CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA IMPACT REPORT 2022-2024





Conservation South Africa supports economic development that values nature because people need nature to thrive. Our approach is simple yet transformative.

OUR VISION

A South Africa where growth and development are catalysed through the sustainable stewardship of nature.

OUR MISSION

Restore and secure key reservoirs of nature across South Africa for the benefit of all.

OUR ORGANISATION

Conservation South Africa is an independent affiliate of Conservation International, legally registered as a Section 18A public benefit organisation in South Africa. As an affiliate, Conservation South Africa subscribes to the aspirational vision and mission, strategic framework, and operational requirements of Conservation International, but is enabled to adapt language and specific policies and goals to the unique context of South Africa.





A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Conservation South Africa continues to expand its footprint. Over the past 20 years, we have evolved from conserving 8,300 hectares with 12 communal farmers to 175,703 hectares with agreements covering 53 villages. This is conservation with tangible financial benefits to communities: better grazing practices and herd health, improved access to water and jobs for hundreds of people.

CONSERVATION IS FOREVER

The land preserved under conservation agreements has generated significant financial and social benefits. It is this success that gives us hope for the future, ensuring that these programmes remain sustainable, because conservation is not a temporary project, it's forever. Land regeneration restores water to springs, birds have returned, indigenous grasses are recovering and communities have a growing sense of pride.

Our scope of work will continue to expand. We are active in 7 neighbouring countries on 16 sites. We are also scaling up our oceans programme, to conserve 320,598 km² along the west and east coasts of Southern Africa.

Our cutting edge scientific research includes papers on carbon sequestration achieved through our grazing practices, which enables communities to benefit financially from carbon credits.

Growth, as always, comes with change. After 6 extraordinary years of leadership, Julia Levin has transitioned to a regional role at Conservation International as Vice President for Southern Africa. Julia will remain on our board and continue to share her expertise and wisdom with our teams. We are delighted to welcome Peter Shisani as our Country Director. Peter has led our field programmes for the past 5 years and has played a key role in driving their growth.

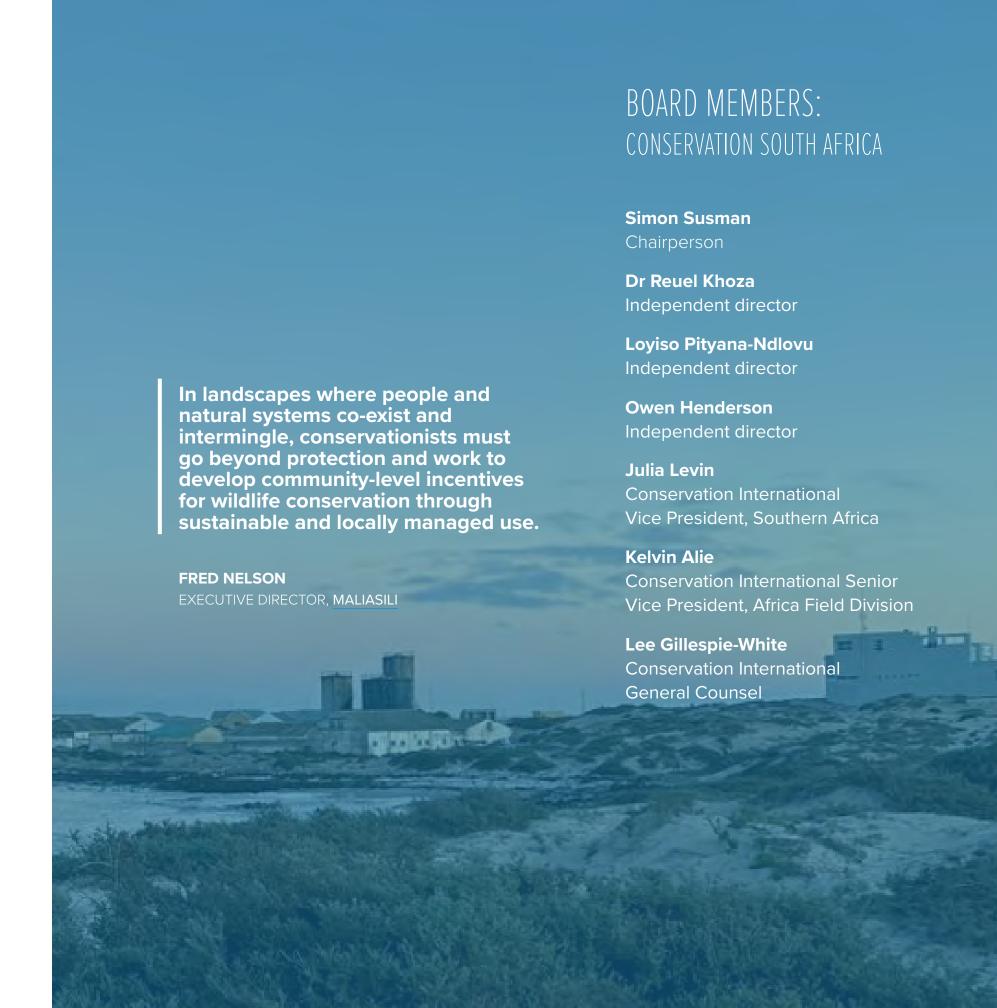
I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who works in this incredible organisation. Their passion and dedication have resulted in these transformative outcomes.

