 2013). Available at: [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/367305-8act16of20.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/367305-8act16of20.pdf)



### 3.1.2 Secondary Stakeholders

#### 3.1.2.1 Families and Smallholder Farmers

In areas under customary tenure, land is typically allocated through Permission to Occupy (PTO) rights — a form of land-use authorisation granted by traditional leaders<sup>17</sup>. PTOs allow individuals or families to occupy and use specific parcels of communal land, usually for residential or agricultural purposes, without formal ownership. Although these rights are not registered in the national deeds system, they may be recognised by government departments such as the DALRRD and are widely respected within communities<sup>18</sup>. PTOs are often hereditary and passed down through generations, though formal recognition by traditional councils may still be required during inheritance.

Given that land access, use and farming decisions are typically organised at the household level, the project adopted a family-based approach to engagement. This enabled households to make collective decisions, coordinate labour and manage the distribution of benefits. It also facilitated informal information-sharing through extended kinship and social networks. Due to the variation in landholding size, resource access and intra-household dynamics, families and smallholder farmers were identified as a distinct stakeholder group within the FPIC process

#### 3.1.2.2 Communal Property Associations

Communal Property Associations (CPAs) are legal entities established under the Communal Property Associations Act 28 of 1996 to allow groups to acquire, hold and manage land collectively — particularly in the context of land reform and restitution<sup>19</sup>. Operating under a registered constitution, CPAs are mandated to manage land democratically and equitably for purposes such as agriculture, settlement and conservation.

In areas where CPAs operate alongside traditional authorities, overlapping mandates can result in contested authority, particularly concerning land allocation and development coordination. In some instances, CPAs operate under legal or institutional barriers that undermine their effectiveness — such as delayed registration, lack of state recognition or limited access to support services. Despite these challenges, CPAs represent an important institutional layer within the stakeholder landscape and were engaged accordingly<sup>20</sup>. Their presence necessitated deliberate and context-specific engagement to avoid governance exclusion, mitigate risks associated with conflicting land-use authority and ensure that all recognised rights-holders were meaningfully included in the FPIC process

#### 3.1.2.3 Women and Youths

Women and youth were expected to be affected by structural barriers to participation in community decision-making forums, which are often dominated by older men. Women are also more likely to be involved in fruit and nut production, reflecting gendered divisions of labour in many South African rural communities. Youth participation is typically constrained by age-based

<sup>17</sup> Republic of South Africa. 1991. Upgrading of Land Tenure Rights Act (No. 112 of 1991). Available at: [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/a1121991.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a1121991.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Claassens A & Cousins B. 2013. Land, Power & Custom: Controversies generated by South Africa's Communal Land Rights Act. Legal Resources Centre. UCT Press. Available at: <https://openuctpress.uct.ac.za/uctpress/catalog/view/40/67/175>.

<sup>19</sup> Republic of South Africa. 1996. Communal Property Associations Act (No. 28 of 1996). Available at: [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/act28of1996.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/act28of1996.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Claassens A & Cousins B. 2013. Land, Power & Custom: Controversies generated by South Africa's Communal Land Rights Act. Legal Resources Centre. UCT Press. Available at: <https://openuctpress.uct.ac.za/uctpress/catalog/view/40/67/175>.



hierarchies, with limited opportunities to influence broader meetings. To address these limitations, the project incorporated disaggregated engagement and monitoring protocols, enabling the team to assess participation levels and benefit-sharing outcomes by gender and age group. These protocols support more inclusive planning and ensure that marginalised voices are represented within the FPIC process.

#### 3.1.2.4 Community Liaisons

Community liaisons were engaged to strengthen communication and build trust between the project team and local stakeholders. Individuals such as Cry Sithole and Velly Mokgotho — who hold longstanding social ties within the project area — serve as primary intermediaries. They maintain regular contact with community members and traditional leadership, facilitate two-way information exchange and contextualise project activities during consultations. Their involvement enables culturally appropriate engagement, enhances responsiveness to community concerns and encourages participation in the FPIC process. Working in coordination with the project team, the liaisons support inclusive stakeholder engagement and help sustain relationships throughout the project lifecycle.

#### 3.1.3 Other Stakeholders

The Save the Sand Project engages a range of institutional stakeholders — including financial partners, technical service providers and policy collaborators — whose roles support project design, implementation and compliance with FPIC and carbon certification standards. These actors do not reside in the project area and are not directly dependent on local resources and are therefore classified as ‘other stakeholders’ in accordance with CCB guidance.

##### 3.1.3.1 Implementation Partners

###### *FEADT-SA*

Farmer Empowerment, Agricultural Development and Transformation South Africa (FEADT-SA) leads the Agritech cluster model and is the implementing partner responsible for agricultural training and capacity development. Established in 2021, FEADT-SA focuses on supporting black farmers to farm sustainably, promoting environmental stewardship and contributing to land restitution reform. Its activities include:

- training smallholder and emerging farmers;
- establishing agri-hubs;
- supporting cooperatives; and
- promoting market-oriented production systems.

The organisation implements the Agri Tech Women in Rural Business Programme, which provides female farmers in Bushbuckridge with training in sustainable agriculture, soil and irrigation management, financial planning and market engagement.

FEADT-SA also operates the Cluster Support model, a de-risking mechanism that provides smallholder farmers with equipment, training and improved access to markets, finance and logistics to support the development of climate-resilient and commercially viable agricultural systems.



## C4 EcoSolutions

C4 EcoSolutions (Pty) Ltd. — a consulting business that develops and implements climate change projects for governments and UN agencies globally — is the primary implementing partner and provides overall technical support for project design. Additionally, C4 EcoSolutions (Pty) Ltd. led the development and operationalisation of the FPIC framework in alignment with the requirements of the VCS methodology VM0047 and the CCB Standards.

### 3.1.3.2 Supporting Partners

- **Good Work Foundation (GWF):** Through its Creative Climate Academy, GWF builds local capacity by training community members as project implementers. It delivers programmes in digital literacy, adult education and environmental awareness, with a particular focus on youth and rural engagement. In partnership with FEADT-SA, GWF delivers training, mentorship and production support across multiple campuses using a *train-the-trainer* model designed to reach ~3,000 farmers.
- **UVU Africa:** Brings expertise in innovation systems, vocational training and entrepreneurship. As a strategic partner, it strengthens elements of the Green Economy Flywheel by supporting the development of sustainable business capabilities within farming communities.
- **Lotus Impact Foundation:** Supports inclusive enterprise development by providing financial assistance and technical input. Its work focuses on smallholder value chains, social business models and community-based innovation, contributing to more equitable and resilient livelihoods.
- **Sabi Sand Pfunanani Trust:** A community-based organisation in the Sabie-Sand catchment working across education, environment and enterprise. It contributes to ecological restoration and livelihood development by delivering agricultural inputs, facilitating knowledge transfer and providing support to smallholder farmers and their households.
- **Londolozu Ripple Fund:** Supports the early stages of model testing by providing seed capital, sourcing technical support and developing local farming talent. Pilot marula farms are used to demonstrate the feasibility of the integrated approach before broader implementation across the catchment.
- **Abundant Village:** Develops sustainable villages that provide essential services and opportunities in ecologically vulnerable areas. These include access to: i) water; ii) food; iii) energy security; iv) education; v) housing; vi) wellness care; and vii) employment, to contribute to long-term community resilience.
- **Project Biome:** A nonprofit organisation advancing regenerative food systems to restore human and environmental health. It connects practitioners, supports capacity-building and collaboration across the food systems sector.
- **Innovation Africa:** Supplies solar-powered drip irrigation systems and borehole technology to support the Save the Sand project's marula propagation initiative. This support enables women-led cooperatives and youth-focused groups to establish sustainable agroforestry operations, ensuring reliable water access for millions of trees and generating local employment through an integrated service delivery model.

### 3.1.3.3 Technical and Scientific Support

- **Root and Ground (Pty) Ltd:** Provides technical input on agroforestry system design, including species selection and propagation protocols for specific site conditions.
- **Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI):** Contribute scientific guidance on ecological suitability, biodiversity conservation



and climate resilience. Their support strengthens restoration planning and informs environmental monitoring activities.

#### 3.1.3.4 Policy and Development Partners

- **Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE):** South Africa’s lead environmental institution and implementing agency for the Ten Million Trees Programme — a Presidential Flagship Project aiming to plant 2 million indigenous and fruit trees annually over five years. The programme promotes environmental sustainability, climate resilience and socioeconomic development.
- **Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency:** Supports alignment with provincial sustainability priorities and facilitates cross-sector collaboration to strengthen green economic development.
- **Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD):** Coordinates public-sector efforts related to land governance, including PTO recognition, oversight of communal property associations (CPAs) and provision of agricultural extension services that contribute to FPIC processes.
- **Kruger to Canyons Biosphere:** A UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve spanning 2.5 million hectares. The organisation implements integrated development projects that link biodiversity conservation with local socio-economic development across the greater Kruger National Park landscape.
- **Global Water Partnership Southern Africa (GWPSA):** A regional technical arm of the Global Water Partnership that supports integrated water resources management (IWRM) and climate-resilient water investment planning across 16 SADC member states.

#### 3.1.3.5 Green Economy Flywheel

The Save the Sand project operates through an Agritech Cluster model that enables smallholder farmers to participate in the Green Economy Flywheel. This model is implemented through a coordinated network of partners providing technical, financial, governance and implementation support. Activities are structured around five principles:

- **Propagation:** Expanding tree planting and restoration
- **Capacity building:** Training in sustainable farming
- **Mentorship:** Providing technical support
- **Market access:** Linking farmers to value chains and carbon revenues
- **Ecosystem reinvestment:** Directing benefits to community development

This approach will link rural livelihoods with climate mitigation and supports the transition to a green, inclusive economy.

#### 3.1.3.6 Sand Catchment (Pty) Ltd.

Sand Catchment (Pty) Ltd. is the registered project proponent and primary implementing agent, with experience in conservation initiatives and commercial green economy activities across the region. It is responsible for overall project management, including securing funding, coordinating with stakeholders and implementing restoration and livelihood activities. The company also oversees monitoring and reporting, manages benefit-sharing mechanisms and supports the development of markets for tree products and climate-resilient agriculture.



Table 1 provides a summary of all primary, secondary and other stakeholders identified, as well as their expected interest and influence in project implementation.

Table 1. Stakeholder identification and their expected levels of interest and influence in project implementation.

| Group                         | Sub-group  | Description  | Level of interest | Level of influence |
|-------------------------------|--|--|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Primary stakeholders</b>   | i. Setlehare;<br>ii. Moreipuso;<br>iii. Mnisi;<br>iv. Moletele;<br>v. Thabakolo;<br>vi. Jongilanga;<br>vii. Malele;<br>viii. Amashangana;<br>ix. Hoxani; and<br>x. Mathibela | Local Communities and locals who rely on the project area for livelihoods, culture and well-being.           | High              | High               |
|                               | Bushbuckridge Local Municipality   | Facilitates institutional support and ensures coordination of activities.                                    | Medium            | High               |
|                               | Ehlanzeni District Municipality  | Provides regional support for integrated development.  | Medium            | High               |
|                               | Local traditional authorities  | Traditional leaders of Local Communities.  | High              | High               |
| <b>Secondary stakeholders</b> | Key families   | Families who own property or manage communal lands and contribute to decision-making processes.              | High              | High               |
|                               | Communal Property Associations (CPAs)  | Facilitate community governance and land use in certain areas.   | High              | High               |
|                               | Save the Sand Community Liaisons   | i. Facilitate trusted two-way communication; and<br>ii. support inclusive outreach and ongoing engagement.   | High              | Medium             |
|                               | Smallholder farmers  | Local farmers cultivating 1–50 hectares, participating in the Save the Sand Project.                         | High              | Medium             |
|                               | Sabi Sand Pfunanani Trust  | A community-based organisation supporting sustainable development and conservation in the Sabie-Sand region. | High              | Medium             |
|                               | Women, youths and marginalised groups.   | Women, youths and marginalised groups  | High              | Medium             |
|                               | Farmer Empowerment, Agriculture  | Focuses on forming partnerships between  | High              | Medium             |



| Group                     | Sub-group   | Description  | Level of interest | Level of influence |
|---------------------------|---|--|-------------------|--------------------|
|                           | Development & Transformation (FEADT-SA)                       | new and commercial farmers to promote sustainable agriculture and community development.   |                   |                    |
|                           | Londolozzi Ripple Fund  | Provides seed capital and technical support for early-stage marula farming pilots.   | High              | High               |
|                           | Save the Sand Oversight Committee                             | Oversees the project's strategic direction, consisting of leaders in finance, conservation, and development.   | High              | High               |
|                           | Save the Sand Catchment (Pty) Ltd.                            | Primary implementing agent and registered project proponent. Manages project coordination and carbon credit development to support reforestation and green economy activities. | High              | High               |
|                           | C4 EcoSolutions (Pty) Ltd. Team                               | Provides technical expertise on the FPIC framework development and implementation planning.  | High              | High               |
|                           | Be The Hero Foundation  | Manages funding allocations and disbursement schedules.  | High              | High               |
| <b>Other stakeholders</b> | Save the Sand Investment Company                              | Handles systemic investment funds and bioregional bonds.   | High              | High               |
|                           | Lotus Impact Foundation                                       | Lotus Impact offer technical help and impact funding to motivated changemakers who want to restructure value chains and innovate social solutions.                             | High              | Medium             |
|                           | Good Work Foundation (GWF)                                    | An NGO providing support in rural education, digital literacy and capacity building.   | High              | Medium             |
|                           | Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency                               | Promotes sustainable economic initiatives in Mpumalanga.   | Medium            | Medium             |
|                           | Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development | Governmental partner supporting policy alignment.  | Medium            | Medium             |



| Group | Sub-group  | Description  | Level of interest | Level of influence |
|-------|--|--|-------------------|--------------------|
|       | Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) | Leads national tree-planting and climate resilience programmes.  | Medium            | Medium             |
|       | Kruger to Canyons Biosphere                              | Implements integrated conservation and development projects.   | Medium            | Medium             |
|       | Project Biome  | Promotes regenerative food systems and capacity building across food sectors.  | Medium            | Medium             |
|       | Innovation Africa  | Supplies solar-powered irrigation systems and enables women-led cooperatives and youth-focused groups to establish sustainable agroforestry.                       | Medium            | Medium             |
|       | Green Economy Flywheel                                   | A coordinated partner network supporting smallholder farmers through tree planting, training, mentorship, market access and reinvestment in community development. | Medium            | Medium             |
|       | UVU Africa   | Strengthens innovation systems and sustainable business capabilities in farming communities.   | Medium            | Low                |
|       | Abundant Village   | Develops sustainable villages delivering essential services to build community resilience.   | Medium            | Low                |
|       | Global Water Partnership South Africa                    | Supports climate-resilient water resource management.  | Medium            | Low                |
|       | Root and Ground (Pty) Ltd.                               | Specialises in agricultural value chain consulting and technology for tree propagation.  | Medium            | Low                |
|       | ReSeed Technology  | Implements SAAS platforms for conservation credits.  | Medium            | Low                |
|       | Agricultural Research Council (ARC)                      | Facilitates research in agricultural innovation.   | Low               | Low                |
|       | South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)    | Supports biodiversity management.  | Low               | Low                |



## 4 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Given that most inhabitants of the project area had limited prior exposure to carbon markets or benefit-sharing mechanisms, the FPIC process was structured to allow for gradual understanding, inclusive participation and ongoing dialogue. A three-phase approach was used to ensure that information was conveyed in accessible formats, that consent was obtained in a culturally appropriate manner and that mechanisms for continued participation were embedded throughout the project lifecycle.

