

## **The Role of Networks in Strengthening of Environmental Awareness and the Civil Society in Swaziland**

Author's name and affiliations: Mrs. Ireen Festus Namukoko Ng'ambi\*,  
Projects / Finance Coordinator  
Contact name: Green Living Movement (GLM) Swaziland  
Postal address: P.O BOX 9069, Mbabane, Swaziland  
E-mail address: ireengambi@gmail.com  
Telephone: +268 76305230



Mrs. Ireen Ng'ambi works for the Green Living Movement Swaziland and was one of the active founders of the organisation. Her main role is a finance coordinator under Organisational Capacity Building for Environmental Education and Community Development Project and previously she has been working for the sister organisation Green Living Movement in Zambia. She qualified in Certificate in Accounts and Business Studies (CABS) at Chipata Trades in Zambia in 1999 and has a Single Diploma in Project Management at Corporate Development and Training Centre in Swaziland in 2012. In addition, Mrs. Ng'ambi was appointed to be the contact person for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector (WASH).

Author's name and affiliations: Ms. Anni Salla, B.Sc, Project Coordinator  
Contact name: Green Living Movement (GLM) Finland  
Postal address: Kiskontie 11 A 6, 00280 Helsinki  
E-mail address: [anni.m.salla@gmail.com](mailto:anni.m.salla@gmail.com)  
Telephone: +358 503500134 / Skype: Anni Salla



Anni Salla is a volunteer in Green Living Movement Finland and a project coordinator under Organisational Capacity Building for Environmental Education and Community Development Project. She completed a Bachelor's Degree in Sustainable Development in Turku University of Applied Sciences in 2014. The topic of her thesis was project sustainability in development cooperation and she carried out her three months practical training in Swaziland in 2013. In fall 2015 she will start her Master's Degree Studies on Development Geography in the University of Helsinki.

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### **Abstract**

Organisational Capacity Building for Environmental Education and Community Development Project (2013-2014, second phase 2015-2016) is implemented in cooperation with Green Living Movement (GLM) Swaziland and Green Living Movement (GLM) Finland. The project aims to enhance the organisational capacity of GLM Swaziland and to increase environmental awareness in the two partner communities in the capital city Mbabane, namely Dlangeni and Msunduzi and one in the northwestern part of the country, namely Ngonini. The activities include training and education for the communities on dry sanitation, waste management and sustainable management of natural resources as well as

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workshops on organisational management for GLM Swaziland and other NGOs in order to strengthen the local civil society.

In order to change the models of operation in the society, multi-level cooperation is essential. Networking on a communal level is a way to reach individuals whereas cooperation with other NGOs and the authorities enables working with a greater volume. GLM Swaziland has been participating in the National WASH Stakeholder Coordination Forum where different stakeholders meet to discuss and to take part in workshops covering issues related to water, sanitation and hygiene. The forum is a good ground for networking with other NGOs and participants, which include higher-level actors such as the Ministry of Health. Networks have enabled dissemination of awareness on dry sanitation through requested trainings while cooperation with respected institutions such as the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) has supported GLM's credibility. Additionally, GLM is involved in extending PELUM Association to Swaziland, which is a major regional network for members of the civil society in Africa.

Networking with the authorities has enabled GLM to enter new communities and to attract new target groups. It has enhanced the capacity of the organisation and sustainability of the project enabling continuity and strengthening the cooperation. Additionally, GLM has gained essential experience on facilitation and a stable status as an NGO working on dry sanitation in Swaziland. The positive attitude towards the project themes on the communal, organisational and administrative level has been gained through consistent work in terms of forums, meetings and workshops. Training of Trainers (ToT) is a great tool for disseminating information and through actualization and visible results, the trained themes will attract even more interest.

With the support of its sister organisation in Finland and in Zambia, GLM Swaziland has gained a strong role in the growing civil society of Swaziland and has connected with actors in all levels of the society. Additionally, increased amount of requests to be trained indicates that the market for environmental education has mushroomed. GLM will continue networking with authorities and NGOs as well as other actors such as churches which play an important role in the communities.

