

## **Coastal Links Chairperson's Report – AGM May 2011**

First and foremost I would like to thank our Heavenly Father for all the things He made possible for us this past year. Secondly I want to thank all the members of Coastal Links because without you, we as executive committee would be nothing. Then I want to thank the rest of the executive committee and the Masifundise team for their ongoing support and guidance throughout the year.

The year started off with winds of change blowing through our organization as new leadership was introduced onto the executive committee. It is with this in mind that I must say that we must always be ready for change in order to take our movement forward. We must be proud of this, because it shows that we are willing to allow our organization to grow and prosper.

I want to thank all the leaders who served this organization so diligently in the past, because without you there would be no new leaders.

### **The Small-scale Fisheries Policy**

We had tremendous success with the progression towards the finalization of the policy. After the long road that those before us treaded, we are finally on the verge of small-scale fishers being recognized by law and with the right to live out our traditional way of life. During the month of September 2010, a momentous occasion occurred when the constitutional court decided that big business have no case against the restitution of our rights. This signaled the final countdown towards the long awaited finalization of the policy. However I would fail if I do not mention the fact that this road was rocky and challenging and it took a lot of hard work from those who were here before us to bring us to the point where we are today. I want to assure those heroes that under your guidance we will make sure that, the dreams and goals that you set out to do; we will bring it to realization. You've given birth to this baby, you made this baby crawl, you made this baby walk, but now that this baby wants to run you are afraid that it may fall. Rest assured that sometimes this baby may fall but this baby will never lie down, this baby will always get up and start running again. The challenge that now lay before us, is to make sure that our voices are heard when the implementation plan is written.

### **Interim Relief**

The interim relief is ridden with problems. We've faced enormous challenges with the introduction of other organizations into the discussions with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry's and Fisheries (DAFF), in regards to the I.R. We must also be honest when we discuss the I.R. and say that a lot of the challenges we face were brought about by our own leaders firstly and secondly our members. If we don't make a serious effort to reduce and subsequently eradicate poaching, we will be faced with serious challenges in the future. I see the I.R. as a method that's making us lose focus of our goal to get the SSF-policy finalized and implemented. We are spending too much energy on trying to make this measure economically viable and it never will be, so let's re-focus and make sure the policy is finalized.

On the positive side I also see the I.R. as a trial run for the policy. A few vital lessons have been learned from the I.R. to make sure the policy works.

Without vessels and equipment the fishers are still reliable on those who benefited from the wrongs of the past. Without proper compliance, monitoring, reporting and management of the

resource, those who benefited from the wrongs of the past will still benefit. Without a comprehensive drive to educate our fishers in resource management, those who benefited from the wrongs of the past will still benefit. I would also want to see a similar structure as the Truth and Reconciliation Committee introduced, in order to give convicted poachers the chance to be given the opportunity to redeem themselves before the community.

### **Organizational Structure**

The current way of operation of Coastal Links is making waves across the continent and the world. The only thing that's lacking is more workshops on the lowest level which is at a town level. If we improve on that and encourage more youth to join Coastal Links we will ensure that Coastal Links will live for the next thousand years. Let us continue to encourage the youth that's been part of the youth program to stay involved with Coastal Links. The time has come for this program to be strengthened and introduced into the West Coast and Northern Cape. On another level I would also like to see that we improve on the high membership turnover rate and how we deal with the constant switching of members between organizations. Let us convince our members to start contributing financially to the betterment of their lives and livelihoods.

### **International Visits**

As all of us know, Coastal Links is a name that's being recognized more and more internationally. We are recognized as leaders in the fight for small scale fishers. In the last edition of the Fisher's Net, there's a full page devoted to Coastal Links' members international visits, that alone shows me that we have the capacity and the knowledge to take our fight forward, and break even international boundaries to achieve that. Let us never be afraid to step into the unknown, let our fear for those we leave behind never keep us from challenging the fears that lies ahead and let the fears of the boldness of the youth never keep us from allowing them to lead us into the future.

### **The Way Forward**

We are currently embarking on three (3) new programs simultaneously; a local initiative to start looking at how we can strengthen our relationship with Artisanal Fishers, a national footprint to expand Coastal Links into the remaining two fishing provinces and an African footprint to link Coastal Links with the rest of the continent, in order to strengthen our voice. All these present exciting opportunities and challenges, but no challenge can be bigger or more daunting than what we do everyday of our lives.

Some might ask, 'What man or woman in his right mind will get up in the early hours of the morning to go out and face an ocean?' All of us will answer, 'When the seawater courses through your veins, you will face an ocean'.

An ocean that is bigger then all the land we live on.

An ocean that is mightier than biggest "staal bak" ever built.

An ocean that has got more power then the biggest nuclear plant man has ever built.

An ocean that is faster then biggest motor man has ever built.

Yet we embrace this beauty of the Lord everyday.

We've been blessed with gorgeous sunsets and sunrises; we've been blessed with the beauty of dolphins swimming around us when we fish.

We've been blessed with a source of food fit for the table of a king.

We've been blessed with a resource that would allow ourselves to alleviate ourselves from poverty and a lack of education, a lack of food and a lack of jobs. Let us respect the ocean for its strength, for its beauty, for its abundance in riches and most of all let us respect the ocean for the generations to come.

With this I want to conclude and say that up to now it has been an honor for me to be part of this organization and for these brave fishermen and women to allow me to be the chairperson of this groundbreaking organization, I thank you.

**Christian Adams – CLinks Chairperson**