Phase One focused on early-stage awareness and orientation. Given that the project is still in its preparatory phase, these initial consultations aimed to introduce the project concept, understand governance dynamics and land tenure arrangements, and gauge the level of community interest and support. Discussions centred on clarifying project intent, listening to stakeholder perspectives and identifying areas of concern — rather than making premature commitments around benefit-sharing or employment. This approach ensured that engagement remained realistic, inclusive and aligned with the principles of FPIC.

By prioritising early relationship-building and avoiding overpromising, the project team sought to establish transparency and legitimacy from the outset. Detailed planning discussions — including those related to financial benefits, legal agreements and implementation roles — will take place during Phase Two, once technical elements of the project are more fully developed, and stakeholder feedback has been incorporated.

### 4.1 PHASE ONE — AWARENESS AND PRELIMINARY ENGAGEMENT

The objective of Phase One was to: i) obtain written consent from traditional authorities to proceed with the project and engage with community members in their jurisdiction; ii) build initial awareness of the project with community members; and iii) create the conditions for informed consent. This phase introduced the project's objectives, outlined its potential implications, and provided opportunities for community members to raise questions, share concerns and express their views on proposed activities.

The main activities included:

- Sensitisation meetings to communicate project goals, anticipated environmental and socio-economic benefits, potential risks and the geographic scope of eligible areas.
- Engagements with traditional authorities, ward councillors and customary governance bodies to ensure alignment with local governance systems and support institutional coordination.
- Community meetings using non-technical, translated materials to promote accessibility for diverse audiences.
- A sign-up process for interested individuals, enabling direct communication with project implementers and early registration of feedback.
- Introductory discussion on the carbon market and the types of co-benefits typically associated with ARR interventions.
- Community-led reflections on development needs and land use priorities to guide future planning.
- Integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into project design, species selection and restoration strategies.
- A preliminary overview of project timelines, milestones and the expected sequencing of implementation activities.



## 4.2 PHASE TWO — FOLLOW-UP CONSULTATIONS AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Phase Two will deepen engagement with individuals and groups who elect to participate in the project. The aim is to co-develop activity plans, formalise participation arrangements and ensure that implementation is underpinned by inclusive decision-making processes. Consent at the individual and family level will be formalised during this phase through signed consent forms and land-use agreements.

Planned activities include:

- Consultations with households, traditional councils and CPAs to support detailed land-use planning.
- Participatory resource mapping to identify land access, customary use areas and community-defined priorities.
- Legal agreements that formalise access rights, planting responsibilities and consent terms.
- Co-development of a financial benefit-sharing framework that is transparent, equitable and reflective of local priorities.
- Establishment of clear grievance redress procedures and conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Confirmation of implementation schedules, benefit timelines and co-management roles.
- Use of small-group dialogues and participatory workshops to support collaborative planning and resolve emerging challenges.

## 4.3 PHASE THREE — CONTINUOUS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The final phase of the FPIC process ensures that consent is maintained and reaffirmed throughout project implementation, monitoring and verification. This phase supports adaptive management and reinforces the principle that consent is an ongoing process — not a single event.

The main actions include:

- Periodic updates on project progress, validation audits and any material changes to planned activities.
- Iterative engagement with participating communities to incorporate new feedback and adjust implementation strategies.
- Monitoring of social and environmental indicators, including household well-being, tree survival and biodiversity outcomes.
- Reconfirmation of consent when expanding to new areas, stakeholder groups or activity types.

To date, the Save the Sand Project has completed Phase One. Between April and May 2025, introductory engagements were conducted with traditional authorities and Local Communities to establish understanding and confirm support for project development. These engagements included in-person consultations and the rollout of a multilingual WhatsApp chatbot to support ongoing communication. The chatbot enables users to access summarised information in local languages, submit questions, raise concerns and share feedback with the project team. As stakeholder interest increases, additional consultations will be scheduled under Phase Two to enable more detailed, participatory planning and formalisation of community roles in the project.



## 4.4 PHASE ONE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Phase One consultations focused on early engagement with traditional governance structures and Local Community stakeholders to introduce the Save the Sand Project and assess support for its proposed activities. These engagements were used to establish project legitimacy, understand customary governance arrangements and to build trust with land users. They also enabled the project team to initiate discussions on land tenure, local expectations and the broader socio-ecological challenges in the landscape.

### 4.4.1 Traditional Authorities

*April 2024–May 2025*

In accordance with customary protocol, initial consultations were held with traditional leaders to secure permission to conduct broader FPIC engagements within their jurisdictions. Between April 2024 and May 2025, formal meetings were conducted with six traditional councils: i) Amashangana; ii) Jongilanga; iii) Mnisi; iv) Hoxani; v) Moletele; and vi) Mathibela.

Each *Kgosi* (chief) received a formal presentation outlining the objectives and implementation plan of the Save the Sand Project. These meetings provided an opportunity to clarify the scope of the project, introduce the phased FPIC process and respond to initial questions. All six traditional authorities issued written endorsements confirming their support for the commencement of FPIC consultations. Each also facilitated introductions to their respective *Ndunas* (headmen), enabling the project team to initiate community-level meetings in line with customary leadership structures.

In addition to traditional authorities, an initial engagement was held with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), represented by Nakeni Khoza (Ehlanzeni District). This consultation served to ensure alignment with national and provincial mandates, particularly with respect to land rehabilitation and climate resilience objectives.

The stakeholders listed in Table 2 below participated in formal information-sharing engagements between May 2024 and May 2025:

Table 2. Local leaders who participated in the April 2025 to May 2025 project information sharing engagement

| Traditional Organisation                              | Authority/ Stakeholder name          | Type of stakeholder                        | Location  |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment | Nakeni Khoza                         | DFFE Representative for Ehlanzeni District |   |
| Mnisi   | <i>Ndunas</i> and interim leadership | Traditional leaders                        | Mnisi Authority Chambers<br>Traditional Council   |
| Moletele  | Kgoshi S Chiloane                    | Kgosi                                      | Moletele Authority Chambers<br>Tradtional Council |



|                    |                                 |                             |  |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Amashangana</b> | Hosi A Nxumalo                  | King                        | Amashangana<br>Traditional Authority<br>Headquarters       |
| <b>Jongilanga</b>  | Hosi L Khosa                    | Hosi                        | Jongilanga<br>Traditional Authority<br>Council<br>Chambers |
| <b>Hoxani</b>      | <i>Ndunas</i> and<br>leadership | interim Traditional leaders | Hoxani<br>Traditional Authority<br>Offices                 |
| <b>Mathibela</b>   | Kgoshi LM Mokoena               | Kgosi                       | Mathibela<br>Traditional Authority<br>Council<br>Chambers  |

#### 4.4.2 Engagement with Headmen (*Ndunas*) and Community Stakeholders

21 April–1 May 2025

Following introductory meetings with traditional authorities, community-level engagements were held across nine locations under the leadership of *Ndunas*, with support from civil society and faith-based organisations. These meetings provided an opportunity to introduce the project directly to residents, share early-stage information and begin gathering local perspectives.

Consultations were held with:

- **Traditional Authorities:** Jongilanga, Mnisi, Hoxani, Mathibela and Moletele
- **Ten Trees Project:** a local NGO supporting tree planting and agroforestry education in Acornhoek.
- **Hosanna Church and Praise Tabernacle Christian Church, Hazyview:** trusted community venues used to disseminate project information
- **Good Work Foundation (GWF), Hazyview Campus:** a youth-oriented education centre engaged to promote awareness among younger stakeholders
- **Smallholder farmers in Thulamahashe, Dingleydale and Lillydale:** engaged during site visits to understand farming conditions and share project information

These engagements were coordinated by the Save the Sand Project Coordinator, Richard Laburn, and facilitated by C4 EcoSolutions (Pty) Ltd. representatives William Liversage and Mira Peter, together with community liaison officers Cry Sithole and Velly Mokgotho.

#### 4.4.3 Primary Discussion Themes

Across all Phase One engagements, the following topics were covered to ensure foundational understanding and to solicit early feedback:

- The scope and rationale of planting ~3.5 million trees across croplands, homesteads and rangelands
- The principles and process of Free, Prior and Informed Consent
- Local environmental challenges, including land degradation, water scarcity and soil erosion
- Socio-economic opportunities potentially associated with restoration activities
- A basic introduction to the carbon market and how credits are generated and verified



- Criteria for voluntary participation in future project phases
- Initial community feedback, questions and concerns

These discussions clarified local priorities, identified potential implementation risks and established early communication channels with participants. This foundation will inform more detailed Phase Two consultations, where site-specific planning and formal agreements will be developed collaboratively.

## 5 RISK MAPPING

FPIC must be implemented with a full understanding of the environmental, legal and socio-political context in which a project operates. In the Save the Sand Project, risk analysis was prioritised as a foundational component of stakeholder engagement. The project area presents several context-specific challenges, including unresolved land claims, overlapping governance systems, limited access to secure livelihoods and vulnerability to environmental degradation. These risks are particularly pronounced in the Sabie–Sand River catchment and were prioritised in the project’s early planning to ensure that FPIC could be conducted in a meaningful, inclusive and conflict-sensitive manner.

Rather than applying a standardised list of FPIC-related risks, this section identifies and explores those issues most likely to affect project implementation, community participation and the legitimacy of consent. Additionally, these risks were introduced as focal points in the FPIC consultations themselves. Community members, traditional authorities and municipal leaders were engaged in identifying, validating and responding to these risks through dialogue and feedback mechanisms. This approach ensured that risks were assessed and integrated into the design of engagement and the co-development of solutions.

### 5.1 ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND APPROACH

To inform risk identification and engagement design, the Save the Sand Project applied three participatory assessment tools:

- **Rapid Land Tenure Assessment (RaTA)**<sup>21</sup>: to identify overlapping or insecure land claims and governance gaps.
- **Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)**<sup>22</sup>: to surface local perspectives, land use patterns and socio-economic conditions.
- **Restoration Opportunity Assessment Methodology (ROAM)**<sup>23</sup>: to frame restoration goals in terms relevant to communities.

These tools enabled the project team to prioritise risks that specific to the catchment area and provided a foundation for designing FPIC engagements that were relevant to local dynamics.

<sup>21</sup> Galudra G. 2010. RaTA: A Rapid Land Tenure Assessment manual for identifying the nature of land tenure conflicts. World Agroforestry Centre.

<sup>22</sup> Chambers R. 1994. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA): Challenges, potentials and paradigm. *World Development*, 22(10):1437–1454.

<sup>23</sup> IUCN & WRI. 2014. A guide to the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM): Assessing Forest landscape restoration opportunities at the national or sub-national level. Working Paper. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Gland, Switzerland. Available at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2014-030.pdf>



### 5.1.1 Rapid Land Tenure Assessment

The Rapid Land Tenure Assessment (RaTA) — developed by the World Agroforestry Centre — was used as a conceptual framework to guide the identification of land tenure risks. The Bushbuckridge region is characterised by complex tenure arrangements, including Communal Property Associations (CPAs), customary use rights, government-owned land and ongoing restitution claims. These overlapping systems present a considerable challenge to project implementation.

Due to limited availability of formal data and the sensitive nature of unresolved claims, the project team was not yet able to comprehensively map disputed areas or document tenure narratives. Instead, the RaTA tool informed early consultations by informing questions and identifying land access risks that may affect participation and benefit-sharing.

As the project progresses, elements of RaTA will be implemented more systematically. In Phase Two, the project team will initiate engagement with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), local land claims offices and legal support organisations to:

- Identify areas with known or active land disputes;
- Clarify restitution processes; and
- Support the development of locally valid land use agreements with participants.

Outputs from these efforts will be used to refine implementation boundaries, validate participation eligibility and support due diligence for credit issuance. While the full RaTA process is still in progress, it remains a necessary risk management tool guiding how tenure uncertainty is handled across the project area.

### 5.1.2 Participatory Rural Appraisal

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a suite of qualitative methods designed to enable Local Communities to analyse and articulate their knowledge, priorities and socio-environmental conditions. It serves as a tool to enhance the relevance of planning, promote local ownership and reduce dependency on externally led assessments.

The Save the Sand Project employed PRA to ensure consultations were contextually grounded and responsive to diverse community needs. Tools such as resource mapping, seasonal calendars and priority ranking were used in group settings to generate insight into land-use patterns, livelihood strategies and institutional affiliations. These sessions allowed for open dialogue, surfacing variations in priorities shaped by gender, age, household structure and resource access.

The application of PRA supported the identification of site-specific restoration opportunities and helped structure the engagement process around real community concerns. It also enabled project implementers to understand spatial dynamics — including informal grazing areas and culturally significant sites — which informed planting strategies and minimised disruption to existing land uses.

PRA results fed directly into the design of stakeholder monitoring protocols, which include disaggregated feedback collection and iterative engagement. This approach ensures that stakeholder voices continue to shape project implementation and that the FPIC process remains dynamic, inclusive and evidence led.



### 5.1.3 Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology

The Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM), developed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), provides a flexible framework for identifying forest landscape restoration (FLR) opportunities at national and sub-national levels. ROAM typically integrates spatial analysis, economic appraisal and stakeholder engagement to inform cost-effective and context-sensitive restoration strategies.

While ROAM was not employed as a technical planning tool in the Save the Sand Project, its conceptual framework was instrumental in structuring the communication and framing of FPIC consultations. Project objectives were translated into locally meaningful themes — such as reversing land degradation, improving water availability and strengthening livelihoods — that aligned with community priorities and promoted inclusive participation.

By presenting land-use interventions through land cover categories familiar to community members — including homesteads, croplands, rangelands and riparian zones — ROAM enabled accessible dialogue and reduced the perceived technical complexity of the project. This approach also ensured that participation was not restricted to those with formal land rights, but open to all community members regardless of tenure status, gender or social standing.

ROAM thus enhanced the project's ability to engage communities meaningfully and facilitated alignment between restoration objectives and local aspirations. It reinforced the principle that FPIC is not only a compliance requirement but a strategic tool for fostering long-term support and co-ownership.

## 5.2 RISKS AREAS, MITIGATION STRATEGIES AND ROLE OF THE FPIC

Risk analysis in the STS Project was not a generic exercise. It was context-specific, participatory and embedded from the outset of community engagement. The Sabie–Sand catchment presents distinct and interacting risks — including unresolved tenure claims, governance overlaps and deep socio-economic vulnerability. These risks were not only anticipated by the project team but also raised by communities themselves and placed at the forefront of consultation dialogues. This integrated approach allowed risks to be jointly assessed, communicated and used to inform consent processes and engagement design.

While the risks below are presented individually, they often compound one another. For example, tenure uncertainty can exacerbate governance confusion and participation gaps, especially where local power dynamics limit representation. Recognising these interdependencies, the FPIC process was designed to address multiple risks in parallel — using clear information, inclusive outreach and coordinated institutional engagement.