### ***NETWORKING, COOPERATION, ENVIRONMENT, EDUCATION, CIVIL SOCIETY***

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## **The Role of Networks in Strengthening of Environmental Awareness and the Civil Society in Swaziland**

### **1. Introduction**

Swaziland is a land-locked country between South-Africa and Mozambique with a population of 1.2 million and it is the last absolute monarchy in Africa ruled by the King Mswati. Swaziland got its independence in 1968 after being a British protectorate from the beginning of the 20th century. Geographically versatile country includes mountainous areas in the North-West and lowveld in the South-East. That makes the climate as diverse. (CIA 2014.) One of the environmental challenges is soil erosion which is a cause of over-grazing and deforestation and enhanced by deep slopes and heavy rains. Another challenge is water pollution caused mainly by industry and agriculture but also domestic waste waters with insufficient or nonexistent water purification. (Encyclopedia of Nations.) In Swaziland around 160 children from the country's population die for diarrheal diseases annually and especially vulnerable for diseases are people with HIV/AIDS. Swaziland has the highest

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HIV/AIDS rate, 25 %, in the world. One third of the population does not have an access to a clean water source and forty percent do not have adequate sanitation facilities. (WaterAid.) The unemployment rate is high and the rural-urban migration has increased due to drought and lack of opportunities. Additionally, 70 % of the population is living on less than two dollars per day. Civil society in Swaziland is still rather young and the activity of it is hindered by restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. These restrictions are set by the government and despite the rights in the constitutions they are still somewhat undermined. However, the number of NGOs is relatively high and despite the restrictions, it is relatively vibrant.

Green Living Movement Swaziland (GLM Swaziland) is a registered non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to ensure environmental protection, sustainable community development and to help eradicate all forms of poverty. Green Living Movement was originally founded in 2000 by a group of six development enthusiasts in Zambia. GLM Swaziland was formed in 2009 under the Swaziland Companies Act no 7 of 1912. The organisation is built on environmental approach, but interacts at all areas of sustainable development, social, cultural, economical and ecological. GLM believes in a participatory and people centered development approach. The organisation has adopted the philosophy of a Chinese revolutionary Dr. James Yen as a guiding principle *“Unless you enter the lion’s den, you cannot get the cubs. Go into the community, live humbly with the people as one of them, learn from them, plan with them, start with what they know and build on what they have”*. Inspired by the philosophy, the organisation creates partnership with local communities and other development agents in the implementation of development interventions. It ensures capacity and the knowledge base are built among local communities to enable them to become managers of their own processes. The organisation members and volunteers spend substantial amount of time living, learning, sharing and planning with local communities. This approach is well framed in the organizing belief that the people who an intervention is meant to benefit must be part of the entire circle of a development undertaking from project identification to planning to implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

GLM Swaziland’s objectives are to promote environmental health and sustainability among communities in Swaziland. It supports community income generation and self-help initiatives as strategies for poverty alleviation, and promotes participation among communities as a way of cultivating collective responsibilities towards social change. It also contributes to the fight against HIV/AIDS through creation of awareness and by providing education and information to young people on causes, prevention and strategies for mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS. GLM Swaziland advocates for and support policies, national and global initiatives that support the plight of poor communities, and provides knowledge and skills for developing community leadership as a strategy for attaining community ownership of development interventions. Additionally, it documents, communicates, and shares experiences of Green Living Movement Swaziland to/with likeminded national and international organisations.

## 2. Project Background

Organisational Capacity Building for Environmental Education and Community Development Project (2013-2014, second phase 2015-2016) is implemented in cooperation with GLM Swaziland and GLM Finland and it is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The project aims to enhance the organisational capacity of GLM Swaziland and to increase environmental awareness in the three partner communities. Msunduza is the oldest township in the capital city Mbabane and a semi-rural area with about 16 000 inhabitants; rural Dlangeni is situated 30 km north-east of Mbabane and have about 7 000 inhabitants; the third community Ngonini was included into the project in its second phase and it is located in the North Western part of the country.

GLM Swaziland works in close cooperation with the communities and it is organizing trainings on dry sanitation, waste management, sustainable use of natural resources, agroforestry and climate change. It

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supports the building of composting dry toilets and drop-off points as well as establishment of agroforestry fields. Additionally, it aims to develop as a non-governmental organisation and to strengthen its capacity in order to gain steady status and continuity to its activities by enhancing its management skills. It also organizes workshops for other NGOs on organisational management. Training of Trainers (ToT) is a key method in disseminating information. Trainers are educated on teaching methods, leadership skills, conflict management, event organizing skills and communication and encouraged in their work in providing education on such themes further in their respective communities. GLM Swaziland aims strongly to create networks for NGOs and enterprises as well as to develop arenas for learning and community participation. It also supports creation of Community Development Committees in each project community and has a Project Steering Committee of which members consist of representatives from the communities and the City Council.

