



## ▶ Case Study: Bela Bela Communal Property Association



### Type of Organisation

Community Property Association



### Founder

Andries Matseremane Mabuela



### Employees/Beneficiaries

2,000 beneficiaries



### Aim of the organisation

The Bela Bela Communal Property Association (CPA) creates employment and provides skills development and training to upskill its community members. Food parcels are distributed to the CPA's members monthly and they also receive a Christmas hamper and annual bonus.



### Location

Bela Bela, Limpopo



### Website/contact details

<http://belabelacpa.com>

## ▶ The Bela Bela CPA, a lesson in *letsema*

The Bela Bela Communal Property Association (CPA) is a working example of *letsema* in action. The CPA was formed by the late Andries Matseremane Mabuela who rallied the community to lodge a successful land claim for 6,000 hectares of fertile farmland in the biodiverse Waterberg District of Limpopo. A portion of the land included a game lodge as a going concern and the CPA decided to add cattle and crop farming as well as poultry to its business to create jobs for the community and generate additional income. Given the levels of poverty and hunger within families, the CPA initiated a community food programme, with each family receiving 12.5 kg of maize meal, a bag of mixed vegetables, red/white meat including game meat, eggs, rice and fish each month. Members receive Christmas hampers and, when profits allow, a cash bonus of up to R10,000 per family.

▶▶ The concept of *letsema* originates in the African tradition of volunteering one's labour to community projects. It is also linked to old African adages that say: 'Two heads are better than one' and: 'A single finger cannot remove fluff.'



Cattle and crop farming make up a significant portion of the CPA's activities, which also include poultry farming and eco-tourism.

In terms of the CPA Act, No. 28 of 1996, which governs communal property associations, CPAs are purely land holding entities and by law are not allowed to conduct business. As a result, an operating company, Mahlohoholo Investments, was created to run the businesses. The CPA is its main shareholder and the investment company enters into a lease agreement with the community who pay rental fees.

By putting effective leadership in place and ensuring stability and cohesion in the community through equal rights and participation, as well as an equal distribution of benefits and the collective management of natural resources, Bela Bela CPA has been cited as one of South Africa's most successful land restitution and development models.

“In terms of the African communal model, development is seen as the movement or progression of the community, group or individual from their current socio-economic status to the desired one. Development is the responsibility of the individual in the first instance, and is supported by others as a group or a community.”  
– Extract from: Transient Caretakers: Making Life on Earth Sustainable, Mervyn King with Teodorina Lessidrenska (July, 2009).

“At the beginning there was no skills development plan by government – the leadership had to conceptualize, develop and implement a plan. Today we run internships, undergraduate placements, mentorships and learnerships”, says Lefa Barrington Mabuela, son of the late Andries Matseremane Mabuela.

According to the CPA website, the CPA's belief is that: “Land Restitution is about restoring dignity, fighting poverty and hunger. Poverty is a deadly disease, so our leadership in consultation with the community came up with ways and means of insuring that we are a food secure community.”

### Additional reading and information

[Bela-Bela Egg Farm Tells an Excellent Story](#)

[Bela-Bela Communal Property Association Empowers Univen School of Agriculture Students](#)

[Understanding Conflicting Outcomes in Common Property-Based Natural Resources Management in South Africa: Comparative Analysis of Bela-Bela and Bjatladi Communal Property Association](#)

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