The risks outlined below were prioritised based on likelihood and impact. They are also subject to adaptive monitoring, with mitigation strategies that will evolve through feedback mechanisms and validation cycles. The greatest risks — land tenure uncertainty, governance fragmentation and community expectations — are discussed in detail.

### 5.2.1 Land Tenure Uncertainty

The Project operates in a legal and historical context shaped by land dispossession, restitution claims and overlapping authority between Communal Property Associations (CPAs), traditional



leaders and statutory governance<sup>24</sup>. These overlapping systems, combined with unregistered Permission to Occupy (PTO) arrangements, create uncertainty around land rights and pose a substantial risk to project legitimacy, implementation, and credit issuance.

### 5.2.1.1 Mitigation Strategies

- A RaTA framework was adopted to guide early engagement on land tenure issues. While the project team was not yet able to comprehensively map disputed areas or compile tenure narratives, the tool helped shape consultation content and clarify risk categories.
- In areas where uncertainty was evident, project activities have been deferred until tenure is clarified or access can be demonstrated.
- Participation criteria were shared during Phase One, requiring either formal tenure documentation or locally recognised access as a condition for involvement.
- In Phase Two, the team will work with DALRRD, land claims offices and CPAs to identify active disputes and support the co-development of land use agreements<sup>25</sup>.
- These agreements will be documented and incorporated into the benefit-sharing framework and validation process.
- Lessons from other projects — including those managed by Kruger to Canyons and Conservation International — were reviewed to anticipate complications from unclear tenure and improve early risk communication.

Land access risks were introduced directly in FPIC consultations. Communities were informed that implementation would not proceed without recognised access to land. This risk messaging improved transparency and helped establish consent criteria that were aligned with both community knowledge and legal due diligence.

## 5.2.2 Overlapping Governance Structures

The coexistence of traditional and municipal governance systems in the Sabie–Sand catchment presents risks of institutional conflict and confusion over authority. Municipal ward councillors operate under state legislation, and traditional leaders who hold authority through customary arrangements as recognised under the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (Act 41 of 2003)<sup>26</sup>. In some areas, both ward councillors and traditional leaders exercise parallel mandates, which can delay approvals and undermine decision-making coherence if one structure is excluded.

### 5.2.2.1 Mitigation Strategies

- The project team has engaged traditional and municipal leaders from the outset. Briefings were held with chiefs, headmen and councillors ahead of community consultations.
- Joint meetings were arranged in locations where feasible to support mutual awareness and reduce the risk of parallel communication streams.
- It was emphasised throughout FPIC engagement that no project activity would proceed without both systems being informed, reinforcing institutional respect.

<sup>24</sup> Centre for Law and Society. 2015. Communal Property Associations. University of Cape Town. Available at: [https://law.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content\\_migration/law\\_uct\\_ac\\_za/1149/files/Factsheet\\_CPAs\\_Final\\_Feb2015.pdf](https://law.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/law_uct_ac_za/1149/files/Factsheet_CPAs_Final_Feb2015.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Stakeholder consultation with Vele Mokgotho

<sup>26</sup> The Republic of South Africa. 2003. *Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act 41 of 2003*. Government Gazette, Pretoria.



- In Phase Two, the project will host a joint governance workshop to consolidate input and support the development of a shared oversight framework for implementation and benefit-sharing.

The consultation process was designed to reflect the legitimacy of both governance structures. Consent was not regarded as valid unless recognised by both customary and statutory leadership, thus improving procedural integrity and reducing governance-related risks.

### 5.2.3 Unrealistic Community Expectations

In a region with limited employment opportunities, there is a tendency to view externally supported environmental projects as potential job creation schemes<sup>27,28,29</sup>. This perception can result in disappointment or disengagement if immediate financial rewards are not delivered.

#### 5.2.3.1 Mitigation Strategies

- During Phase One consultations, the project team consistently framed participation as a pathway to long-term land-based livelihoods, not as a short-term employment programme.
- The team used examples of gradual household benefit — such as improved soil health, fruit yields, and marula-based processing — to reorient expectations.
- Carbon finance was explained as performance-based and long-term, contingent on survival rates, monitoring and third-party verification.
- In Phase Two, the project will formalise training schedules and co-benefit offerings, including seed provision, agroecological extension, and market access support — to reinforce non-cash value creation.

Open discussion that drew on lessons from other initiatives that had experienced challenges with unmet community expectations<sup>30,31,32</sup>, around timelines, carbon payment mechanisms and the phased nature of benefits ensured communities understood what participation entails. This enabled consent to be based on realistic, shared expectations.

### 5.2.4 Lack of Participation and Community Buy-in

Barriers such as mobility limitations, time constraints, low literacy, and cultural norms may prevent women, youth, elders and informal land users from engaging equally. This poses a risk to inclusivity and undermines the representativeness of consent.

<sup>27</sup> Pollard S, Biggs H & du Toit D. 2008. *Towards a socio-ecological systems view of the Sand River Catchment, South Africa: An exploratory resilience analysis*. WRC Report No. TT 364/08. Water Research Commission, Pretoria, South Africa.

<sup>28</sup> Department of Provincial and Local Government & Business Trust. 2007. *Bushbuckridge Nodal Economic Development Profile: Mpumalanga*. Republic of South Africa. Available at: [https://btrust.org.za/library/assets/uploads/documents/1\\_CIPPB\\_Bushbuckridge%20narrative.PDF](https://btrust.org.za/library/assets/uploads/documents/1_CIPPB_Bushbuckridge%20narrative.PDF)

<sup>29</sup> Bushbuckridge Local Municipality. 2023. *Annual Report 2022/2023: For the year ended 30 June 2023*. Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Mpumalanga. Available at: [https://bushbuckridge.gov.za/images/files/2024/05/23/665/BLM\\_Annual\\_Report\\_20222023.pdf](https://bushbuckridge.gov.za/images/files/2024/05/23/665/BLM_Annual_Report_20222023.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Davey E. 2022. *In Peru, Kichwa tribe wants compensation for carbon credits*. Associated Press, 22 December. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/peru-carbon-credits-kichwa-cordillera-azul-5a4a290f8f2b1d6a536fef9b63b83a4f>

<sup>31</sup> World Bank. 2020. *Benefit sharing in emission reductions programs: Insights from the BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes (ISFL)*. Available at: [https://www.biocarbonfund-isfl.org/sites/isfl/files/2020-11/ISFL\\_Benefit\\_Sharing\\_Insight\\_Note.pdf](https://www.biocarbonfund-isfl.org/sites/isfl/files/2020-11/ISFL_Benefit_Sharing_Insight_Note.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Ramirez J. 2024. *Carbon offsetting fails to support climate mitigation and local communities*. Profundo, 25 January. Available at: <https://www.profundo.nl/en/publications/carbon-offsetting-fails-to-support-climate-mitigation-and-local-communities>



#### 5.2.4.1 Mitigation Strategies

- Ahead of formal consultations, community liaisons engaged households informally, sharing project details and explaining the consultation process.
- Targeted sessions were conducted with women’s groups, youth organisations and elders, allowing marginalised voices to be heard without the pressure of mixed-group dynamics.
- Consultation materials were translated into local languages and adapted for accessibility, with a mix of visual and verbal formats.
- The team tracked participation with disaggregated attendance records and will continue to monitor inclusion across Phase Two.

FPIC was treated as a process, not a single event. Its phased structure allowed time to reach underrepresented groups, validate feedback and refine strategies for ongoing inclusion.

#### 5.2.5 Information Clarity

Carbon project mechanisms — such as how credits are generated, verified, and monetised — are unfamiliar to most rural communities. Without adequate explanation, there is a risk that community consent could be ill-informed.

##### 5.2.5.1 Mitigation Strategies

- Communication materials were translated, simplified and visualised, explaining key concepts like additionality, permanence and benefit-sharing.
- The team piloted the materials with local stakeholders, *inter alia* Londolozi Game Reserve staff, to assess clarity before broader dissemination.
- The Save the Sand WhatsApp chatbot was introduced to provide mobile access to information, including summaries, FAQs and the ability to ask questions anonymously.
- In future phases, this platform will be expanded to include audio clips for low-literacy users, and content will be regularly updated in response to community feedback.

Information was shared iteratively and in multiple formats to ensure understanding. This met the FPIC standard of informed participation and provided communities with tools to revisit information at their own pace.

#### 5.2.6 Representation and Power Imbalances

In many community meetings, dominant voices — often those in formal leadership roles — may speak on behalf of others, limiting broader participation and skewing the outcomes of engagement.

##### 5.2.6.1 Mitigation Strategies

- The team facilitated separate sessions for women, youth, informal land users and elders not affiliated with traditional councils.
- Facilitators were trained to recognise and manage local power dynamics, ensuring more equitable dialogue in joint sessions.
- The use of rotating spokespersons, breakout discussions and anonymous feedback tools helped mitigate dominance by individuals or groups.
- The Good Work Foundation (GWF), an implementation partner, actively supports inclusive engagement by leveraging its extensive experience in community-based capacity building. Through its local networks and digital learning platforms — which are women-led and reach



underrepresented groups — GWF contributes to broadening participation beyond traditional leadership structures.

- Moving forward, feedback mechanisms such as the chatbot, community liaisons and GWF-supported platforms will remain active throughout implementation, ensuring that community voices continue to shape activities.

The project's approach to FPIC explicitly countered elite capture by incorporating structured efforts to balance influence and amplify marginalised voices.

### 5.2.7 Environmental Constraints

The Sabie–Sand catchment faces significant environmental challenges, including degraded soils, variable rainfall and increasing climate stress. These conditions pose risks to tree survival, project viability and community motivation.

#### 5.2.7.1 Mitigation Strategies

- Indigenous and drought-tolerant tree species were selected to align with local ecological conditions and enhance resilience.
- Training sessions covered soil preparation, mulching, and low-water planting techniques, with support from FEADT-SA and ARC.
- The team is in discussions with Innovation Africa to introduce solar-powered boreholes in select communities, pending feasibility and local support.
- In Phase Two, site selection will be refined through participatory mapping to ensure that planting occurs in ecologically and socially suitable areas.

Environmental risks were not hidden but brought into the consultation process directly. Communities helped identify these risks and co-designed early mitigation measures, strengthening ownership and credibility of the project design.

## 6 COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES, FEEDBACK AND CONCERNS

Consultations with community members and *Ndunas* indicated broad support for the project's ARR objectives. No objections were raised to the project proceeding, and activities were generally viewed as consistent with existing land-use practices — particularly subsistence agriculture and the harvesting of fruit and nut trees. Participants expressed interest in the opportunity to generate additional income through tree planting and noted the value of capacity-building and training throughout the project lifecycle. Improved access to markets was frequently highlighted as a relevant benefit, given the persistent challenges faced by small-scale farmers in securing reliable market linkages.

At the same time, several community members raised questions and offered suggestions to strengthen project design. These inputs have been grouped under five recurring themes:

- tree species and site selection;
- trampling or damage of saplings by livestock;
- access to water smart planting support;
- support for subsistence farming; and
- agricultural market access.



These themes reflect the perspectives shared during Phase One consultations and serve as an early indication of local priorities. In line with the CCB Standards, project proponents are required to demonstrate how community inputs influence project design and implementation<sup>33</sup>. The feedback outlined below is therefore directly linked to the development of implementation strategies, project design and will inform Phase Two engagements and benefit-sharing arrangements.

## 6.1 TREE SPECIES AND SITE SELECTION

While marula (*Sclerocarya birrea*) is widely valued for its cultural significance and economic potential, community members noted that it may not be suitable for all planting contexts. Concerns were raised about its height — which can exceed 10 metres — and the potential for root systems to damage nearby structures when planted near homesteads. Considering this, participants recommended that marula be prioritised for croplands, communal lands and rangelands, while more compact fruit tree species — such as mango (*Mangifera indica*) and avocado (*Persea americana*) — would be better suited to household-level planting.

### Outcomes

To support informed decision-making on species selection, the project team will develop training materials and information brochures — in collaboration with partners such as FEADT-SA — outlining the preferred site conditions, growth characteristics and land-use compatibility of each species. In addition, participants will be offered a range of suitable species to accommodate differing land types, spatial constraints and household preferences.

## 6.2 TRAMPLING OR DAMAGE OF SAPLINGS BY LIVESTOCK

Community members identified livestock browsing and trampling as key threats to seedling survival, particularly in communal areas and rangelands. Croplands are also occasionally grazed when left fallow between planting seasons, further increasing the risk to young trees.

### Outcomes

To address this challenge, the project team will incorporate tree protection strategies into training sessions. Participants will be introduced to practical, low-cost fencing methods that use locally available materials such as branches, sticks and repurposed wire. Demonstrations will illustrate how to construct simple enclosures suited to different land uses and grazing pressures. These techniques are designed to be cost-effective, accessible and community-maintainable, strengthening local capacity to ensure sapling survival and long-term project success.

## 6.3 ACCESS TO WATER-SMART PLANTING SUPPORT

The Sabie–Sand catchment is characterised by highly variable rainfall patterns, resulting in frequent water scarcity and limited irrigation access<sup>34</sup>. During several consultations, community members raised concerns about sapling survival, the feasibility of irrigation, and the availability

<sup>33</sup> Verra. 2017. Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards: v3.1. Verra, Washington, DC. Available at: [https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/CCB-Standards-v3.1\\_ENG.pdf](https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Pollard S and du Toit D. 2008. Integrated water resource management in complex systems: How the catchment management strategies seek to achieve sustainability and equity in water resources in South Africa. *Water SA*. 34(6):671–680.



of water for household use. Water is typically accessed via boreholes or through government-supplied tankers, which deliver to centralised collection points for local distribution.

#### Outcomes

In response, the project will prioritise the use of drought-tolerant tree species that are better suited to low-rainfall conditions. Where appropriate, the project team will also explore partnerships with organisations such as Innovation Africa to improve borehole access through solar-powered pump systems. Training and extension sessions — led in collaboration with FEADT-SA and the ARC — will focus on water-efficient practices such as composting, mulching and minimal irrigation techniques. These measures are intended to increase sapling resilience, reduce household water burdens and support long-term sustainability in a water-constrained landscape.

## 6.4 SUPPORT FOR SUBSISTENCE FARMING

*Ndunas* from the Moletele and Mathibela traditional councils expressed concern that many of the proposed tree species — such as marula — require several years to bear fruit and generate income. This time lag was identified as a potential risk to food security, particularly for households that already face limited access to reliable nutrition<sup>35</sup>. To mitigate this, community representatives proposed that the project include support for small-scale vegetable cultivation alongside tree planting activities.

Additional requests were raised at the Good Work Foundation campus, where participants advocated for the distribution of staple vegetable seeds — such as spinach (*Spinacia oleracea L*) and tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) — together with training in sustainable crop production. There was strong interest in these short-cycle agricultural inputs as a means of generating early-stage household benefits while longer-term restoration efforts are established.

#### Outcomes

To respond to these concerns, the project will assess participant interest in receiving vegetable seeds as part of the broader benefit-sharing package. This intervention will be formally integrated into implementation planning and supported through collaboration with FEADT-SA and Farm in a Box. Participants will receive training on crop care, seasonal planning and the selection of context-appropriate vegetable varieties. These activities are intended to enhance household food security, promote early project buy-in and support the phased delivery of project benefits in line with community priorities.

