**PRESS RELEASE**

Working with nature to build climate resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa

**03 October 202****4:** Leading consulting engineering and infrastructure advisory firm [Zutari](http://www.zutari.com) is collaborating with SUNCASA (Scaling Urban Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Adaptation in Sub-Saharan Africa) in a notable partnership to enhance the climate resilience of cities in sub-Saharan Africa. The SUNCASA project aims to enhance urban resilience to climate change by promoting the use of nature-based solutions in cities.

SUNCASA is being implemented in several pilot cities and regions across Sub-Saharan Africa, chosen based on their vulnerability to climate impacts and potential for successful nature-based solution integration. These include Dire Dawe in Ethiopia, Kigali in Rwanda, and Johannesburg. Despite distinct local challenges, these cities combat the universal threat of climate change that endangers both the well-being and livelihoods of their populations. The gender-responsive, nature-based solutions in the three cities are expected to benefit about 2.2 million people across three years.

“The SUNCASA initiative aligns closely with the existing priorities of the cities involved, such as mitigating the risk of flooding and heatwaves,” notes **Dr. James Cullis**, Technical Director, Water. By integrating natural processes and green infrastructure, such as urban forests, green roofs, and wetlands, SUNCASA seeks to mitigate such climate impacts while improving environmental health and social well-being.

SUNCASA recognises that effective solutions must be both locally responsive and sustainable. Achieving this requires thorough research, continuous monitoring and evaluation, and strong ownership by local communities.

SUNCASA’s research aims to identify the most effective nature-based solutions for specific urban contexts within Sub-Saharan Africa, considering local ecosystems, climate vulnerabilities, and socio-economic conditions. The project incorporates robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of pilot solutions, emphasizing continuous learning and refinement.

A key component of the initiative is building local capacity and actively engaging communities, ensuring that solutions are sustainable and locally driven. SUNCASA fosters collaboration with local organizations to promote gender equality, social inclusion, and biodiversity conservation.

Ultimately, the goal of SUNCASA is to develop scalable models that integrate sustainable and adaptive practices into urban planning and development, fostering climate-resilient cities across the region and beyond. By demonstrating the cost-effectiveness and diverse benefits of nature-based solutions, SUNCASA aims to build a compelling case for their widespread adoption in urban planning and climate adaptation efforts.

In Johannesburg, the initiative has made significant strides in revitalising the Jukskei River catchment area by removing invasive species and rehabilitating riverbanks. These efforts have already improved water quality and community health and are expected to reduce flood risks, mitigate urban heat, protect biodiversity, and enhance local livelihoods.

As technical advisor, Zutari applies its broad expertise in various domains, including urban greening, transformative river management, ecological and hydrological monitoring, and stakeholder engagement. In collaboration with the City of Johannesburg and local partners like Gender CC, Water for the Future, and Alexander Water Warriors, a multidisciplinary approach is adopted to provide clean and safe water in pollution-affected areas. This initiative is expected to benefit about 1.045 million people and create around a thousand eco-friendly jobs, mainly in disadvantaged communities.

**“**Being part of this initiative is deeply rewarding,” states **Luyanda Mhlanga**, civil engineer on the project. “We are privileged to use our technical skills to improve quality of life and sustainability for urban communities.”

SUNCASA recognises the necessity of working *with* nature, and *with* people, fostering deep collaboration to ensure communities are active participants and direct beneficiaries throughout the project lifecycle. By integrating expert knowledge, local insights, and resources with nature’s inherent wisdom, the programme will help to build resilient, thriving cities that can withstand the challenges of the future.

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**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 infrastructure engineering and advisory practice, 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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