### 3. Implementation

Networking within the civil society means different kind of social groups, organisations and individuals coming together to pursue their common objectives in social development and democratic governance. It enables all the actors to share experiences, to coordinate policies, programs and activities, to search for common funding and to implement joint projects. Networks are also good forums to get peer support. GLM Swaziland aims to network with other NGOs and individuals working in the field of sustainable development but also with the administrative, educational institutions and institutional structures within the project communities. Additionally, it has contacts with organisations outside the country.

#### 3.1. Administrative and organisational level

GLM Swaziland is participating in the WASH Forum Swaziland where different stakeholders meet on a monthly basis to discuss on various issues especially on water, sanitation and hygiene. The forum is convened monthly by UNICEF and it works also as a secretariat in the meetings. The chairperson is appointed by Director of Water Affairs in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy (MoNRE). The forum is open for organisations, institutions, and citizens who are interested in water, sanitation, and hygiene initiatives. The objectives of the WASH Forum is to spread awareness on WASH subjects in Swaziland, to enhance networking between different stakeholders working in the field of WASH, to share knowledge, experiences and best practices to be used in future WASH initiatives and to monitor and evaluate projects by the member stakeholders. Other partners involved in the WASH Forum are Micro-Projects which falls under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, U-Tech College, University students, Vusumnotfo, Water Aid, Gone Rural boMake, COSPE, Swaziland Conference of churches, City Council of Mbabane, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries – Swaziland now with Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and the University of Swaziland. Some NGOs have suffered from lack of funding and thus became inactive but have been encouraged by the Forum to keep up the activities with any resources available. The meetings give opportunities for stakeholders to present their activities and themes and to share information, knowledge and experiences. Members also attend each other's workshops and the Forum can call up consultants for specific activities. Additionally, members of the Forum attend different kind of events such as World Toilet Day and World Water Day which are also great opportunities to form new links to other actors in development and to share information.

During the meetings with WASH members GLM Swaziland interacts with different organisations and during the presentations of the activities some organisations have become interested in the work of GLM. Vusumnotfo Community Based Organisation is an NGO working in the field of community capacity building and child education. Cooperation with Vusumnotfo started to widen as more information on dry sanitation, organic gardening was shared. When developing the proposal for continuation for the Organisational Capacity Building for Environmental Education and Community Development project Vusumnotfo showed their interest in participating in the project. Thus GLM

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Swaziland involved Ngonini as one of the project communities. Vusumnotfo is interested in dry sanitation since they are promoting and practicing permaculture and they will be Training of Trainers in the community of Ngonini.

GLM Swaziland is also involved in extending of PELUM (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management) Association to Swaziland, which is a major regional network for members of the civil society in Africa established in 1995. It is a civil society member driven regional network of over 220 member organisations that are farmer based, working for rural development in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. Since then PELUM Association has been working to improve the livelihoods of small-holder farmers and the sustainability of farming communities, by fostering Ecological Land Use Management. To date, the network operates in ten (10) in east, central and southern Africa; Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Head office is based in Zambia. Preparations are under way to expand to Burundi, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Swaziland where GLM Swaziland falls. At the time of its inception, an environment that made it hard for smallholder farming communities to prosper and prevail inspired the emergence of PELUM Association. In recent times, this environment is complicated further by a range of regional, continental and global factors that further work against smallholders' livelihood and survival. Therefore, the Association aims at both linking islands of success in promoting farmers' interests as well as enhancing the capacity of its members to more effectively innovate and enhance farmer –led livelihood processes. In the face of regional economic and political clusters, it has become even more desirable for organisations serving vulnerable communities including small-scale farmers to strengthen their regional groupings too if they have influence regional and national policies and to face up the powerful multi-national corporations whose primary interest is to reap profits. PELUM Association hence is in pole position to take up the role of a regional watch-dog. (Pelum Association.)