## 6.5 UNRELIABLE ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL MARKETS

Community members in the Jongilanga, Moletele and Mathibela areas noted that while fruit trees are common, access to commercial markets remains limited. Participants raised concerns about the low returns from informal fruit sales and the failure of past processing initiatives — such as jam-making or fruit drying — due to the absence of equipment, packaging, and market information. Several individuals expressed interest in marketing existing produce but indicated

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<sup>35</sup> Muthee K, Duguma L, Majale C, Mucheru-Muna M, Wainaina P & Minang P. 2022. A quantitative appraisal of selected agroforestry studies in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Heliyon*, 8(9): e10670. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e10670>



that they lacked awareness of demand trends and the resources needed to scale their activities into viable enterprises.

### Outcomes

To address these constraints, the project team will integrate enterprise development support into training activities. This will include sessions on fruit and nut processing, product aggregation, packaging standards and basic price negotiation. In parallel, collaboration with FEADT-SA and Farm in a Box will assist in establishing agricultural cooperatives and supporting early-stage business development. In areas where interest has been expressed, targeted workshops will be held to introduce participants to potential buyers and processing partners. These efforts are intended to strengthen value chain integration, promote household income generation and ensure that project benefits extend beyond subsistence production.

## 7 ONGOING AND FUTURE ENGAGEMENTS

Future engagements will proceed with Phases Two and Three of the FPIC process. Phase Two will include follow-up meetings to ensure: i) the continued integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into project design; ii) disaggregated consultations for equitable participation by women, youths, the elderly and disabled people; iii) the finalisation of the benefit-sharing framework; and iv) a grievance resolution mechanism. Phase Three will focus on engagement during project implementation, including project updates, validation and verification processes and the dissemination of monitoring results and project documentation.

### 7.1 PHASE TWO — FOLLOW-UP CONSULTATIONS AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

#### 7.1.1 Inclusion of Women, Youths and Vulnerable Groups

To ensure equitable participation, the project will implement structured mechanisms to include women, youths, the elderly and persons with disabilities. These mechanisms are designed to overcome participation barriers and ensure that all community members can access information, contribute to decision-making and influence project outcomes meaningfully.

The project will implement the following approaches:

- **Dedicated women’s focus groups:** Biannual sessions will be led by women in partnership with existing networks, including: i) churches; ii) caregiver forums (linked to the 10 Trees Project); and iii) local savings groups (stokvels)<sup>36</sup>. These forums will provide safe and culturally familiar spaces for women to share concerns, review proposals and influence planning.
- **Youth engagement platforms:** Young people (aged 18–24) will be engaged through partnerships with schools, youth clubs and local organisations such as the Good Work Foundation. Activities will include environmental education and training linked to roles in nursery operations, tree planting, seedling monitoring and data collection. This will contribute to local capacity-building and support long-term employment pathways.
- **Support for the elderly and disabled people:** Elderly residents, who are often the primary custodians of homestead plots during labour migration, will be engaged through targeted

<sup>36</sup> A stokvel is a type of community-based savings group in South Africa where members make regular contributions to a shared fund, used for rotating pay-outs or collective needs.



outreach. Where travel barriers exist, transport will be arranged to nearby venues. Meeting and training locations will be selected with accessibility in mind to ensure proximity and ease of participation.

Disaggregated attendance records and structured participant feedback will be used to monitor the reach and effectiveness of these inclusion strategies. This data will inform ongoing adjustments to strengthen engagement with underrepresented groups throughout project implementation.

### 7.1.2 Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Local Land Use Practices

The project will integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and local land-use practices into restoration design and planning. This approach respects customary land governance and cultural relationships to the landscape, while ensuring that project activities are grounded in local realities.

To operationalise this, the project will conduct:

- **Participatory resource mapping:** Community-led workshops will identify land-use patterns, grazing zones and culturally significant sites. These maps will inform tree-planting plans, helping to protect communal resources and align interventions with local spatial practices.
- **Site management planning:** Consultations will be held to confirm species selection, planting methods and maintenance responsibilities. This co-design approach supports shared accountability and informed decision-making over the long term.
- **Accessible information delivery:** All printed materials — such as flyers and training guides — will be simplified and translated into local languages including Xitsonga, Sesotho and Siswati. These materials will be distributed through schools, churches, traditional authority offices and digital channels, including radio and mobile platforms.

This approach is supported by international guidance. The IUCN’s FPIC guidelines (2019) emphasise integrating traditional knowledge into the project design<sup>37</sup>. Article 31 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirms the right to maintain and develop cultural heritage and knowledge systems<sup>38</sup>. Similarly, Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity recognises the critical role of traditional knowledge in conservation<sup>39</sup>. Ensuring that communities understand how project activities intersect with land, livelihoods and cultural identity is essential for meaningful participation and sustained consent.

### 7.1.3 Benefit-Sharing Framework

To avoid marginalisation and promote inclusive development, the project will implement a transparent and accountable benefit-sharing framework. This framework is designed to reflect community priorities and ensure equitable distribution of both financial and non-financial benefits.

The following components will be established:

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<sup>37</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). 2019. Guidelines on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

<sup>38</sup> United Nations. 2007. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Article 31.

<sup>39</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). 1992. Convention on Biological Diversity: Article 8(j) — Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices.



- **Carbon finance distribution mechanisms:** Clear systems will be developed to define how Verified Carbon Units (VCUs) are monetised and shared with participants, including eligibility criteria and allocation procedures.
- **Eligibility and equity measures:** Participation criteria will be developed with safeguards to ensure benefits reach women, youth, the elderly, and low-income households. Special provisions will be made to support marginalised groups.
- **Types of benefits:** Both financial (such as carbon revenues) and non-financial (such as training, inputs, employment and infrastructure) benefits will be defined according to participant roles and levels of engagement.
- **Disbursement methods:** The timing, frequency and format of benefit distributions will be communicated. Payment schedules and reporting procedures will be made accessible to all participants.
- **Local governance structures:** Community-based benefit committees will be established to oversee distribution, resolve disputes and maintain records for public accountability.
- **Monitoring and revision mechanisms:** Systems will be developed to track benefit flows, incorporate community feedback and revise benefit-sharing arrangements as needed to reflect performance and evolving needs.

This framework aligns with guidance from the UN-REDD Programme and the Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment (SBIA) Manual, both of which emphasise inclusive, transparent benefit-sharing as critical to project legitimacy, sustainability and local governance<sup>40,41</sup>.

#### 7.1.4 Grievance Resolution Mechanism

In accordance with the CCB Standards, the project will establish a formal grievance redress mechanism to address any disputes arising during planning, implementation or benefit-sharing<sup>42</sup>. This includes concerns related to FPIC, land use, resource access, participation and distribution equity.

The mechanism will include:

- **Multiple access channels:** Complaints may be submitted via in-person meetings, local liaison officers or through the dedicated Save the Sand WhatsApp chatbot.
- **Support and guidance:** A designated grievance officer will assist individuals in submitting and tracking complaints and navigating resolution processes.
- **Tracking and auditing:** All grievances will be documented in a secure, auditable database accessible to third-party reviewers.
- **Transparency of outcomes:** Resolution outcomes will be compiled in regular reports and disseminated through community meetings and public channels.
- **Independent mediation:** In the event of unresolved disputes, neutral third parties will be engaged to mediate and facilitate fair resolutions.

<sup>40</sup> UN-REDD Programme. 2011. Guidelines on Free, Prior and Informed Consent. UN-REDD Programme, Geneva. Available at: <https://www.uncclearn.org/wp-content/uploads/library/un-redd05.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Richards M. 2011. Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment (SBIA) Manual for REDD+ Projects: Part 2 – Social Impact Assessment Toolbox. Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance and Forest Trends with Rainforest Alliance and Fauna & Flora International. Washington, DC.

<sup>42</sup> Verra. 2017. Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards: v3.1. Verra, Washington, DC. Available at: [https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/CCB-Standards-v3.1\\_ENG.pdf](https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf)



- **Adaptive management:** Feedback from the grievance mechanism will be used to refine project implementation and engagement strategies, with periodic updates shared on actions take

This system will be time-bound, accessible, culturally appropriate and capable of being independently verified — as required by CCB validation criteria.

### 7.1.5 Feedback Integration, Monitoring and Reporting

Following finalisation of the grievance redress procedure, the Save the Sand project team will provide communities with feedback received during Phase One of the FPIC process. To ensure continuity, all concerns raised and addressed during initial consultations will be integrated into subsequent phases of implementation. This feedback will also inform the design of impact monitoring activities to support continuous evaluation and response. The WhatsApp chatbot will be updated to reflect these responses and maintain ongoing communication with participants. Annex II: Stakeholder Monitoring provides an overview of the impact monitoring categories and associated methodologies which will be implemented during the project.

Stakeholder impact monitoring will assess the net effects of project activities on primary, secondary and other stakeholder groups. This will include changes in social and economic well-being, ecosystem service use and feedback on participation experiences. Impacts and grievances will be reported at intervals aligned with the stakeholder interest–influence matrix (see Section 10.4), ensuring that stakeholders with greater interest or influence receive more frequent and detailed updates. Reporting formats and frequency will be adapted to the needs of different stakeholder groups — from summary briefs for institutions to in-person community sessions for local participants.

### 7.1.6 Project Implementation Timeline

To support informed consent and inclusive planning, the project will ensure that all participants receive clear, accessible information on implementation timelines. This is consistent with ILO Convention 169<sup>43</sup>, and the UNDP Social and Environmental Standards (2021)<sup>44</sup>, which emphasise the right of Indigenous and local communities to understand when activities and benefits are expected to occur.

The following commitments will be made:

- **Phased implementation plan:** The project will provide an outline of activity sequencing across all phases, including consultation, planting, training and monitoring.
- **Employment timeline:** A high-level schedule will be shared to indicate when short-term and long-term job opportunities are expected to become available, aligned with restoration milestones.
- **Capacity-building schedule:** Timelines will be issued for the delivery of training and support activities, coordinated with partners such as FEADT-SA, the Good Work Foundation and Farm in a Box.
- **Carbon finance disbursement:** The project will communicate when carbon revenues are expected to materialise and how distribution schedules will align with verification and issuance cycles.

<sup>43</sup> International Labour Organization. 1986. Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No.169). Available at: [https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx\\_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C169](https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169)

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Development Programme. 2021. United Nations Development Programme: Social and Environmental Standards.



- **Project duration:** The full implementation period is expected to span 40 years. This long-term timeframe will be discussed with participants to support intergenerational understanding and consent.

These timelines will be introduced during Phase Two engagements and reviewed collaboratively to ensure alignment with local development priorities and expectations.

## 7.2 PHASE THREE — CONTINUOUS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Phase Three represents the ongoing application of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) across the full project lifecycle. At this stage, community engagement is no longer limited to consultation — it becomes an embedded part of implementation, monitoring and benefit-sharing. The purpose of Phase Three is to ensure that consent is continuously upheld, transparently reaffirmed and adapted in response to community feedback, especially as activities expand or evolve.

The main activities will include:

- regular project updates, including validation and verification milestones;
- transparent communication of monitoring results;
- revisions to project design based on local input; and
- reaffirmation of consent when activities extend to new areas, groups or land types.

### 7.2.1 Independent Validation and Verification

In accordance with CCB requirements, Local Communities should be informed about the validation and verification process conducted by a third-party Validation and Verification Body (VVB)<sup>45</sup>. The project will take the following steps to ensure transparency and community access:

- **Advanced communication:** The purpose, process and implications of validation and verification visits will be clearly explained through briefings, community meetings and written materials.
- **Access to information:** Details will be shared via the WhatsApp chatbot, printed communications and in-person engagements.
- **Direct community-VVB interaction:** The project will facilitate independent, unsupervised communication between the VVB and community members, in line with CCB expectations for impartial input.

### 7.2.2 Project Information Dissemination

The CCB requires evidence that full project documentation has been made accessible to communities and other stakeholders<sup>46</sup>. This includes demonstrating how summary and full project documents have been actively disseminated in relevant local or regional languages and how widely publicised information meetings have been held to communicate project details. To ensure these principles are upheld the Project prospectus, draft PDD and final PDD will be shared

<sup>45</sup> Verra. 2017. Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards: v3.1. Verra, Washington, DC. Available at: [https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/CCB-Standards-v3.1\\_ENG.pdf](https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> Verra. 2017. Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards: v3.1. Verra, Washington, DC. Available at: [https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/CCB-Standards-v3.1\\_ENG.pdf](https://verra.org/wp-content/uploads/CCB-Standards-v3.1_ENG.pdf)



with Local Communities and participants, translated into local languages and presented in accessible formats.

### 7.3 METHODS FOR DOCUMENTING CONSENT

The project will ensure that consent is not treated as a one-time event, but as a continuous process that adapts to the evolving nature of project activities. Consent will be reaffirmed when:

- Project activities are expanded geographically;
- New stakeholder groups are engaged;
- Substantive changes are made to benefit-sharing structures or land use; and
- Verification processes introduce new implementation steps.

Documentation methods will include:

- signed attendance registers confirming participation in engagement sessions;
- detailed meeting minutes capturing discussion points, clarifications and decisions;
- participant feedback, including written or verbal expressions of support, concern or objection;
- photographic and audio records, with prior consent;
- formal letters of support from traditional authorities;
- signed participation agreements outlining roles, rights, land-use permissions and grievance procedures; and
- WhatsApp chatbot interaction logs capturing queries, acknowledgements and anonymised community feedback.

All documentation will be digitised and stored in a secure project database. This database will be made available to VVBs during validation and verification. Data protection protocols and informed consent procedures will be applied throughout to uphold participant privacy and trust.

### 7.4 ONGOING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHODS

The Save the Sand Project will implement a communication strategy that combines digital platforms with traditional community channels to reach stakeholders across technological and infrastructural divides.

The main tools include:

- **WhatsApp chatbot and broadcast messaging:** The chatbot will serve as the central platform for digital engagement, providing real-time updates on project milestones, training opportunities, grievance resolution pathways and benefit-sharing arrangements. It will also offer a frequently asked questions (FAQ) feature and collect feedback from users.
- **In-person meetings:** Annual in-person meetings will be held in each project area, with additional sessions scheduled in advance of key implementation events. Venues will include traditional authority offices, schools, churches and other accessible locations. Meeting notices will be disseminated via the WhatsApp chatbot, printed flyers, local radio, and community networks at least two weeks in advance.
- **Local radio partnerships:** The project will collaborate with stations such as Blue Hazy FM to reach communities without reliable digital access. Segments will provide project updates, participant interviews, responses to common questions and reminders about available feedback and grievance channels — all in local languages.



### 7.4.1 Capacity-Building and Training

The project will deliver structured training to increase community capacity, strengthen understanding of implementation roles and support meaningful, informed participation. Training sessions will be conducted in local languages and designed to promote peer learning.

