

SMISO BHENGU

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL AT ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

DURBAN (SOUTH AFRICA)



How have you been affected by flooding?

Floods washed away most roads I use when travelling to work. This meant I had to look for alternative routes, which led to me travelling longer distances and more time on the road when coming to work. The floods affected me professionally but it was also emotional seeing how families and the general public lost everything due to the flooding incidents.

Key actions and impact

I have been involved with capacity building within vulnerable communities, educating them on the dangers of building close to rivers, wetlands or in floodplains. This included promoting the ecosystem based adaptation approaches. I have also been a part of the community-based early warning system. The early warning system saved lives during the flooding event, and this has also capacitated community members who are part of this system to better understand issues. Although it currently focuses on one informal settlement, the plan is to upscale it and include other vulnerable settlements. I've also been part of community engagements and discussions that look at possible alternative solutions.

Challenges and lessons learned

It can be a challenge to get the funding to implement large scale projects, which can build resilience or improve adaptive capacity for the community. One of the lessons I have learned is to look for different funding avenues, rather than relying on municipal funds. It is important to get the private sector to also fund some of the initiatives, especially in areas where they operate. Everyone has a role to play in responding to climate change and in building community resilience.

Call to action

This work is important because it leads to the improvement of the living conditions of the most vulnerable communities (which are within informal settlements). Everyone must participate and every small action counts. As a collective, we can achieve more. Collaboration, partnerships and working for a common goal of building resilience will be key to minimising climate change impacts for all.

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MEET THE CHANGEMAKERS

#2 *This is part of an infographic series profiling key role players who are working with the INACCT Resilience project in supporting resilience building.*