As an organisation GLM Swaziland is also partnering with the University of Swaziland (UNISWA). The partnership with UNISWA was more intensified when another project called Mbabane Dry Sanitation and Waste Management project was developed in cooperation with the university. UNISWA implements researches and new innovations in the project areas and they are the local coordinator for the project. UNISWA is a member of the WASH Forum as well. GLM Swaziland cooperates also with the authorities such as different ministries, City Council and the Swaziland Environmental Authority (SEA). The City Council of Mbabane and the Swaziland Environmental Authority have been members of the Steering Committee under the Organisational Capacity Building for Environmental Education and Community Development Project 2013 -2014. The role of the members in the Steering Committee was to give expert advice to the small organisation on how to run projects according to the stipulated laws and regulations in the country. The Swaziland Environmental Authority invites the organisation to participate in some events like the World Environmental Day. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment have requested GLM to facilitate workshops in their project communities and especially on dry sanitation.

GLM Finland and GLM Zambia are the sister organisations of GLM Swaziland. The three organisations work in close cooperation and the facilitator from Zambia visits regularly Swaziland in order to facilitate trainings in the communities and to support GLM Swaziland in terms of education on different management and organisational skills. Additionally, as mentioned previously GLM Swaziland promotes the same well-working methods from Zambia. GLM Finland also supports GLM Swaziland in terms of management and organisational education and fundraising. It also monitors and evaluates the projects.

### 3.2. Communal level

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Training of Trainers (ToT) is a tool to disseminate information and in spreading of educated themes further. The idea is to train community members in themes such dry sanitation and waste management and they will train more people in their respective communities. GLM Swaziland implements ToT in all of the project communities and in other communities after request from the ministries. Thus far about 30 have been trained as Trainers and educated on dry sanitation, waste management, organic gardening and agroforestry. They have also learnt about organisational management and facilitation practices in order to be able to educate more community members.

The community leaders play a vital role in the communities and in community development, thus their involvement and acceptance is essential. After the project the leaders among other beneficiaries are one of those to run the activities and therefore GLM Swaziland works in close cooperation with the leaders in every project community. It also supports establishment of Community Development Committees which are also meant to obtain the ownership of the project. The members of the committees consist of community members and leaders. In Dlangeni the committee is established and it works as one actor in sharing information at community level. In some communities cooperating with WASH members, there are already existing groups under water projects and these groups will also work in disseminating knowledge and knowhow.

#### 4. Results

Through networking with various actors, GLM Swaziland has gained a great variety of new skills and adopted a lot of new organisational and management practices. For example, Vusumnofu actively involves all the staff members in the development work and this is something GLM Swaziland has seen as essential part of the activities and an objective to aim for. UNISWA has supported GLM in organisational management and thus in reaching such goals. During the WASH Forum activities, GLM Swaziland has learnt about event management which is an essential part of the work since a great part of the activities consist of different kind of events. GLM Zambia and GLM Finland have played an extremely important role in development of GLM Swaziland. Especially, the organisational and management support has contributed to the strength and capacity of the organisation. Through ACAT (Africa Corporation Action Trust), which is a major partner in the PELUM, GLM Swaziland has got support in running an NGO in Swaziland. ACAT has been working in Swaziland for years and is familiar with the rules and regulation on the national level. Through sister organisations GLM Finland and GLM Swaziland, GLM Swaziland has gained skills in running a project and an organisation. The monitoring and evaluation has resulted in constructive feedback and enhanced support in sectors where needed. The three GLM teams support each other and share experiences and knowledge which help to improve and to develop as an organisation and an actor implementing community projects.

Different actors have expressed their interest in being trained on dry sanitation and waste management by GLM Swaziland. The number of invitations to implement trainings in communities has increased during the past few years which indicates that the market for such event has expanded. Not many actors promote dry sanitation in Swaziland thus GLM Swaziland plays an important role in the civil society and especially the WASH Forum has been a good ground to present the concept to new interested actors. Thus far, dry sanitation has been incorporated in the projects by several members for example the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Natural Resources. The latter is working in several communities of which five communities are being trained on dry sanitation. The communities are receiving education on dry sanitation and those interested in constructing one will be trained on building of a dry toilet. Most of their community workshops are done jointly with the Ministry of Health thus making it easy for GLM Swaziland and the ministries to work hand in hand. In 2014 GLM Swaziland was one of the trainers in a workshop which comprised of at least fifty participants from different communities under the jurisdiction of the ministry.