To our donors, without whose support none of this would be possible, we extend our heartfelt thanks. We raise funds in South Africa, Europe, and the United States from donors who share our commitment to large-scale, sustainable conservation for the benefit of thousands of people.

Lastly, we would like to thank Conservation International, our parent organisation. Their guidance, financial support, and practical advice continue to be invaluable to our programmes.

SIMON SUSMAN

CHAIRPERSON, CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA







A MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

Over the past 2 years, our footprint has grown to its largest ever, both in reach and impact. We worked with 53 villages across 3 district municipalities, secured 175,703 hectares under conservation agreements with 1,400 farmers, and created 3,000 jobs for unemployed, rural based, women, youth and marginalised/previously disadvantaged community members in ecosystem restoration and climate action.

We focused on empowering the people closest to nature to sustain themselves and the ecosystems they depend on. We aimed to create independent villages that restore ecosystems and generate financial benefit on their own. This success has allowed us to grow and reach new beneficiaries – we could only scale once our initial beneficiaries were doing well on their own.

We also took on new opportunities by adding a portfolio focused on oceans and coasts and established cross-border conservation efforts in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area, spanning Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Regional partnerships across 16 sites in 7 African countries have strengthened our financial stability and expanded our impact.

The past 2 years taught us the importance of accessing larger, multi-year funds with partners to sustain and grow our work. However, we recognised that delivering on these funds required strengthening our internal teams, while building strong relationships with implementing partners to enhance delivery capacity. After a period of stabilisation, we pushed forward, raised funds and grew.

Now, we are the most financially stable we have ever been. As our focus shifts from fundraising to implementation and delivery, we remain mindful of the organisational risks and challenges that accompany growth.

We look to the future with excitement. Under the leadership of our new Country Director, Peter Shisani, and through Julia Levin's new role as Vice President for Southern Africa, we will continue to expand and deepen our impact across the region.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

JULIA LEVIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA (2018 – 2024)

JABULANI PETER SHISANI, CEO AND COUNTRY DIRECTOR, CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA





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THE ART OF SCALING

GETTING GROWING RIGHT

In the world we envisage, our impact has multiplied, and resonates across communities and regions. Our approach to conservation continues to prioritise participation of rural women and youth in governance of landscapes and seascapes.

This report explores the theme of scaling as a way to measure our impact. Conservation efforts take many forms: they can be scaled up by expanding an existing protected area, scaled out by replicating a conservation model in a new region, or scaled deep by increasing their intensity. Conservation also operates across different timeframes. How do we grow our interventions and quarantee that they keep addressing the problems they are designed to solve and stay true to our vision and mission?

Africa's vast stretches of grassy biomes – shrublands, grasslands and savanna – and continental marine area, have massive potential for natural climate solutions and building protection-linked livelihoods.

An essential part of our strategy is partnering with local communities, leaders, NGOs, and government to blend traditional knowledge with conservation science, for peoplecentred conservation. With financial and technical support, these partnerships enable grassroots scaling that can bring about reform at a national level and influence global climate forums.

