

Environmental Sustainability through Community Participation.

The environment sector seeks to promote sound environmental management of natural resources and increase community participation in decision-making on local environmental issues. The main objectives of Skillshare International Swaziland are to support organisations promoting sustainable tourism development and environment; to advocate and act for appropriate environmental and natural resource management laws, policies and practices; and to advocate for the mainstreaming of environment and natural resources in all socio-economic development plans and initiatives.

Skillshare International Swaziland has a strong partnership with Yonge Nawe Environmental Action Group which is a membership-based NGO. Skillshare International has supported Yonge Nawe since it was founded in 1987; the first Directors were Skillshare development workers (DWs). Yonge Nawe focuses on 3 programmes: natural resource management; environmental and socio-economic justice campaigns; information education and communication.

Skillshare International DW Nick Brooks is the Communication and Research Coordinator at Yonge Nawe. He is responsible for providing a responsive demand-driven information and research service, aimed at educating and empowering target groups to enhance environmental management in Swaziland. Nick has been involved in numerous capacity building initiatives aimed at empowering communities to advocate for a better quality of life.



A community workshop held at Nhlambeni in the Manzini region aimed to stimulate discussion with community members about environmental pollution from a nearby factory. They also learned about the findings of an environmental audit and mitigation plan. The workshop was a resounding success with a turnout of over 140 community members. Following the workshop the community members prepared their submission to the Swaziland Environmental Authority to object to the factory being granted an environmental compliance certificate. Photo: Yonge Nawe staff assist members to record a Community submission to Swaziland Environmental Authority.

Nick has built staff capacity on different methods of information dissemination and advocacy. In the past year they have produced and aired over 20 radio programmes on different environmental issues. *The Swazi Times* has published 37 columns written by Nick about medical waste, desertification, youth and sustainable development, environmental justice, international conventions and celebrations, gender and the environment, and research on environmental issues. Nick has also revived a 2-page monthly update which is emailed to over 150 members and circulated to international partners. The Law Department of the University of Swaziland described these monthly updates as “consistent, informative and thought provoking”. Another member of the organisation said “the organisation’s website has improved and is very rich with information.” Nick is compiling an *Alternative State of the Environment Report for Swaziland*, which highlights some of the most serious environmental concerns in Swaziland such as water pollution by factories, corporate irresponsibility, land degradation and enforcement of environmental legislation.

Skillshare International continues to support Yonge Nawe’s advocacy programme, with special emphasis on advocating for the ratification of regional and international agreements such as the Conventions on Biodiversity (CBD) and International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES).