**NEWS ARTICLE**

Recent flooding highlights the need for resilient, sustainable development

**23 March 2023:** It is clear that the increasing threat posed by climate change, combined with the demand for land and access to basic services, highlights the importance, and the challenges, of developing resilient infrastructure.

On 13 February the government declared a national state of disaster to enable an intensive, coordinated response to the impact of floods that recently affected Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, the Northern Cape and North West provinces.

Leading consulting engineering and infrastructure advisory firm [Zutari](http://www.zutari.com) has established a sustainable development unit to highlight the importance of collaborating with stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions for underlying socioeconomic challenges facing many local communities due to the growing impact of climate change. The unit comprises a range of experts with skills in environment, climate change, town planning, geospatial analysis and stakeholder management.

Zutari also contributed to highlighting the risks associated with climate change as part of the Long-Term Adaptation Scenarios (LTAS) flagship research programme and the CSIR Greenbook, which flags key risks for local municipalities. Undertaken by the Department of Environmental Affairs, LTAS produced a report entitled ‘Climate Change Adaptation Perspectives for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in South Africa’.

LTAS highlights the significant risk to both towns and cities, particularly in areas where informal development has taken place within existing flood lines, or unsuitable geological conditions, but also in terms of critical infrastructure such as building, roads, bridges, dams and powerline crossings. “We need to co-create resilient, sustainable and liveable infrastructure and urban areas in South Africa,” says **Dr. James Cullis**, Sustainability Expertise Leader at Zutari.

The possibility of increased disaster risk is considered one of the most concerning and potentially costly impacts of future climate change in South Africa and globally. Understanding these risks and identifying key areas of concern is critical for developing suitable and sustainable adaptation policies and scenarios.

The increasing risks associated with climate change cuts across different sectors and departments, a challenge for many cities and institutions that are still very silo based. “However, at the end of the day, we must all work together to achieve a shared vision. In Africa and the developing world, there is increasing acknowledgement of the importance of mitigating climate-change risk,” says Dr. Cullis.

Zutari’s combination of urban planning, engineering and climate change expertise has also come together to support a unique alliance of organisations and independent specialists comprising the Future Cities South Africa (FCSA) initiative. This is in conjunction with PwC (UK and South Africa), Open Cities Lab, Palmer Development Group, Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading and the Isandla Institute, among others.

The FCSA is the delivery partner for the South African component of the Global Future Cities Programme, managed by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The initiative aims to support Durban, Johannesburg, and Cape Town with the urgent challenges experienced in sustainable development and climate change mitigation.

Increasingly, the importance of investing in ecological infrastructure is being recognised as a critical component of climate change adaptation. In South Africa, the importance of investing in ecological infrastructure has been well known and contributed to the success of the various Working for Programs including both Working for Water and Working for Wetlands and more recent examples such as the establishment of the Greater Cape Town Water Fund following the Cape Town drought.

The eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality is implementing the Transformative River Management Programme (TRMP) to try and restore the natural systems and river corridors. It recognises the importance that these have in managing the increased risk of flooding, and the many challenges faced, particularly related to informal settlements and lack of maintenance.

“There is a broader narrative concerning climate change and design and construction. We need to assess risk and design differently for more resilient infrastructure. It also speaks to risk classes and defining areas not to develop in and then keeping these areas free of development. There is no doubt that the recent severe flooding has increased the focus on climate change as a matter of urgency. Extreme weather events are likely to become more extreme and common in future. It speaks to the need for resilient infrastructure and risk mitigation, as well as bringing environmentally aware design to bear,” concludes Dr. Cullis.

**Pull quote**

“There is no doubt that the recent severe flooding has increased the focus on climate change as a matter of urgency.” – **Dr. James Cullis**, Sustainability Expertise Leader, Zutari

**Social media?**

***Twitter***

#Zutari’s Sustainable Development unit collaborates with stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions for underlying socioeconomic problems that many local communities are faced with in terms of the growing impact of #ClimateChange.

***Ends***

**Notes to the Editor**To download hi-res images for this news article, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the Zutari link to view the company’s press office.

**About Zutari**

As an engineering and advisory firm, we believe infrastructure has unparalleled potential to create enduring impact. Never more relevant, this potential can be realised only if we plan, design, deliver and manage infrastructure in ways that maximise its value. Our work in water, transport, energy, resources, and built-environment infrastructure does just this – helping to nurture thriving communities, growing economies, and healthy environments.

At Zutari we understand that radical impact doesn’t just happen; it requires more of us to connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted.

**We connect differently**. Our broad collective of in-house experts connects across traditional disciplines to provide integrated results. We collaborate with clients, partners, and end-users, leaning into diverse perspectives to create superior solutions - together.

**We work smarter**. Our people lead the industry. We draw from deep technical skills, accrued over decades, and embrace the transformative power of digital technology to find simpler, better, and more innovative ways to deliver value.

**We stay rooted**. Few can rival our local capacity and understanding. Building on solid foundations, now 90 years in the making, we are trusted to shape locally relevant solutions through our extensive footprint in Africa and the Middle East.

At Zutari our people connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted. Working in this way, we reliably deliver impact through infrastructure, making the world a better place – one project at a time.

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