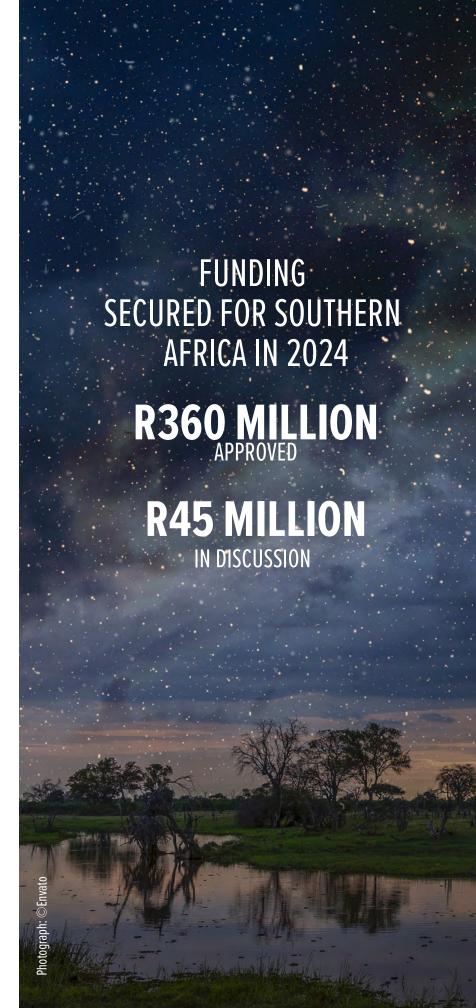
With this growth, and scaling innovations in science, new financial instruments, smart, coherent policy, and sustainable and regenerative approaches to productive systems can accelerate progress and reduce barriers to realising impact.

HOW WE GROW

Conservation South Africa works with communities and partners across Africa – country programmes and countries of interest – to implement nature-positive interventions backed by research and supported by sustainable funding models.

This report explores areas in which Conservation South Africa has demonstrated its ability to scale. The impact and success of our interventions hinges on the integrity of these fundamental aspects of conservation.

- **Grassy biomes**: Improving rangeland management by implementing Herding for Health in 7 countries and on 16 sites.
- Oceans: Increasing our footprint in Africa in transboundary areas and oceans.
- **People**: Jobs and enterprises that help nature and people.
- Partnerships with other conservation organisations to increase impact and take conservation to scale.
- **Science**: Findings to empower people with evidence to enable conservation.
- **Governance**: Policy and community governance structures that favour a nature-positive environment.
- Conservation technology: Tools to measure impact.
- **Finance**: Implementing existing conservation finance strategies and designing new ones.



PARTNERS FORNEW FRONTIERS

In the period covered by this report, our commitment to attaining the 30 x 30 global biodiversity goals was deepened through partnerships with governments, academia, NGOs, local enterprises and the communities that strengthen our efforts and broaden our reach.

GRASSY BIOMES

Our flagship programme, Herding for Health, founded with Peace Parks Foundation, has enabled us to scale across Africa into 7 countries on 16 sites. While our implementation partners – Meat Naturally, Wild Entrust Africa, CLAWS, WildTrust, BigLife Foundation, Government of Botswana – and training partners – Southern African Wildlife College, AfriVet, Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN) – are essential to expanding our work across the continent, none of the progress we have made would be possible without strong partnerships with local communities.



OCEANS AND COASTS

The Namakwa Seascape is a marine area adjacent to Conservation South Africa's terrestrial stewardship programmes in Namakwa District Municipality in the Succulent Karoo Biodiversity Hotspot. At the local level, Conservation South Africa is working closely with fishing cooperatives and community members, with a focus on women and youth, and with local and district governments. We are also co-developing a business plan with the national Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), the University of Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Finance is being secured to pilot 2 value chains: sustainably harvested kelp and line fish, which is processed and frozen in Port Nolloth and sold at market.

In Mozambique, Conservation South Africa and African Parks are supporting the government to strengthen protection of Tofo, Great Bazaruto, and the Pomene coastline, vital biodiversity areas within Inhambane Seascape.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Conservation South Africa is partnering with 9 organisations to support the 10-million hectare Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area which includes Banhine and Zinave national parks, the Massingir and Corumana areas and interlinking regions in Mozambique, as well as private and state-owned conservation areas in South Africa and Zimbabwe on its borders. Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) are protected areas, and their surrounds, that span multiple countries. Their purpose is to conserve biodiversity by unifying ecosystems, support sustainable economic development, promote regional peace and stability, and allow wildlife and tourists to move across borders.



Since 2009, through our partnerships, we have scaled from 12 people on 8,300 ha to 1,400 farmers on 175,703 ha



THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Written by Malinda Gardiner

In 2009, 12 communal farmers signed individual conservation agreements with Conservation South Africa (then Conservation International) at a ceremony in Leliefontein, a tiny village in the Kamiesberg Uplands, Namaqualand.