Modules will include:

- **Rights and responsibilities associated with Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC):** An overview of FPIC principles, how consent is obtained, reaffirmed and documented, and the role of participants in influencing decisions throughout the project lifecycle.
- **Agroecology and land preparation:** Techniques for sustainable land use, including soil improvement, water conservation and preparation methods aligned with ARR objectives.
- **Tree planting, watering and protection:** Practical guidance on species-specific planting methods, watering strategies, and sapling protection to ensure long-term survival.
- **Site selection for homestead and communal planting:** Training in how to assess homestead and communal land for planting suitability, based on land-use patterns, soil quality and household needs.
- **Use of feedback and grievance systems, including the WhatsApp chatbot:** Demonstrations of how to access project information, submit concerns, and interact with project tools such as the WhatsApp chatbot and grievance officers.

These training sessions are designed not only to improve technical implementation but to support transparent participation and sustained community engagement. Content will reflect international best practice and be revised regularly to respond to evolving project needs and community feedback.

## 8 CONCLUSION

Consultations to date have demonstrated broad support for the Save the Sand Project's ARR objectives. The primary Phase One objectives of obtaining written consent from traditional authorities and conducting initial sensitisation meetings were met. No objections were raised by community members or traditional leadership. Participants regarded the proposed activities as compatible with existing land-use systems — particularly subsistence agriculture and the cultivation of fruit and nut trees. Many expressed interests in the project's potential to increase income-generation opportunities and welcomed the inclusion of training and capacity-building throughout the implementation period. Improved market access was highlighted as a particularly important benefit, given the prevailing constraints faced by smallholder producers in the region.

During these engagements, five priority areas emerged for further clarification and support: i) species selection and site suitability; ii) seedling protection from livestock; iii) water availability for tree survival; iv) integration of short-term agricultural support; and v) access to markets. These themes will inform the design of future interventions and training modules. In response, the project team and implementation partners — including FEADT-SA and Farm in a Box — will refine support structures to address community concerns. Feedback also underscored the need for early-stage benefits to sustain participation, alongside practical support in product processing, enterprise development and market engagement. These measures are intended to enhance local capacity and enable more inclusive participation in rural value chains.



FPIC implementation will continue under Phases Two and Three. Phase Two will focus on disaggregated consultations with women, youth and other underrepresented groups, integration of traditional ecological knowledge, finalisation of the benefit-sharing framework and activation of grievance mechanisms. Consent at the individual and family level will be formalised during this phase through signed consent forms and land-use agreements. Phase Three will maintain engagement during implementation — including training delivery, updates on validation and verification, dissemination of monitoring results and reaffirmation of consent where activities are modified or expanded. These processes are designed to uphold transparency, strengthen co-governance and support long-term community co-benefits across the project lifecycle.



## 9 ANNEX I: FPIC DOCUMENTATION

The following engagement events form part of Phase One of the Save the Sand FPIC process, summarised in Table 3. They were designed to introduce the project to local stakeholders, explain concepts such as carbon credits and project eligibility, while initiating feedback loops that inform participatory project design. These events represent the initial implementation of the FPIC framework, consistent with the CCB Standards' requirements for transparency, cultural appropriateness and iterative consent.

Attendance at all FPIC engagements was documented using registers disaggregated by stakeholder group and community affiliation. The registers captured participants' names and roles — including traditional authorities, *Ndunas*, community members, youth representatives and project team members — as well as the date and location of each meeting. Where applicable, supplementary information such as ward number or household affiliation was also recorded. All attendance records have been digitised and securely stored in a central project database managed by the Save the Sand implementation team. These records are available for third-party audit and verification purposes and will be used to assess representation, track outreach coverage and support disaggregated monitoring across the project lifecycle

Meeting discussions were documented using a standard template capturing: i) objectives; ii) agenda items; iii) discussion points; iv) community feedback; v) questions raised; vi) responses provided; vii) outcomes agreed upon; and viii) action items assigned. A member of the project team or a designated liaison officer was responsible for real-time notetaking at each event. Meeting summaries were reviewed internally by the project lead and relevant engagement officers to ensure accuracy and completeness. Where necessary, the main points were confirmed in follow-up engagements or through liaison with local representatives. All minutes are retained in project archives and may be shared with stakeholders or Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs) as evidence of informed consultation and iterative engagement.

The Save the Sand WhatsApp chatbot is a mobile-based engagement platform designed to complement in-person meetings by enabling two-way communication, disseminating project information and documenting community feedback. Participants can access summaries of project activities, receive updates, ask questions and submit feedback in their preferred language. Participation is tracked using chatbot analytics, which include: i) engagement frequency; ii) message content themes; iii) stakeholder location; and iv) demographic indicators, where provided. The chatbot also supports sign-up and registration processes for interested participants, providing a digital record of expressions of interest. Entries related to grievances; clarification requests or consent withdrawal are flagged for follow-up by the project team and integrated into FPIC monitoring records. All chatbot data is stored in compliance with data protection protocols and is anonymised before analysis unless the participant provides explicit consent for their identity to be recorded. This digital engagement process strengthens access, participation and traceability — particularly for youth, working adults and individuals unable to attend meetings in person.



Table 3. Summary of the stakeholder engagement database for engagements held from March 2025 to May 2025

| Event Name                                 | Location                                       | Date        | Stakeholder Group         | Number of Attendees | Follow-up Actions  |
|--|--|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--|
| <b>Amashangana Traditional Council</b>     | Amashangana Traditional Authority Headquarters | 30 Mar 2025 | Traditional Authority     | 6+                  | i. Follow-up meeting scheduled for 15 Apr; and<br>ii. nursery plan to be provided by 10 April 2025 |
| <b>Jongilanga Traditional Council</b>      | Jongilanga Council Chambers                    | 31 Mar 2025 | Traditional Authority     | 10+                 | i. Community-wide info sessions; and<br>ii. liaison committee to be formed.                        |
| <b>Jongilanga Ndunas and Council</b>       | Jongilanga Traditional Authority               | 23 Apr 2025 | Ndunas & Council          | 10+                 | i. Share presentations; and<br>ii. Coordinate broader community outreach.                          |
| <b>Hoxani Traditional Council</b>          | Hoxani Traditional Offices                     | 1 Apr 2025  | Traditional Authority     | 10+                 | i. Custom training schedule; and<br>ii. nursery site assessments.                                  |
| <b>Hoxani Ndunas and Councillors</b>       | Hoxani Traditional Authority                   | 23 Apr 2025 | Ward Councillors & Ndunas | 10+                 | i. Community meetings planned; and<br>ii. visual materials to be distributed.                      |
| <b>Mathibela Traditional Council</b>       | Mathibela Council Chambers                     | 1 Apr 2025  | Traditional Authority     | 10+                 | Provide further information on site visits and follow-up sessions                                  |
| <b>Mathibela Council &amp; Community</b>   | Jongilanga Traditional Authority               | 23 Apr 2025 | Council & Community       | 15+                 | i. Community meetings planned; and<br>ii. market access support requested                          |
| <b>Moletete Traditional Authority</b>      | Moletete Traditional Authority                 | 29 Apr 2025 | Traditional Authority     | 15+                 | Training and market support are to be designed   |
| <b>Mnisi Traditional Authority</b>         | Mnisi Council                                  | 25 Apr 2025 | Council & Community       | 15+                 | Ongoing consultations and site preparation   |
| <b>Ten Trees Project</b>                   | Acornhoek                                      | 29 Apr 2025 | NGO Participants          | 10+                 | Follow-up email feedback from Ten Trees participants   |
| <b>Dept. of Forestry, Fisheries, Env.</b>  | Microsoft Teams                                | 22 May 2025 | Government                | 6+                  | Concept note submission and strategic alignment  |
| <b>Bushbuckridge Municipality Workshop</b> | Mhlahle Primary, Lillydale                     | 29 May 2025 | Multi-stakeholder         | 20+                 | Scaling engagement and youth involvement   |
| <b>Londolozi Game Reserve Staff</b>        | Londolozi Ubuntu Camp                          | 22 Apr 2025 | Private Sector            | 15+                 | i. Create liaison with the sustainability team; and<br>ii. provide further training options.       |



|  |                      |                   |                                |     |   |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----|---|
| <b>Good Work Foundation &amp; Churches</b> | GWF Campus, Hazyview | 21 Apr-1 May 2025 | Youth, Religious Organisations | 30+ | Follow-up briefings and training sessions |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----|---|

## 9.1 AMASHANGANA TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

### 9.1.1 Amashangana King and Traditional Council

- Date: Sunday, March 30, 2025.
- Location: Amashangana Traditional Authority Headquarters.
- Primary Presenter: Richie Laburn, Save the Sands Project Lead.

#### 9.1.1.1 Attendees

- King Bayethe Hosi Abednigo Nxumalo, King of Amashangana Traditional Authority.
- Traditional Council Members: Mr Mathibela (1 present).
- Community Representatives Cry Sithole / Dzunisani Mnkansi (2 present).
- Save the Sands Project Team: Richie Laburn (1 present).

#### 9.1.1.2 Discussion Points

- Project Introduction and Overview
  - Richie Laburn presented the Save the Sands Project goals to plant 3.5 million indigenous and fruit trees along the Sabie-Sand River Catchments.
  - Explained the environmental and economic co-benefits of the project.
  - Outlined how carbon credit generation would provide sustainable income to participating community members.
  - Presented visual aids demonstrating project implementation in similar communities.
- Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) Process
  - Explanation of the FPIC principles and their importance to the project.
  - Clarified that community participation is voluntary and requires full understanding.
  - Distributed printed FPIC documentation in local languages.
  - Answered questions about consent withdrawal and participant rights.
- Implementation Timeline
  - Details on the proposed pilot nursery establishment within Amashangana territory.
  - Outlined the three-phase implementation plan (2025-2030).
  - Discussed training programs for community members on tree care and management.
  - Presented the WhatsApp registration system for interested participants.
- Community Benefits Discussion
  - Job creation opportunities in nursery management, planting and tree monitoring.
  - Income generation through fruit and nut harvesting and carbon credit sharing.
  - Technology training and digital monitoring tools.
  - Market access initiatives for agroforestry products.



## ■ Land Use Integration

- Explained how tree planting would complement existing agricultural practices.
- Discussed species selection is appropriate for local conditions.
- Addressed concerns about land-use change and water requirements.

### 9.1.1.3 Outcomes

- The King's Response: His Royal Highness expressed strong support for the project and requested expedited implementation of the pilot phase. He emphasized the need for visible progress to maintain community interest.
- Nursery Location: Consensus was reached on establishing the first nursery in the eastern sector of the traditional land, near the existing community garden area.
- Gift Presentation: Richie Laburn presented a ceremonial gift of an indigenous tree in an Airpot to the King as a symbol of the project's commitment.
- Community Questions: Council members raised questions about water usage, maintenance responsibilities and profit-sharing mechanisms that were addressed by the project team.
- Next Steps: A follow-up meeting was scheduled for April 15, 2025, to finalise nursery establishment plans and begin the community registration process.

### 9.1.1.4 Action Items

- Save the Sands Project team to prepare a nursery establishment plan by April 10.
- Traditional Authority to designate community liaison officers by April 15.
- WhatsApp registration channel to be activated by April 5.
- Project team to provide sample tree planting layouts to council by April 20.
- Initial seedling procurement to begin immediately as requested by the King.
- The meeting concluded with a traditional ceremony and refreshments, with consensus on moving forward with the project partnership.





Figure 1. Richie Laburn pictured with King Bayethe Hosi Abednigo Nxumalo of the Amashangana traditional authority.

## 9.2 JONGILANGA TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

### 9.2.1 Chief of the Jongilanga Traditional Authority

- Date: Monday, March 31, 2025
- Location: Jongilanga Traditional Authority Council Chambers
- Primary Presenter: Richie Laburn, Save the Sands Project Lead

#### 9.2.1.1 Attendees

- Chief of Jongilanga Traditional Authority
- Traditional Council Members and *Ndunas*
- Community Representatives including Cry Sithole, Dzunisani Mnkansi and Isaac Hlatswayo
- Save the Sands Project Team — led by Richie Laburn.

#### 9.2.1.2 Discussion Points

- Project Introduction
  - Richie Laburn presented the Save the Sand project, outlining its mission to restore damaged land and support local communities.

- Explained the goal of planting 3.5 million indigenous and fruit trees along the Sabie-Sand River Catchments.
- Highlighted environmental benefits: improved air quality, soil restoration, biodiversity enhancement

#### ■ Implementation Model

- Detailed how the tree planting program works specifically with smallholder farmers and landowners.
- Outlined the registration process through the Save the Sand WhatsApp channel.
- Explained how trees would be integrated with existing croplands, gardens, homesteads, and rangelands.
- Described training programs and technical support available to participants.

#### ■ Carbon Credits Explanation

- Provided an explanation of how carbon credits function as an additional income source.
- Illustrated how trees capture carbon dioxide and how this ecosystem service generates credits.
- Outlined the verification process and how participants would receive compensation as trees mature.
- Demonstrated the long-term financial benefits beyond fruit and nut production.

#### ■ Agricultural Partnership

- Introduced FEADT-SA as the project's agricultural implementation partner.
- Explained their role in providing technical expertise, training, and ongoing support.
- Discussed how FEADT-SA would connect participants to markets for their produce.

#### ■ Pilot Project Details

- Presented specific plans for the initial pilot phase in the Jongilanga area.
- Showed maps of potential nursery locations and planting areas.
- Outlined timeline for implementation and expected milestones.
- Discussed criteria for selecting initial participants.

#### ■ FPIC Process: The FPIC principles were explained, emphasizing that:

- Participation is entirely voluntary
- Community members have the right to full information before deciding
- Consent can be withdrawn at any point
- The project respects local governance structures and traditions

#### 9.2.1.3 Community Feedback:

#### ■ Council members and community representatives provided feedback, particularly regarding tree species selection and planting methods. Questions focused on:

- Water requirements for different tree species;
- Compatibility with existing crops;
- Time commitment for maintenance; and
- Expected growth rates in local conditions.



- Questions and Answers: Richie Laburn and team addressed all questions, explaining:
  - Indigenous species selection process focused on drought-resistant varieties;
  - Flexible planting arrangements to suit different land types;
  - Minimal interference with existing agricultural activities; and
  - Training and support systems will be integrated into the project.
- The meeting concluded with expressions of interest from the Traditional Authority, with agreement to continue discussions and begin more detailed planning for implementation in the Jongilanga area.

#### 9.2.1.4 Outcomes

- Ceremonial Gift: As a symbol of the project's commitment, Richie Laburn presented the Chief with a gift of a Marula tree in an Airpot, highlighting the tree's cultural significance and economic value.

#### 9.2.1.5 Action Items:

- Distribution of detailed project information packets to all council members.
- Scheduling of community-wide information sessions in several villages.
- Establishment of a local liaison committee to facilitate ongoing communication.
- Site assessment visits to identify optimal nursery locations.
- Development of a customised training schedule for interested participants.





Figure 2. Richie Laburn pictured with several team members at the Jongilanga stakeholder engagement.

