



The Eco-DRR Project

A Story of People, Nature and Resilience in South Africa

Across South Africa, climate change is bringing stronger storms, longer and more intense droughts, and more frequent wildfires. Many communities—especially in rural and peri-urban areas—are already facing water shortages, damaged homes, failing crops and rising living costs. Climate change is already and will continue make these challenges harder to cope with.

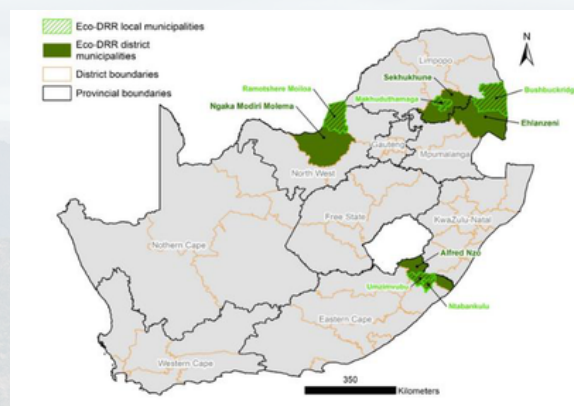
But there is hope. For generations, South Africans have depended on healthy wetlands, rivers, grasslands and mountains. These ecosystems naturally protect people by slowing floods, storing water and reducing wildfire risks. When they are damaged—by invasive plants, poor land management and degradation—communities become more vulnerable to climate change.

A New Way to Reduce Climate Risks

The Eco-DRR (Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction) project is built on a simple idea:

By restoring nature and managing the land wisely, people can be better protected from climate related disasters.

The project will work in four climate vulnerable districts: Alfred Nzo in the Eastern Cape, Ehlanzeni in Mpumalanga, Ngaka Modiri Molema in North West and Sekhukhune in Limpopo, over a period of 8 years.



What the Eco-DRR project will do

The Eco-DRR project will work through three interconnected programmes of work.

1. Restore landscapes

The project will clear invasive plants, restore wetlands and riverbanks, improve rangeland management and restore degraded catchments. These actions reduce flood damage, improve water quality, increase natural water storage and slow the spread of wildfires. Over 68,000 hectares will be restored or better managed.

2. Help communities prepare for disasters

The project will strengthen early warning systems for floods, droughts and wildfires. It will support municipalities, train local leaders and work with communities, so people know how to respond when disasters strike—helping protect more than 5.4 million people.

3. Support livelihoods—especially for women and youth

The project will create opportunities for youth employment and skills development and help women and young people build climate resilient livelihoods. Many already have deep ecological knowledge; the project will provide the training and partnerships needed to turn this into sustainable income. It will also help to unlock the financial flows required to sustain these livelihoods, ensuring that the benefits continue well beyond the life of the project.

Why It Matters

Local governments, particularly in rural districts, often face mounting climate risks with limited staff, budgets and technical capacity. When disasters hit, the costs—both financial and human—are far higher than what early action would have required. By restoring ecosystems and improving land management now, the Eco-DRR project will help reduce these long-term costs, strengthen public services, and build resilience where it is most urgently needed.

A Story of Resilience

The Eco-DRR project is ultimately about people—families facing drought, farmers fearing the next storm, and women walking long distances for water—and the landscapes that sustain them. By restoring ecosystems and empowering communities, the project helps build a safer, more resilient future for millions of South Africans.

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