Since then, Conservation South Africa's stewardship programme has grown to more than 1,400 communal farmers and 175,703 hectares. The land under conservation agreements in Alfred Nzo District and Kruger to Canyons Landscape forms part of the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany hotspot and the Steinkopf commonage in Namakwa District, is in the Succulent Karoo.



The 12 farmers from Leliefontein communal lands who signed the first conservation agreements.

Photo: Tessa Mildenhall

NAMAKWA DISTRICT

Area: 12,683,600 hectares

Location: Namakwa District Municipality in the Northern Cape province, in the Succulent Karoo Biodiversity Hotspot. The Namakwa seascape ■ adjacent to the terrestrial stewardship area focuses on coastal communities in Port Nolloth and Hondeklipbaai.

UMZIMVUBU CATCHMENT

Area: 2,874,800 hectares

Location: The Alfred Nzo District
Municipality and the area that runs
along the northern boundary of the
Eastern Cape Province. It extends
from the Lesotho escarpment to the
northern Wild Coast adjacent to the
Indian Ocean within the Maputaland—
Pondoland—Albany Biodiversity
Hotspot

KRUGER TO CANYONS (K2C)

Area: 1,073,100 hectares

Location: Western border of Kruger National Park into Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. Part of the site falls within the Maputaland—Pondoland—Albany Biodiversity Hotspot.

Conservation South Africa is also scaling across the transboundary landscape. Parts of K2C and the Inhambane Seascape → are included in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park and Conservation Area (GLTFCA) ...



AFRICAN RANGELANDS

UNDER BETTER MANAGEMENT

The rangeland management methods piloted by Conservation South Africa in Namakwa District in Northern Cape, the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region and in the Umzimvubu Catchment in Eastern Cape are being scaled into Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Madagascar and Zambia – countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – as well as in Kenya. Our footprint now covers 827,603 hectares, in 7 countries on 16 sites.

Read more about other sites in Africa where our rangeland programme, Herding for Health, is being rolled out.

CATALYSE CONSERVATION OF 320,598 km² OCEAN AND COASTLINE

Studies have been conducted to determine the feasibility of establishing a seascape in the ocean and coast adjoining the land-based areas in Namakwa District where our stewardship programmes are implemented. In Mozambique, Conservation South Africa is working with the government in partnership with African Parks to strengthen protection of Tofo, Great Bazaruto and the Pomene coast, vital biodiversity areas within the broader Inhambane Seascape.



Natural climate solutions – actions that leverage the power of nature to mitigate climate change and enhance climate resilience – have the potential to address accelerating climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation while unlocking investment and creating jobs. When youth and women in rural areas gain skills for nature-positive jobs, impact and scaling are exponential.

HOW JOBS FOR NATURE BRING POSITIVE CHANGE

- Livelihoods improve
- Opportunities for new enterprises open up
- Local NGOs, businesses and communities benefit
- Investment flows into the area
- Nature benefits
- Awareness of climate change and conservation practices increases
- New scientific knowledge helps communities advocate for improvements to policy
- Government partners with organisations that boost local conditions and improve ecosystem services

PARTNERING TO INCREASE OUR IMPACT

Conservation South Africa is partnering with the Social Employment Fund (SEF), Groen Sebenza and Youth Employment Service (YES) to increase its impact, especially in the youth employment sector. Youth who join these programmes learn skills that set them up to grow; some start their own businesses and become employers themselves, while others discover new interests and talents.

The <u>Decent Work in Nature-based Solutions 2024 report</u> estimates that targeted investments could increase natural climate solutions employment by up to 32 million jobs globally. The report recommends strengthening policy frameworks, investing in skills development, enhancing worker productivity, promoting worker rights and inclusiveness in the sector and strengthening research and data collection.



Globally, more than

60 MILLION PEOPLE

work in activities categorised as natural climate solutions: actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems.

Decent Work in Nature-based Solutions 2024

'hotograph: Emily Nyro

NATURE-POSITIVE ECONOMIES

Three pro-nature enterprises in the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region

Jobs for Nature equips women and youth with skills and experience in the green economy, and opportunities for climate-smart careers. It also enables scaling of natural climate solutions through strategic partnerships with organisations like Youth Employment Service (YES), Groen Sebenza and Be the Change Africa and the SEF.