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Vusumnotfo has incorporated dry sanitation into their activities now when cooperating with GLM Swaziland. A pilot dry toilet will be built in Ngonini and community members will receive education on dry sanitation. Additionally, the staff of Vusumnotfo has been trained on the subject. Vusumnotfo is also eager to train the children at their early stage to grasp the use of the dry toilet. It has been pointed out that dry sanitation is seen as an important concept together with composting and usage and maintenance practices. As especially essential was mentioned the health and hygiene aspect of dry sanitation. As a result, it can be said that the concept of dry sanitation is possible to be adopted by new organisations, communities and homesteads.

The requests to implement workshops have played an important part in the development of GLM Swaziland. The team members have gained essential experience on facilitation which can only be achieved through practicing. Additionally, the organisation has gained more visibility which enhances GLM's status and stability in Swaziland. The other side of the workshops is of course the community members who are and will be educated on themes which will affect their life positively especially on the long run. The cooperation with other organisation and other actors in the field of development has brought a significant amount of new beneficiaries under the work of GLM Swaziland. Additionally, the organisations who have been introduced to dry sanitation and other themes can disseminate such information and knowhow and thus increase the amount of people who can benefit from sustainable living and practices.

Training of Trainers has enabled more effective dissemination of information within the communities. Although in the work of GLM Swaziland the impact ToT method is not yet properly measured, the great potential of receiving positive and effective results exist. The contribution to ToT has been strong, it has been implemented in several communities and people have shown interest in being trained which indicates good results. Additionally, the Community Development Committees as being one institution in the communities and part of the network have a lot of potential especially if the initiative to establish a committee comes from the community members. The Committees could share experiences between one another and manage the trainings in their respective communities. As well as they could work as links between individual community members and NGOs and authorities.

## 5. Conclusions

Overall can be said that networking at a communal, national and international level benefit all of the stakeholders and especially when working in the field of sustainable development the whole nation when being forethought. In Swaziland all the civil society actors especially have gained more visibility which enables sharing of information and implementing joint programmes since the field of work, strengths and abilities of every actor is known. Networking has also enabled new practices being introduced effectively for every possible target.

WASH Forum is a great example of same minded actors coming together and aiming for same objectives together. It represents the "together we can" idea of being more effective when working as a group. In Swaziland, where the work of NGOs is somewhat restricted, peer support and sharing advices and knowledge is essential. Additionally, working in close cooperation helps to avoid overlapping among initiatives and it contributes to the effectiveness of the work. Work can be shared thus it ease everybody's burden and new innovations can be easily presented. In order to this kind of cooperation to success the networks among the actors need to be strong. The understanding of having the same objectives has to exist. Under the WASH Forum a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Natural Resources. It includes aspects such as using dry sanitation as sanitation facility instead of pit latrine. Through the memorandum signed, GLM Swaziland shall enhance the effectiveness of WASH interventions for addressing humanitarian needs and contributing to the achievement of the National Development Strategy (NDS) and United Nation's Millennium Development Goal 7 (MDG) which includes aspects

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as promoting sustainable development, adequate sanitation and an access to clear water. Thus GLM Swaziland will assist the government and stakeholder organisations to coordinate the planning, advocacy, resource mobilization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of emergency and development of sector interventions.

GLM Swaziland has benefitted remarkably from the networks it has successfully managed to form. It is a part of influential national level networks such as WASH Forum and PELUM which make GLM Swaziland as a stable part of the civil society in Swaziland. It has good partnership to actors in all levels of the society which result in reliability and visibility. Through good networks GLM Swaziland has gained good opportunities to develop its work thus it is clear that networking plays an important role in the strength and sustainability of the organisation. Especially when promoting dry sanitation which is a new concept for many, it is important to be reliable and well-known organisation as well as have partners aiming for the same objectives. Environmental issues are not always the easiest themes to get through since understanding the relationship between the environment and peoples living standards is relatively difficult for many. Within the concept of dry sanitation the biggest challenges relates with the usage of the end-product of the toilet, the composted waste which can be used as fertilizer. However, through consistent work the negative attitudes and misunderstandings can be corrected.

GLM Swaziland will continue its work and networking with different stakeholders. It will also continue educating partner organizations especially on dry sanitation. Thus far GLM Swaziland is the only NGO who actively implements trainings on dry sanitation practices. The organisation aims to create networks with environmental enterprises and thereby add the private sector into the network and also find adequate and functioning cooperation models. Additionally, GLM Swaziland continues cooperation with authorities and for example with churches which play an important role in the communities.

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