### 9.2.2 Jongilanga *Ndunas* and Traditional Council

- Date: 23 April 2025
- Location: Jongilanga Traditional Authority

#### 9.2.2.1 Attendees

- Jongilanga Traditional Authority *Ndunas* and Council Members.
- Save the Sand Representatives: Cry Sithole (Londoloji), William Liversage (C4 EcoSolutions), Mira Peter (C4 EcoSolutions), Dumisane (Lotus Impact Foundation)

#### 9.2.2.2 Meeting Objectives

- To introduce the Save the Sand project.
- To explain the project’s goals of planting trees to restore the environment, create sustainable livelihoods and increase carbon sequestration.
- To answer questions and receive input or concerns

### 9.2.2.3 Discussion Points

#### ■ Overview

- The team presented an overview of the project aimed at ecological restoration, focusing on the planting of 3.5 million fruit and nut trees and restoring degraded areas.
- Emphasised environmental benefits of the project such as improved water retention, reduced erosion, biodiversity recovery and carbon capture.
- Outlined socio-economic benefits such as food security through fruit and nut production, job creation and carbon credit income.

#### ■ Environmental Challenges and Solutions

- Addressed local environmental issues such as soil degradation, invasive species and deforestation.
- Discussed the ecological benefits of removing invasive plants and restoring natural vegetation to restore eroded areas, stabilise riverbanks and improve water quality.

#### ■ Socio-Economic Opportunities

- The project's objective to support sustainable livelihoods by training community members in tree care, harvesting fruits and nuts and sustainable agriculture.
- Participants will be given access to tools, seedlings and educational workshops through FEADT-SA.
- Employment opportunities include tree planting, nursery management and removing invasive species.

#### ■ Carbon Credits and Long-Term Participation

- Explained how carbon sequestration works and how communities can earn from carbon credits by maintaining trees.
- Trees must be grown for 40+ years to ensure project success and to qualify for full carbon credit benefits.

#### ■ Participation Criteria and Inclusion

- Open to all community members with access to land (home gardens, grazing areas and croplands).
- Voluntary participation, with no cost to sign up.
- Sign-up can be done through the WhatsApp chatbot or through local liaisons and organisations.

### 9.2.2.4 Community Questions, Feedback and Concerns

- The *Ndunas* requested regular project updates from the Save the Sand Project, ensuring that traditional council members are involved throughout the project.
- Questions on whether crop seeds and seedlings could be provided by project to increase agricultural production and to receive short-term benefits while trees grow.



### 9.2.2.5 Outcomes

- General support from attendees, with interest in employment, skills training and income opportunities.
- Agreement on the importance of cultural preservation and Indigenous knowledge integration.
- Willingness to collaborate in pilot project areas and support wider community rollout.

### 9.2.2.6 Next Steps

- Plan broader community engagement meetings facilitated by the *Ndunas* and ward councilors.
- Share project contact information such as the WhatsApp chatbot.
- Share presentation PowerPoint which will be presented at further Traditional Council Meetings.



Figure 3. The Save the Sand Team pictured at the Jongilanga traditional authority consulting with the *Ndunas*.

## 9.3 HOXANI TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

### 9.3.1 Hoxani Chief and Traditional Council

- Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025
- Location: Hoxani Traditional Authority Offices
- Primary Contact: Bayethe, Traditional Authority Representative

#### 9.3.1.1 Attendees

- Chief Bayethe and Hoxani Traditional Council Members
- Save the Sands Project Team (Richie Laburn, Jess Maclarty)
- Community Representatives (Cry Sithole, Lotus Khoza)

#### 9.3.1.2 Meeting Objectives

- To introduce the Save the Sands tree planting project to the Hoxani Traditional Authority, gain their endorsement for implementation in their region and address any questions or concerns.

#### 9.3.1.3 Discussion Points

- Project Introduction
  - Presented the Save the Sands project vision and goals.
  - Outlined the plan to plant indigenous and fruit trees along the Sabie-Sand River Catchments.
  - Explained the environmental benefits such as carbon sequestration, soil restoration, and biodiversity enhancement.
  - Highlighted economic opportunities for community members through tree cultivation and carbon credits.
- Project Implementation
  - Discussed the phased approach to tree planting in the Hoxani region.
  - Presented maps of potential areas to start planting.
  - Explained the selection criteria for tree species based on local conditions.
  - Outlined the support systems that would be provided to participants such as seedlings, tools and guidance.
- Training and Employment Opportunities
  - Presented the partnership with Good Work Foundation (GWF) Farming Academy
  - Outlined training programs available to community members:
    - ▶ Tree planting and maintenance techniques
    - ▶ Sustainable agricultural practices
    - ▶ Harvest and post-harvest handling
    - ▶ Digital monitoring of tree growth
  - Discussed certification opportunities and skills development pathways
  - Addressed questions about job creation opportunities through:



- ▶ GWF Tourism Academy hospitality training and placement
- ▶ Tracker Academy for wildlife tracking and nature guiding skills
- ▶ Direct employment in nursery operations and tree maintenance

#### ■ Pilot Project Partnerships

- Identified several local farmers as potential partners for initial pilot projects.
- Discussed criteria for pilot participant selection and benefits of early adoption.
- Outlined support systems for pilot farmers and expectations for demonstration plots.

#### 9.3.1.4 Questions and Answers Session

##### ■ Addressed questions relating to specific tree varieties to be planted in the region.

- Indigenous fruit trees (Marula, Wild Plum, African Mangosteen)
- Shade and timber species (*Combretum*, *Vachellia* varieties)
- Fast-growing indigenous trees for early carbon sequestration

##### ■ Clarified locations for initial planting areas:

- Focus on community lands next to water courses.
- Integration with existing agricultural areas.
- Strategic placement for erosion control.

#### 9.3.1.5 Outcomes

- The Hoxani Traditional Authority — represented by Bayethe — expressed interest in the project and its potential benefits to the community.
- Questions raised by council members were addressed, particularly about tree species selection and planting locations.
- Considerable interest was shown in the training opportunities through the GWF Farming Academy, with several council members requesting more details about enrolment.
- The employment pathways through the Tourism Academy and Tracker Academy were well-received, with enthusiasm for skills development that could lead to positions in nearby reserves and lodges.
- A preliminary list of potential pilot project farmers was established, with agreement to conduct follow-up individual consultations.
- The Traditional Authority gave their preliminary endorsement for the project to proceed to the next stage of community consultations.

#### 9.3.1.6 Next Steps

- Schedule broader community meetings to introduce the project to Hoxani residents.
- Conduct site assessments for initial planting areas with traditional representatives.
- Arrange individual meetings with identified pilot farmers.
- Develop a customised training schedule with GWF Farming Academy for interested community members.
- Create a detailed implementation timeline specific to the Hoxani region.
- Establish local points of contact for ongoing communication.
- The meeting concluded on a positive note, with an agreement to maintain open channels of communication throughout the project planning and implementation phases.





Figure 4. The Save the Sand project Team pictured at the Hoxani traditional authority consultation

### 9.3.2 *Ndunas* and Hoxani Traditional Council

- Date: 23 April 2025
- Location: Hoxani Traditional Authority

#### 9.3.2.1 Attendees:

- Ward councillors
- Save the Sand Representatives: Cry Sithole (Londolozzi Ripple Fund), William Liversage (C4 EcoSolutions), Mira Peter (C4 EcoSolutions), Dumisane (Lotus Impact Foundation)

#### 9.3.2.2 Meeting Objectives

- To introduce the Save the Sand project.
- To explain the project’s goals of planting trees to restore the environment, create sustainable livelihoods and increase carbon sequestration.
- To answer questions and receive input or concerns.

### 9.3.2.3 Discussion Points

#### ■ Overview

- The team presented an overview of the project aimed at ecological restoration, focusing on the planting of 3.5 million using fruit and nut trees and reforestation of degraded areas.
- Emphasised environmental benefits of the project such as improved water retention, reduced erosion, biodiversity recovery and carbon capture.
- Outlined socio-economic benefits: food security through fruit and nut production, job creation and carbon credit income.

#### ■ Environmental Challenges and Solutions

- Addressed local environmental issues such as soil degradation, invasive species and deforestation.
- Discussed the ecological benefits of removing invasive plants and restoring natural vegetation to restore eroded areas, stabilise riverbanks and improve water quality.

#### ■ Socio-Economic Opportunities

- The project's objective to support sustainable livelihoods by training community members in tree care, harvesting fruits and nuts and sustainable agriculture.
- Participants will be given access to tools, seedlings and educational workshops through FEADT-SA.
- Employment opportunities include tree planting, nursery management and removing invasive species.

#### ■ Carbon Credits and Long-Term Participation

- Explained how carbon sequestration works and how communities can earn from carbon credits by maintaining trees.
- Trees must be grown for 40+ years to ensure project success and to qualify for full carbon credit benefits.

#### ■ Participation Criteria and Inclusion

- Open to all community members with access to land (home gardens, grazing areas and croplands).
- Voluntary participation, with no cost to sign up.
- Sign-up can be done through the WhatsApp chatbot or through local liaisons and organisations.

### 9.3.2.4 Community Questions, Feedback and Concerns

- Community members raised questions about the types of trees, land access, income potential and long-term commitments.
- Suggestions included increasing outreach, improving clarity on benefits and ensuring transparency and ongoing support.
- Emphasised the need to “see before believing” — visual results will create trust and broader participation.
- Questions on whether the person who receives the tree owns it and any produce from it.





## 9.4 MATHIBELA TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

### 9.4.1 Mathibela Traditional Council

- Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025
- Location: Mathibela Traditional Authority Council Chambers
- Primary Presenter: Save the Sands Project Team

#### 9.4.1.1 Attendees

- Mathibela Traditional Authority Leadership
- Traditional Council Members
- Community Representatives
- Save the Sands Project Team

#### 9.4.1.2 Meeting Objectives

- To introduce the Save the Sands tree planting project to the Mathibela Traditional Authority, present the FPIC process and gather initial feedback from traditional leadership.

#### 9.4.1.3 Discussion Points:

- Project Introduction
  - Presented the Save the Sands project vision to plant 3.5 million indigenous and fruit trees along the Sabie-Sand River Catchments.
  - Explained the environmental and economic co-benefits of the project.
  - Outlined the carbon credit system and how it would benefit participating community members.
  - Discussed the implementation timeline and phased approach.
- Community Engagement Process
  - Detailed the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles guiding the project.
  - Explained how community members would be invited to participate through the WhatsApp channel.
  - Outlined the support systems available to participants, including training and technical assistance.
  - Discussed the selection criteria for participants and priority areas.

#### 9.4.1.4 Feedback and Questions Session

- Listened to feedback from traditional leadership regarding:
  - Previous environmental initiatives in the area;
  - Community priorities and concerns;
  - Land use considerations; and
  - Traditional knowledge about local tree species
- Addressed questions about:
  - Tree species selection and compatibility with local conditions;



- Water requirements and management;
- Long-term maintenance responsibilities;
- Income potential and payment mechanisms; and
- Training programs and skills development.

9.4.1.5 Outcomes

- The Mathibela Traditional Authority expressed interest in learning more about the project details and its potential benefits for community members.
- Several council members raised questions that were addressed by the project team, providing valuable insights into local concerns and priorities.
- The Authority requested additional information about specific implementation aspects before making further commitments.

9.4.1.6 Next Steps

- Provide detailed written information about the project to the Traditional Authority.
- Schedule follow-up discussions with specific focus groups within the community.
- Conduct preliminary site assessments in collaboration with traditional representatives.
- Develop customised implementation plans that address the specific concerns raised.
- Maintain open communication channels with designated traditional representatives.
- The meeting concluded with an agreement to continue discussions following the Traditional Authority's internal deliberations on the proposed project.



Figure 6. Save the Sand project team picture at the Mathibela traditional authority.

## 9.4.2 Mathibela *Ndunas*, Traditional Council and Community Members

- Date: 23 April 2025
- Location: Jongilanga Traditional Authority

### 9.4.2.1 Attendees

- Jongilanga Traditional Authority *Ndunas*, Council and Community members.
- Save the Sand Representatives: Cry Sithole (Londolzi Ripple Fund), William Liversage (C4 EcoSolutions), Mira Peter (C4 EcoSolutions), Dumisane (Lotus Impact Foundation)

### 9.4.2.2 Meeting Objectives

- To introduce the Save the Sand project.
- To explain the project's goals of planting trees to restore the environment, create sustainable livelihoods and increase carbon sequestration.
- To answer questions and receive input or concerns

### 9.4.2.3 Discussion Points

- Overview
  - The team presented an overview of the project aimed at ecological restoration, focusing on the planting of 3.5 million fruit and nut trees and the reforestation of degraded areas.
  - Emphasised environmental benefits of the project such as improved water retention, reduced erosion, biodiversity recovery and carbon capture.
  - Outlined socio-economic benefits such as food security through fruit and nut production, job creation and carbon credit income.
- Environmental Challenges and Solutions
  - Addressed local environmental issues such as soil degradation, invasive species and deforestation.
  - Discussed the ecological benefits of removing invasive plants and restoring natural vegetation to restore eroded areas, stabilise riverbanks and improve water quality.
- Socio-Economic Opportunities
  - The project's objective to support sustainable livelihoods by training community members in tree care, harvesting fruits and nuts and sustainable agriculture.
  - Participants will be given access to tools, seedlings and educational workshops through FEADT-SA.
  - Employment opportunities include tree planting, nursery management and removing invasive species.
- Carbon Credits and Long-Term Participation
  - Explained how carbon sequestration works and how communities can earn from carbon credits by maintaining trees.
  - Trees must be grown for 40+ years to ensure project success and to qualify for full carbon credit benefits.



#### ■ Participation Criteria and Inclusion

- Open to all community members with access to land (home gardens, grazing areas and croplands).
- Voluntary participation, with no cost to sign up.
- Sign-up can be done through the WhatsApp chatbot or through local liaisons and organisations.

#### 9.4.2.4 Community Questions, Feedback and Concerns

- Questions on where trees can be planted.
- Questions on whether market access can be created for fruits that are currently growing.
- Support for making Bushbuckridge a market centre.
- Suggestion:
  - Concerns about monoculture. Whether marulas be balanced with other trees, such as mangos.

#### 9.4.2.5 Outcomes

- General support from attendees, with interest in employment, skills training and income opportunities.
- Agreement on the importance of cultural preservation and Indigenous knowledge integration.
- Willingness to collaborate in pilot project areas and support wider community rollout.

#### 9.4.2.6 Next Steps

- Plan broader community engagement meetings facilitated by the ward councillors
- Share project contact information, such as the WhatsApp chatbot.
- Share the presentation PowerPoint, which will be presented at future Traditional Council Meetings.





### 9.5.1.3 Discussion Points

#### ■ Overview

- The team presented an overview of the project aimed at ecological restoration, focusing on planting 3.5 million fruit and nut trees and the reforestation of degraded areas.
- Emphasised environmental benefits of the project: improved water retention, reduced erosion, biodiversity recovery and carbon capture.
- Outlined socio-economic benefits: food security through fruit and nut production, job creation and carbon credit income.

#### ■ Environmental Challenges and Solutions

- Addressed local environmental issues such as soil degradation, invasive species and deforestation.
- Discussed the ecological benefits of removing invasive plants and restoring natural vegetation to restore eroded areas, stabilise riverbanks and improve water quality.

#### ■ Socio-Economic Opportunities

- The project's objective is to support sustainable livelihoods by training community members in tree care, harvesting fruits and nuts and sustainable agriculture.
- Participants will be given access to tools, seedlings and educational workshops through FEADT-SA.
- Employment opportunities include tree planting, nursery management and removing invasive species.

#### ■ Carbon Credits and Long-Term Participation

- Explained how carbon sequestration works and how communities can earn from carbon credits by maintaining trees.
- Trees must be grown for 40+ years to ensure project success and to qualify for full carbon credit benefits.

