

Building Coastal Links

As a community based organisation Coastal Links has presence in 21 coastal fishing communities in the Western Cape and Northern Cape. Its establishment was primarily based on ensuring that coastal fishing communities were in a position to mobilise themselves in order to secure their livelihoods and human rights. With a total membership of 1 858, Coastal Links consists of four regions with three of those regions being in the Western Cape and the Northern Cape serving as the fourth region. Each of the four regions has established branches and each branch has a committee with elected officials who represent them on the regional committee. Each region elects a regional secretary, chairperson and co-ordinator. The regional chairpersons and co-ordinators collectively form the Coastal Links Executive Committee. This executive meets every quarter and its meetings coincide with the joint Masifundise board meetings. As a consequence of its effective local branches, Coastal Links functions as an established mass based organisation in the majority of the rural fishing communities in the Western and Northern Cape.

Coastal Links held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Laaiplek on May 13 and 14, 2011. The AGM was preceded by sub-regional caucuses that sought to reach consensus on the leadership collective that should be entrusted with the task of taking the organisation forward. This continues to be a critical indicator that Coastal Links was maturing as an organisation. Apart from electing a new leadership the delegates at the AGM also deliberated and adopted resolutions on a number of issues. The AGM adopted the following resolutions:

1 STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF COASTAL LINKS:

This AGM resolves that there should be a conscious effort between all Coastal Links town to establish an exchange programme in order to share and learn from each other's successes. Furthermore this AGM resolves that the use of the "sms" system be increased so that Coastal Links members are better informed. This AGM also resolves that the youth programme be extended to other Coastal Links towns. This AGM resolves that Coastal Links should formally retain the current regional sub-structures but that in addition to this a council of chairpersons is established to facilitate the flow of information to all branches at operational level.

2 STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND YOUTH IN SMALL SCALE FISHERIES:

This AGM notes the eagerness of women and youth to get more involved in fisheries and therefore resolves to capacitate women and youth with skills that will enable them to make a living from fishing related activities, particularly through the new small scale fisheries policy.

3 FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE PETER CLOETE FUND:

This AGM notes that each member of Coastal Links should make a definite contribution towards the fund and resolves that the Coastal Links Executive should take the lead in this regard by initiating discussions at branch level. Furthermore this AGM resolves that the administration of this fund should be undertaken by the Coastal Links Executive in consultation with Masifundise.

4 FINALISATION OF THE SMALL SCALE FISHERIES POLICY'S IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:

This AGM resolves that Coastal Links will place increased pressure on DAFF to deliver the small scale fisheries policy and the relating implementation plan, through mass action and advocacy work.

5 MANAGEMENT OF AND ACCESS TO MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAs):

This AGM notes that small scale fishers should have access to marine protected areas in a controlled manner and resolves to ensure that fishers are fully integrated into the processes relating to the establishment of MPAs and the management thereof.

6 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GLOBAL INSTRUMENT ON SMALL SCALE FISHERIES:

The AGM notes the importance of ensuring that government presents a position at the United Nations Conference on Fisheries meeting that reflects the views of small scale fishers and therefore resolves to ensure that Coastal Links initiates regional/continental exchange programmes with other small scale fisheries organisations with a view to gathering inputs and developing a common position with which to lobby government.

7 THE ADDITION OF A "METROPOLE" DIVISION WITHIN COASTAL LINKS

This AGM notes the eagerness of the Khayelitsha branch of the Artisanal Fishers Association to join Coastal Links and agrees to include the fishers from Khayelitsha as a branch of Coastal Links within an added region of the Metropole.

On June 7, 2011 the newly elected Coastal Links executive convened its first executive meeting. Its primary aim was to review the organisational plan of action. This review was informed by the resolutions adopted at the last AGM.