



8th Annual Review and Chairman's Report of A Rocha South Africa, 16 March 2014

Dear members of the Board of reference, members of A Rocha and visitors

Thank you for being present at this 8th Annual General Meeting of A Rocha South Africa (ARZA) for the 2012 financial year.

The well known Methodist leader, bishop Mvume Dandala, once said: *The ecological challenge is not a simple theoretical matter for many communities in South Africa. Neither is it a matter of fanciful indulgence among those who seek to respond to it. It is a matter of life and death.* Care for creation is therefore a serious calling of the church of Jesus Christ.

No one seriously reading the Bible can miss the many (± 1000) clear references to the created world and the need to care for it.

I would first like to explain that this report covers the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012. We are unfortunately very late with this AGM due to serious delays with the auditing of the finances. We do undertake to ensure that the audit of the financial year 1 January 2013 – 31 December 2013 will be completed within the allotted time frame and that the next AGM will be held before the end of June 2014.

I would like to highlight the following that happened during 2012:

1. Appointment of a National Director:

In September 2012 a new National Director was appointed, thanks to funding support from A Rocha International, in the person of Mr Rest Kanju. This effectively released Steve Weaver (the Conservation & Science Director) to concentrate on the Groot Marico Biosphere Reserve work. Rest focused on programme development and fundraising.

In December 2012 two members' meetings were convened in two of our major constituency areas, KwaZulu Natal (Hilton) and Cape Town. These meetings attracted approximately 40 existing and prospective members. The new National Director presented his vision for the organization and ideas & inputs from members was welcomed.

2. Conservation Science

Groot Marico Biosphere: Having been released from the position of National Director Steve Weaver could refocus on the work of Conservation Science, specifically in the **Groot Marico Biosphere**. In collaboration with a partner organization, the Marico River Conservation Association (MRCA), ARZA was able to develop a proposal focused on working with communities in the area to implement biodiversity conservation and economic empowerment projects. The application was conditionally approved by the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) of the UNDP. (Funding of some R350 000 was finally approved in May 2013).

The Hilton Quarry Project: This small but exciting project has run for the past four summers and was designed to manage the natural areas around the Hilton Quarry and add aesthetic value in the Hilton community through removal of alien invasive and introduction of indigenous plants. The project has been funded by the St Anne's College in Hilton. For its duration, the project supported 3 casual workers. Unfortunately, the donor decided to bring their funding support to an end as they now have new pressing priorities within their premises. There is a new vision of redesigning the project to be more inclusive and

broader, covering arts, a mini botanical garden and access by the public, if there is sufficient interest and support from the Quarry land owner.

3. Theology and Citizenship

The director of Theology and Citizenship, Allen Goddard, and others presented a three-day *Created for Life!* Course for 9 SCO and Scripture Union Interns in January 2012 in the Western Cape. The evaluations by the participants demonstrated significant learnings on biodiversity, climate change and the theology of creation. In March 2012 a Writers' Training Workshop was held in partnership with Media Associates International. 32 Participants enjoyed world-class writing training in the genres of poetry, fiction, autobiography and Bible engagement, intentionally drawing on stewardship of creation themes. Prof. Jonathan Jansen of UOFS was the keynote speaker on *Restoration, Reconciliation, Transformation and Hope*. An A Rocha poetry anthology publication arising from the workshop is nearing completion. This anthology has strong creation stewardship resonances and will hopefully be published in 2014.

4. New partnerships

The new National Director was active in establishing new partnerships for ARZA. His efforts began to yield the following results:

- 4.1 A Memorandum of Understanding is being negotiated with **SAFCEI (Southern African Faith Communities and Environment Institute)**. ARZA and SAFCEI have agreed to collaborate specifically in the area of Eco-Congregations. SAFCEI is a multi-faith organisation whereas ARZA is a Christian conservation organization founded on the biblical principles of care for creation. However, there are a number of objectives that both organizations have in common.
- 4.2 **Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)**: This Christian donor agency in Norway support environmental work by churches in South Africa. The new National Director developed a concept note focussing on mobilising churches in the township and rural areas of the country (starting in KwaZulu Natal and North West Provinces) to implement climate change adaptation projects using the church as a base for local community action.
- 4.3 **WWF (World –Wide Fund for Nature)**: A meeting with WWF-SA was set up to discuss and explore how ARZA could assist in curbing the scourge of Rhino poaching in South Africa. The Black Rhino Expansion Programme of WWF expressed interest in an idea of mobilizing churches and the Christian community for a national prayer day for the Rhino. ARZA hopes this interaction may lead to a significant partnership in future.

5. Statistics

In 2012 ARZA had 3 staff members and 4 volunteers, 513 friends and members on a database and 93 followers of the Facebook page. 30 children received environmental education input.

ARZA needs to do more to involve and engage with our current supporters and grow the membership base.

I thank you.

Rev. CJ Swart, Chairman A Rocha South Africa

16 March 2014