#### ■ Participation Criteria and Inclusion

- Open to all community members with access to land (home gardens, grazing areas and croplands).
- Voluntary participation, with no cost to sign up.
- Sign-up can be done through the WhatsApp chatbot or through local liaisons and organisations.

### 9.5.1.4 Community Questions, Feedback and Concerns

- Questions on ways to prevent the roots of the marula trees from damaging homes and buildings as they grow.
- Questions on ways to prevent cattle from trampling and damaging the trees planted in grazing areas.
- Questions on how the trees will be irrigated, as there are water access issues in the area.
- Questions on the types of marula trees that the project will be providing and whether these will be different from those currently growing in people's gardens.
- Questions on whether the trees will tolerate different soils in the area.



- Questions on whether market access can be created for fruits currently growing. Whether there are ways for the project to assist people to take them to market.
- Questions on ways to create short-term benefits that can support participants. This would include vegetable seeds and seedlings as well as support in selling these.

#### 9.5.1.5 Outcomes

- General support from attendees, with interest in employment, skills training and income opportunities.
- Agreement on the importance of cultural preservation and Indigenous knowledge integration.
- Willingness to collaborate in pilot project areas and support wider community rollout.
- The project will assess the feedback and address the concerns received.

#### 9.5.1.6 Next Steps

- Plan broader community engagement meetings facilitated by the *ndunas* and ward councillors
- Share project contact information such as the WhatsApp chatbot.
- Share presentation PowerPoint which will be presented at further Traditional Council Meetings.



Figure 8. The Save the Sand project team pictured at the Moletele traditional authority consultation.

## 9.6 MNISI TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY

### 9.6.1 Mnisi Traditional Council and Community Members

- Date: 25 April 2025
- Location: Mnisi Traditional Authority

#### 9.6.1.1 Attendees

- Mnisi Traditional Authority *Ndunas*, Council Members and community members.
- Save the Sand Representatives: Cry Sithole (Londolozu Ripple Fund), William Liversage (C4 EcoSolutions), Mira Peter (C4 EcoSolutions)

#### 9.6.1.2 Meeting Objectives

- To introduce the Save the Sand project.
- To explain the project's goals of planting trees to restore the environment, create sustainable livelihoods and increase carbon sequestration.
- To answer questions and receive input or concerns

#### 9.6.1.3 Discussion Points

- Overview
  - The team presented an overview of the project aimed at ecological restoration, focusing on planting 3.5 million fruit and nut trees and the reforestation of degraded areas.
  - Emphasised environmental benefits of the project such as improved water retention, reduced erosion, biodiversity recovery and carbon capture.
  - Outlined socio-economic benefits such as food security through fruit and nut production, job creation and carbon credit income.
- Environmental Challenges and Solutions
  - Addressed local environmental issues such as soil degradation, invasive species and deforestation.
  - Discussed the ecological benefits of removing invasive plants and restoring natural vegetation to restore eroded areas, stabilise riverbanks and improve water quality.
- Socio-Economic Opportunities
  - The project's objective to support sustainable livelihoods by training community members in tree care, harvesting fruits and nuts and sustainable agriculture.
  - Participants will be given access to tools, seedlings and educational workshops through FEADT-SA.
  - Employment opportunities include tree planting, nursery management and removing invasive species.
- Carbon Credits and Long-Term Participation
  - Explained how carbon sequestration works and how communities can earn from carbon credits by maintaining trees.



- Trees must be grown for 40+ years to ensure project success and to qualify for full carbon credit benefits.

■ Participation Criteria and Inclusion

- Open to all community members with access to land (home gardens, grazing areas and croplands).
- Voluntary participation, with no cost to sign up.
- Sign-up can be done through the WhatsApp chatbot or through local liaisons and organisations.

9.6.1.4 Community Questions, Feedback and Concerns

- No questions were raised

9.6.1.5 Outcomes

- General support from attendees, with interest in employment, skills training and income opportunities.
- Willingness to collaborate in pilot project areas and support wider community rollout.

9.6.1.6 Next Steps

- Plan broader community engagement meetings facilitated by the ward councillors
- Share project contact information such as the WhatsApp chatbot.
- Share presentation PowerPoint which will be presented at further Traditional Council Meetings.



Figure 9. The Save the Sand project team is pictured at the Mnisi traditional authority.

## 9.7 TEN TREES PROJECT

### 9.7.1 Ten Trees Project Participants

- Date: 29 April 2025
- Location: Ten Trees Project, Acornhoek

#### 9.7.1.1 Attendees

- Ten Trees Project participants.
- Trygive Nxumalo, Ten Trees Project manager.
- Save the Sand Representatives: Cry Sithole (Londolozzi Ripple Fund), William Liversage (C4 EcoSolutions), Mira Peter (C4 EcoSolutions).

#### 9.7.1.2 Meeting Objectives:

- To introduce the Save the Sand project.
- To explain the project's goals of planting trees to restore the environment, create sustainable livelihoods and increase carbon sequestration.
- To answer questions and receive input or concerns

#### 9.7.1.3 Discussion Points:

- Overview
  - The team presented an overview of the project aimed at ecological restoration, focusing on the planting of 3.5 million fruit and nut trees and the reforestation of degraded areas.
  - Emphasised environmental benefits of the project such as improved water retention, reduced erosion, biodiversity recovery and carbon capture.
  - Outlined socio-economic benefits such as food security through fruit and nut production, job creation and carbon credit income.
- Environmental Challenges and Solutions
  - Addressed local environmental issues such as soil degradation, invasive species and deforestation.
  - Discussed the ecological benefits of removing invasive plants and restoring natural vegetation to restore eroded areas, stabilise riverbanks and improve water quality.
- Socio-Economic Opportunities
  - The project's objective to support sustainable livelihoods by training community members in tree care, harvesting fruits and nuts and sustainable agriculture.
  - Participants will be given access to tools, seedlings and educational workshops through FEADT-SA.
  - Employment opportunities include tree planting, nursery management and removing invasive species.
- Carbon Credits and Long-Term Participation
  - Explained how carbon sequestration works and how communities can earn from carbon credits by maintaining trees.



- Trees must be grown for 40+ years to ensure project success and to qualify for full carbon credit benefits.
- Participation Criteria and Inclusion
  - Open to all community members with access to land (home gardens, grazing areas and croplands).
  - Voluntary participation, with no cost to sign up.
  - Sign-up can be done through the WhatsApp chatbot or through local liaisons and organisations.

#### 9.7.1.4 Community Questions, Feedback and Concerns

- The ‘permaculture warriors’ welcome the information provided by the project and would like to learn more about the carbon market and land degradation.

#### 9.7.1.5 Outcomes

- General support from attendees, with interest in employment, skills training and income opportunities.
- Agreement on the importance of cultural preservation and Indigenous knowledge integration.
- Willingness to collaborate in pilot project areas and support wider community rollout.
- The Ten Trees Project team will email any suggestions or feedback they have for the team regarding project implementation and methods to reach as many people as possible. They emphasise the need to have a positive impact in the area.

#### 9.7.1.6 Next Steps:

- Plan broader community engagement meetings facilitated by the Ten Trees Project, *Ndunas* and ward councillors.
- Share project contact information such as the WhatsApp chatbot.
- Share presentation PowerPoint which will be presented at further Traditional Council Meetings.





Figure 10. The Save the Sand project team pictured at Trygive and Susan's community garden during the Ten Trees Project consultation.

## 9.8 DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT (DFFE)

- Date: 22 May 2025
- Location: Online meeting — Microsoft Teams

### 9.8.1.1 Contacts

- Primary Contact: Steven Matsea (Forestry Development, DFFE)
- DG: Nomfundo Tshabalala
- Steve Matsea: Manager, Forestry Development

### 9.8.1.2 Attendees

- Steven Matsea – DFFE (National Greening Program Lead, Pretoria)
- Michael Modise – DFFE Representative
- Shirley – Mpumalanga Provincial Representative
- Nakeni Khoza – Provincial Program Lead
- Richie Laburn – Save the Sand Project Lead
- Karl van Vuuren – General Manager, FEADT-SA

### 9.8.1.3 Meeting Objectives

- Present current tree planting and nursery propagation activities under the Save the Sand Project.
- Align project activities with DFFE’s 10 Million Trees and 1 Million Trees programs.
- Explore collaborative opportunities for propagation, distribution and carbon alignment.
- Discuss potential alignment with Indigenous Tree Day (24 September).

### 9.8.1.4 Discussion Points:

- National and Provincial DFFE Programs
  - Mpumalanga is running a ten million trees program focused on urban and rural greening, with emphasis on household-level food security.
  - A new one million trees initiative has launched.
  - The Woodland and Indigenous Forest Management (WIFM) unit oversees indigenous forests.
  - No catchment-based greening programs are currently active—identified as a gap.
- Nursey and Propagation Activities
  - First batch of 8,000 Marula trees at Nelspruit Campus
  - Next batch planning: additional Marula trees
  - Avocado trees part of Cultivate Trading program
  - Planning Litchi and Mango tree propagation
  - Air-pot technology adoption to improve survival rates
  - Agricultural Research Council partnerships for trials and planting programs
  - Infrastructure focus on decreasing mortality rates through grafting
  - Making provision for future trees with improved techniques
- FEADT-SA
  - Experience in worldwide tree propagation
  - Focus remains Save the Sand project and restitution properties
- Collaboration Opportunities
  - Potential SANBI collaboration and Green Climate Fund funding
  - Need to register Save the Sand project for funding access
  - Indigenous Tree Day alignment (September 24th)
  - Integration with ten million trees program

### 9.8.1.5 Outcomes:

- Richie to submit a 2-page concept note early next week covering:
  - Project overview
  - Collaboration possibilities
  - Propagation plans
  - Carbon credits framework
  - 24th September alignment
  - Ten million trees program integration



- DFFE to provide a letter of endorsement for funding purposes
- <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/forestry-fisheries-and-environment-commemorates-indigenous-tree-day-15-apr>
- [https://www.dffe.gov.za/fom\\_projectsprogrammes\\_tenmilliontrees](https://www.dffe.gov.za/fom_projectsprogrammes_tenmilliontrees)

#### 9.8.1.6 Next Steps: Strategic alignment

- Present Save the Sand as flagship model for national scaling
- Create integrated approach beyond tree planting
- Focus on understanding current DFFE initiatives
- DFFE role: enable environment for engagement and funding
- Infrastructure development for collection facilities

## 9.9 BUSHBUCKRIDGE MUNICIPALITY CLIMATE CHANGE WORKSHOP

- Date: May 29, 2025
- Location: Lillydale, Mhlahle primary school

#### 9.9.1.1 Attendees

- Kruger National Park
- Lima Foundation
- Ntirhisano nursery
- Londolozzi Ripple fund
- Save the Sand
- Swikoxeni waste management
- SAPS - calculta
- Department of Health
- Sanco
- BLM -bush buck ridge local municipality
- Sabi sand Nature Reserve

#### 9.9.1.2 Summary

- Project Context
  - This report documents community engagement activities related to the Save the Sand tree planting project, an ARR carbon credits initiative focused on ecosystem restoration in the Sabie and Sand River catchments surrounding Kruger National Park.
- Stakeholder Engagement Overview
  - The consultation involved multiple stakeholder groups working collaboratively on tree planting education and implementation, demonstrating strong community alignment with project objectives.
- Participants and Their Alignment
  - Kruger National Park (KNP): Provided direct logistical support by bringing trees to the engagement event, demonstrating institutional commitment to restoration efforts



- Local schoolchildren and youth: Showed high levels of enthusiasm and engagement in both learning about and participating in tree planting activities
- Community members: Participated actively in discussions about river protection and sustainable land use practices
- Bushbuckridge community representatives: Expressed strong support for expanding these initiatives

#### ■ Evidence of Community Understanding & Support

- The engagement demonstrated clear community comprehension of project benefits:
- Environmental benefits: Participants understood the connection between tree planting and river protection
- Economic opportunities: Community recognized multiple income streams from trees including fruit, nuts, marula, and other forest products
- Climate impact: Discussions successfully connected local tree planting to broader climate change mitigation

#### ■ Youth Engagement & Capacity Building

- Particularly notable was the responsiveness of young participants who:
- Actively participated in hands-on tree planting activities
- Demonstrated understanding of tree care and maintenance requirements
- Expressed enthusiasm for continued involvement in restoration activities
- Showed clear grasp of the environmental importance of the work

#### 9.9.1.3 Community Recommendations

- Strong consensus emerged that expanding these engagement activities would create significant positive impact across the Bushbuckridge community. The success of this initial consultation suggests high receptivity to the Save the Sand project's restoration objectives.





Figure 11. Stakeholders pictured at the climate change workshop

## 9.10 LONDOLOZI GAME RESERVE

### 9.10.1 Londolozi Staff Presentation

- Date: Tuesday, April 22, 2025
- Location: Londolozi Ubuntu Staff Camp
- Facilitators: William Liversage and Mira Peter, C4ES Project Team
- Participants: Londolozi Game Reserve staff (field, hospitality and management personnel)

#### 9.10.1.1 Introduction & Purpose of Meeting

- The objective of the meeting was to introduce the Londolozi staff to the Save the Sand Project and to explain the principles and purpose of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
- The session was used to share information about the project's goals and to gain feedback, suggestions or concerns from the Londolozi staff.

### 9.10.1.2 Summary of Presentation

- **Project Overview:** The Save the Sand Project is a carbon and ecosystem restoration initiative operating in the Sabie-Sand River catchment. It aims to restore degraded landscapes, plant 3.5 million fruit and nut trees and support sustainable agriculture.
- **FPIC Explained:** Participants were informed about the concept of FPIC, summarised below:
  - *Free* – Participation is entirely voluntary.
  - *Prior* – Communities and stakeholders are engaged before any activity begins.
  - *Informed* – All relevant information is made available in a clear and transparent manner.
  - *Consent* – Community members can choose to join or opt out without pressure.
- **Catchment Context:** The Sabi Sand catchment is ecologically significant but exhibits degradation resulting from invasive species (e.g., black wattle, lantana), droughts, erosion, and habitat loss.
- **Project Activities:**
  - Planting of 3.5 million fruit and nut trees.
  - Restoration of forest ecosystems and riparian zones.
  - Introduction of alternative livelihoods: fruit and nut harvesting, nursery operations, agroforestry and eco-product processing (e.g., marula oil).
  - Climate resilience strategies and carbon credit generation through verified measurement of tree growth and carbon sequestration.
- **Points from the Discussion**
  - **Carbon Credits:** Staff expressed interest in understanding how carbon credits are calculated and monetised. The facilitators explained that credits are generated by measuring carbon absorbed through tree growth and these benefits can be measured and paid for by companies and organisations seeking emissions offsets.
  - **Inclusivity:** Clarified that participation is not limited to traditional farmers. Households, workers with gardens and even those with small plots can benefit.
  - **Tree Types and Water Use:** Concerns were raised regarding water availability and how tree types will be selected for different zones. Facilitators confirmed indigenous, drought-tolerant species will be prioritised and practices like mulching will be taught to support water retention.
- **Local Economic Opportunities:** Staff highlighted the need for involvement in:
  - Seedling propagation and nursery management.
  - Transport, harvesting and product value chains.
  - Invasive species removal and landscape restoration.
  - **Training & Support:** Facilitators outlined a plan for continuous training and support visits, and tools to assist participants in managing their trees and land.
- **FPIC and Participation Pathways**
  - **Voluntary Participation:** Emphasis was placed on FPIC, with messaging that no one is obligated to participate.