EATTFRESH AQUAPONICS

Evolutionary Aquaponic Technology and training Fresh (EATtFresh) in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga is a climate-smart commercial aquaponics and demonstration pilot, and an education and training site. Not only is EaTtFresh a source of direct employment; members of the community can also supplement production for EATtFresh as outgrowers with potential spin-offs for the local and regional green economy.

Photo: Fabian Mdhluli



footprint of the agricultural sector while providing a year-round growing season. Because aquaponics does not require much space or large areas of land, it can easily be scaled to meet the needs of a family, community or mass market. Compared with traditional soil-based farming, aquaponics systems generate 7 to 10 times more produce per acre (4,046 m²), and use 96% less water and almost 100% renewable energy. Nutrient recycling means there is no need for harmful pesticides or fertilizers.

VUGIMAMUSI ART AND CRAFT COOPERATIVE

<u>Vugimamusi Women's Cooperative</u> in Welverdiend has increased its product range and boosted sales under the mentorship of <u>The Kulani Collective</u>.

They sell their handicrafts at the monthly Hoedspruit Farmers Market. The next step is from the Region for the Region (fRfR) certification, in collaboration with the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region.

HLAYISANI NATURE BUY-BACK CENTRE

The Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region is steadfast in its support of local enterprises that work towards climate mitigation and its mandate to create green jobs and foster a circular economy.

Hlayisani Nature Buy Back Centre in Utah Village, Acornhoek collects and sorts waste from rangelands, rivers, communities and businesses and sells recyclable materials. They also coordinate and facilitate cleaning campaigns in neighbouring villages.



ABOVE: Women from Hlayisani Co-operation take delivery of 105 waste bulk bags which will help waste management and provide livelihoods to communities. Recycling enterprises contribute significantly to a more sustainable and climate-resilient future.

Photo: Thobani Dlhamini

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TELLING NATURE'S STORY

Kgaugelo Ngomane joined Conservation South Africa in 2019 and was sent to the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region for his 12-month work experience. Part of his job with YES implementation partner, <u>Wild Shots Outreach</u> was to tell community, wildlife, and conservation stories through photography.

Written by Kgomotso Matthews

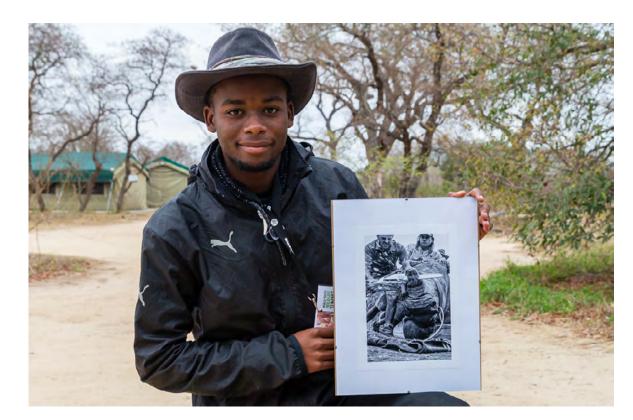
When Covid struck in 2020, CI policy allowed teams to carry on working. Kgaugelo and fellow photographers Rifumo Mathebula and Vusi Mathe were able to capture dramatic portraits of isolation and village roads devoid of humans.

Each of these YES graduates now own media companies in local villages and collectively employ 7 young people, which translates to support for at least 35 community members.