#### ■ Sign-Up Mechanisms:

- Save the Sand WhatsApp chatbot.
- Direct communication through the project website or community partners.
- Representation Options: Communities can choose how they wish to be represented (self-representation, local leaders, or family-based decision-making structures).

#### 9.10.1.3 Feedback & Community Suggestions

- Use visual storytelling, local WhatsApp groups and informal gatherings to spread information.
- Integrate project messaging into staff briefings and use local ambassadors to reach broader audiences.
- Prioritise visible differences in land quality and equity of benefit distribution as motivators for wider uptake.

#### 9.10.1.4 Next Steps & Action Points

- Establish a liaison channel with Londolozi's sustainability team.
- Provide informational materials in digital and visual formats.
- Follow-up session to explore pilot partnerships and nursery or agroforestry training sessions.

#### 9.10.1.5 Conclusion

- The Londolozi staff expressed strong interest in participating in the project and contributing to restoring the ecological health of the reserve's surrounding catchment.
- The dialogue was constructive, with attendees raising thoughtful questions around implementation, equity and sustainability.
- The Save the Sand team emphasised their commitment to collaborative design and reiterated that this was just the beginning of an ongoing partnership.





Figure 12. The Save the Sand project team pictured at Londolozzi during the trialling of the stakeholder engagement presentations.

## 9.11 GOOD WORK FOUNDATION NETWORK ENGAGEMENTS

### 9.11.1 Staff and Students at the Good Work Foundation, Hosanna Church and Praise Tabernacle Church

- Date: 21 April–1 May 2025
- Location: Good Work Foundation Campus, Hazyview

#### 9.11.1.1 Attendees

- Good Work Foundation staff and students
- Save the Sand Representatives: William Liversage (C4 EcoSolutions), Mira Peter (C4 EcoSolutions).

#### 9.11.1.2 Meeting Objectives:

- To introduce the Save the Sand project.
- To explain the project’s goals of planting trees to restore the environment, create sustainable livelihoods and increase carbon sequestration.
- To answer questions and receive input or concerns

### 9.11.1.3 Discussion Points:

#### ■ Overview

- The team presented an overview of the project aimed at ecological restoration, focusing on the planting of 3.5 million fruit and nut trees and the reforestation of degraded areas.
- Emphasised environmental benefits of the project such as improved water retention, reduced erosion, biodiversity recovery and carbon capture.
- Outlined socio-economic benefits such as food security through fruit and nut production, job creation and carbon credit income.

#### ■ Environmental Challenges and Solutions

- Addressed local environmental issues such as soil degradation, invasive species and deforestation.
- Discussed the ecological benefits of removing invasive plants and restoring natural vegetation to restore eroded areas, stabilise riverbanks and improve water quality.

#### ■ Socio-Economic Opportunities

- The project's objective to support sustainable livelihoods by training community members in tree care, harvesting fruits and nuts and sustainable agriculture.
- Participants will be given access to tools, seedlings and educational workshops through FEADT-SA.
- Employment opportunities include tree planting, nursery management and removing invasive species.

#### ■ Carbon Credits and Long-Term Participation

- Explained how carbon sequestration works and how communities can earn from carbon credits by maintaining trees.
- Trees must be grown for 40+ years to ensure project success and to qualify for full carbon credit benefits.

#### ■ Participation Criteria and Inclusion

- Open to all community members with access to land (home gardens, grazing areas and croplands).
- Voluntary participation, with no cost to sign up.
- Sign-up can be done through the WhatsApp chatbot or through local liaisons and organisations.

### 9.11.1.4 Community Questions, Feedback and Concerns

- Questions on whether participants could choose the types of trees they plant.
- Whether vegetable seeds and seedlings would be included in the project.

### 9.11.1.5 Outcomes

- General support from attendees, with interest in employment, skills training and income opportunities.



### 9.11.1.6 Next Steps

- Plan broader information sharing with the Good Work Foundation.
- Share project contact information such as the WhatsApp chatbot.



Figure 13. William Liversage pictured at several information sharing sessions held at the GWF Hazyview campus and with smallholder farmers.

## 9.12 BUSHBUCKRIDGE FARMERS ASSOCIATION ENGAGEMENT

### 9.12.1 Farmers Association, Government, and Development Partners

- Date: 7 June 2025
- Location: Organ Nyathi West's Farm, Allandale, Amashangana Traditional Authority

### 9.12.2 Attendees

- Government Agencies:
  - Department of Agriculture, DARDLEA
  - Department of Agriculture, Mpumalanga

- Development Organisations:
  - Timbavati Foundation
  - Lindalo Inclusive South Africa
  - AWARD (Agricultural Water Research & Development)
- Farmer Representatives:
  - Bushbuckridge Farmers Association
  - Kariso Muroro Farming (Lydenburg)
  - Mr. Monereng (Pest Control Chochoco)
- Private Sector:
  - Save the Sand (represented by Cry Sithole)

#### 9.12.2.1 Meeting Objectives

- To share information about the Save the Sand project and tree-planting activities.
- To explore partnership opportunities with local farmers and the Farmers Association.
- To discuss pathways for funding access and agricultural quality improvement.
- To develop market linkages to support farmer livelihoods.

#### 9.12.3 Discussion Points

##### 9.12.3.1 Project Overview and Information Sharing

- Farmers received comprehensive information about the Save the Sand project, including tree-planting targets and ecosystem restoration goals.
- Project alignment with agricultural development and sustainability objectives was emphasised.
- The presence of government and development partners reinforced project credibility and validation.

##### 9.12.3.2 Farmer Engagement and Partnership Mechanisms

- Farmers expressed strong interest in participating in the project.
- The Bushbuckridge Farmers Association's membership structure was identified as a potential formal pathway for facilitating FPIC consent and broader engagement.
- The association's network provides a valuable mechanism for extended outreach across the Bushbuckridge region.

##### 9.12.3.3 Opportunities for Agricultural Quality Improvement

- Discussions included improving agricultural practices to meet carbon credit requirements.
- Identified the need for regular capacity building and training in sustainable farming techniques.

##### 9.12.3.4 Market Linkages and Funding Access

- Stakeholders explored opportunities for linking farmers to markets and facilitating funding access for inputs and farm improvements.



- Collaborative partnerships with development organisations were discussed as a means of strengthening these pathways.

#### 9.12.3.5 Community Feedback and Observations

- The session was well attended and generated strong interest from farmers across diverse geographical areas (Bushbuckridge to Lydenburg).
- Extended meeting duration (until 15:30) reflected the high level of stakeholder engagement and interest.
- Positive reception was noted, with participants expressing enthusiasm for project participation and collaboration.

#### 9.12.3.6 Outcomes

- Identified the Farmers Association network as a viable consent and engagement channel.
- Commitment to develop a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with association leadership.
- Plans initiated to map production capabilities and geographic spread of member farmers.

#### 9.12.3.7 Next Steps

- Evaluate the Farmers Association membership fee structure for potential integration with the project consent process
- Draft and negotiate an MoU with the Farmers Association leadership
- Initiate mapping of production capabilities and engagement planning with farmer representatives
- Maintain regular engagement with the Farmers Association network to foster sustained collaboration





Figure 14. Farmers Association meeting

## 10 ANNEX II: STAKEHOLDER MONITORING

### 10.1 IMPACT INDICATORS

Monitoring practices will measure social, economic and environmental outcomes in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The monitoring framework is designed to assess both direct and indirect benefits generated through project activities, with reference to established SDG indicators. Areas of focus include job creation, livelihood diversification, agricultural market access, income generation, ecosystem services and gender equity.

Monitoring will be structured around the following components:

- **SDG-Aligned Indicators:** Each monitoring domain corresponds to a recognised SDG target, such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Indicators include metrics such as the number of jobs created, changes in household income, market access for smallholders and uptake of agroforestry practices.
- **Net Impact Tracking:** Monitoring will assess net contributions to SDG indicators using project-specific metrics. For example, under SDG 1, impacts will be tracked through job creation records, beneficiary databases and income surveys. For SDG 13, contributions will be measured by agroforestry data and increases in local ecosystem services.
- **Disaggregated Data Collection:** All indicators will be monitored with disaggregation by age, gender, location and stakeholder group to ensure inclusive benefit distribution and equitable participation.
- **Standardised Monitoring Protocols:** A defined set of protocols will be used for each indicator, including employee records, beneficiary surveys, market access data, and field-based environmental assessments. Data will be collected at regular intervals based on indicator-specific frequencies and validated through field verification and community feedback mechanisms.
- **Feedback and Grievance Monitoring:** In addition to quantitative indicators, the project will maintain systems for capturing community feedback, including grievances, questions and concerns. These inputs will be used to adapt implementation and ensure accountability.

This integrated monitoring system supports adaptive management and provides the basis for ongoing evaluation of the project's contribution to sustainable development at the local level.

### 10.2 MONITORING TOOLS

Several monitoring tools will be used to ensure transparent, inclusive and responsive implementation of project activities. These tools support the documentation of participation, stakeholder feedback and decision-making across all stages of the project lifecycle.

#### 10.2.1.1 Save the Sand WhatsApp Chatbot:

A multilingual chatbot will be the primary platform for project communication and information-sharing. This chatbot will be used to respond to stakeholder queries and track participation, with data disaggregated by stakeholder group and location to identify communication gaps. The chatbot will also administer surveys and questionnaires to gather community feedback on selected SDG-aligned indicators, including those related to household income, market access, perceptions of well-being and adoption of agroforestry practices. This will enable data collection



across geographically dispersed communities and supports participatory monitoring. In addition, the chatbot will be used to log questions, concerns and grievances raised by stakeholders. These entries will be categorised and addressed through a grievance resolution process that includes response tracking, follow-up actions and escalation pathways as needed. While the chatbot increases accessibility and broader monitoring, it will complement other data collection tools, particularly for indicators requiring administrative records or field-based verification — such as employee data, biodiversity metrics and formal income reporting.

#### 10.2.1.2 Attendance and Participation Records

Attendance at meetings and consultations will be documented using disaggregated registers, categorised by stakeholder group and organisational affiliation. This will support analysis of representivity and identify groups requiring further engagement to ensure inclusive participation throughout the project lifecycle.

### 10.3 STAKEHOLDER MONITORING STRATEGY

The interest–influence matrix provides the basis for determining the frequency, method and intensity of stakeholder engagement across the project area. It classifies stakeholders along two dimensions: i) their level of interest in project outcomes; and ii) their ability to influence those outcomes. All stakeholders — irrespective of their influence or proximity to project activities — are included in decision-making, information dissemination and benefit monitoring to varying degrees.

#### 10.3.1.1 Low-to-Medium Interest and Low-to-Medium Influence

This group typically includes community members who are geographically distant from the project area or who do not rely directly on the affected natural resources. Engagement focuses on communication and regular updates on project milestones.

- **Engagement tools:** Biannual updates using the WhatsApp chatbot, community noticeboards, local radio and knowledge products produced by the project.
- **Engagement and monitoring format:** Periodic outreach during community events, with monitoring focused on information reach and responsiveness.

#### 10.3.1.2 Medium-to-High Interest and Low-to-Medium Influence

Stakeholders in this category include residents within the project area, school groups, women’s collectives, youth networks and community-based organisations. Engagement is more frequent and educational in nature, aimed at building technical understanding and awareness.

- **Engagement tools:** Community meetings, environmental education sessions, surveys and technical demonstrations.
- **Engagement and monitoring format:** Biannual interviews and questionnaires to gather feedback and track evolving priorities over time.

### 10.3.1.3 Low-to-Medium Interest and Medium-to-High Influence

This group includes regulatory officials, conservation agencies and traditional governance bodies who may not be directly dependent on local resources but have a central role in determining project outcomes.

- **Engagement tools:** Quarterly technical workshops and briefings.
- **Engagement and monitoring format:** Engagement prior to implementation of activities to receive formal input and ensure institutional alignment.

### 10.3.1.4 High Interest and High Influence

This group comprises traditional leaders, smallholder farmers, project participants and CPAs. These stakeholders are actively involved in project implementation and long-term participation.

- **Engagement tools:** Frequent consultations, technical briefings and feedback mechanisms.
- **Engagement and monitoring format:** Iterative and adaptive, with stakeholders involved in restoration planning, tree monitoring and benefit-sharing.

## 10.4 INFLUENCE-INTEREST MATRIX

To support engagement planning, all stakeholders were assessed using an influence–interest matrix<sup>47</sup> (Table 4). The frequency and methods to engage and monitor these stakeholders will vary based on their level of interest and influence on project activities.

Stakeholders were categorised based on four criteria:

- Proximity to and reliance on project area;
- Level of interest in proposed activities;
- Influence over project outcomes; and
- Vulnerability to project-related impacts.

This matrix-based engagement framework is intended to support adaptable monitoring which can be scaled over time. Stakeholder classifications, communication mechanisms and engagement frequencies are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Stakeholder monitoring strategy.

| Method        | Interest | Influence | Description of engagement | Frequency of engagement   |
|---------------|----------|-----------|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Engage</b> | High     | High      | Project updates           | Twice a year  |
|               |          |           | Environmental education   | During engagements (including inductions, surveys and outreach) |

<sup>47</sup> Richards M. 2011. Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment (SBIA) Manual for REDD+ Projects: Part 2 – Social Impact Assessment Toolbox. Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance and Forest Trends with Rainforest Alliance and Fauna & Flora International. Washington, DC.



| Method                | Interest       | Influence      | Description of engagement | Frequency of engagement  |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|--|
|                       |                |                |                           | Distribution of knowledge products<br>Twice a year   |
|                       |                |                |                           | Interviews, surveys and questionnaires<br>Twice a year   |
|                       |                |                |                           | Stakeholder engagement<br>Twice a year and before the implementation of new project activities |
| <b>Keep satisfied</b> | Medium to high | Medium to high |                           | Project updates<br>Annually  |
|                       |                |                |                           | Environmental education<br>During engagements (including inductions, surveys and outreach)     |
|                       |                |                |                           | Interviews, surveys and questionnaires<br>Where necessary                                      |
|                       |                |                |                           | Distribution of knowledge products<br>Twice a year   |
|                       |                |                |                           | Stakeholder engagement<br>Before the implementation of project activities                      |
| <b>Keep informed</b>  | Low to medium  | Low to medium  |                           | Project Updates<br>Twice a year  |
|                       |                |                |                           | Environmental education<br>During engagements (including inductions, surveys and outreach)     |
|                       |                |                |                           | Distribution of knowledge products<br>Twice a year   |
|                       |                |                |                           | Stakeholder engagement<br>Sporadic and before the implementation project activities            |
| <b>Monitor</b>        | Low to medium  | Low to medium  |                           | Project Updates<br>Twice a year  |
|                       |                |                |                           | Distribution of knowledge products<br>Twice a year   |
|                       |                |                |                           | Stakeholder engagement<br>Before the implementation of any project activities                  |