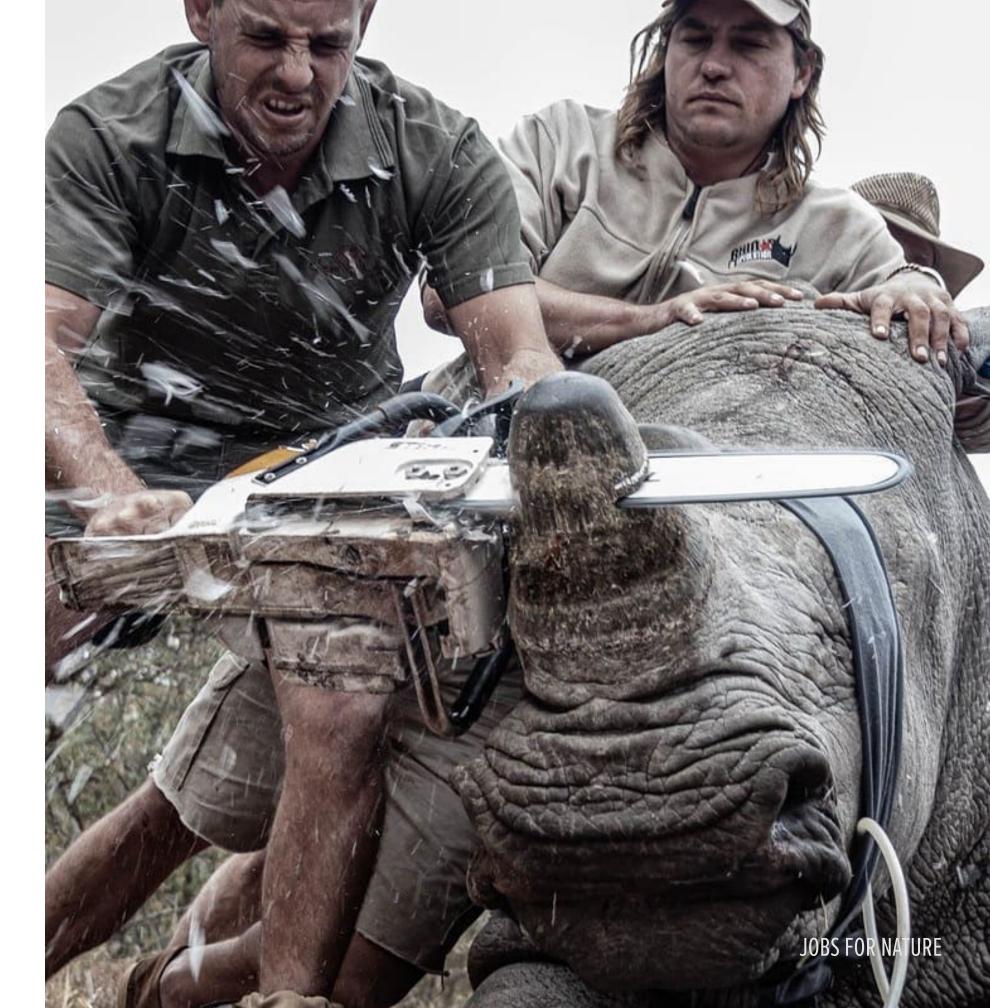
There have been accolades too: in November 2024, as Wild Shots Outreach's Programme Director, Rifumo won the SANParks Kudu Award for Youth Leadership at South Africa's conservation Oscars and in October 2024, Kgaugelo was voted one of Top 35 Under 35

Youth Changemakers a national Daily Maverick/YES competition, that honours the achievements of former YES Youth.

465YES JOBS (2022-2024)



Ngomane's photograph,
Desperate Measures,
which won him the
Young Environmental
Photographer of the Year
award in 2019.







HERDING FOR HEALTH

NATURE-POSITIVE LAND MANAGEMENT

Herding for Health uses herding and livestock management to regenerate Africa's grasslands, savannas and shrublands and enhance climate resilience in the communities that depend on them. Communities sign Conservation Agreements and professional herders — ecorangers — implement combined herding and corralling, or planned grazing depending on the local context, and herd health practices. Participating farmers receive training and access to markets with key market readiness interventions (legal requirements and market systems) to ensure income flow.

HERDING FOR HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

- Safeguard ecosystem function
- Ensure socio-economic development
- Support collective governance
- Promote and facilitate sustainability
- Improve animal health

Herding for Health leverages a range of tools to support implementation which include <u>Africa</u> Rangeland Watch, <u>EarthRanger</u>, <u>H4H Toolkit</u> and H4H Standards.



What I notice about [our indigenous goats] is they are mobile, so they don't stand on one spot and eat the field up there. They move and then they eat here and then they move up into the mountain. So you don't have the problem that the soil will be trampled where they are.

MARIANA BEUKES-JOSEPH

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE HOLDER, NOURIVIER, KAMIESBERG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, NAMAKWA DISTRICT



BALANCING ECONOMY AND ECOLOGY

Written by Pollen Tibane

Livestock farmers in the heart of foot-and-mouth disease buffer zones in the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region have a difficult time balancing productivity with environmental conservation. Conservation South Africa and Meat Naturally are working together to provide the tools and processes they need to produce healthier livestock while contributing to preserving local ecosystems by adopting sustainable practices such as restoration and rotational grazing.

In the dry season, the 12 villages that have signed conservation agreements for 13,896 hectares receive fodder and supplements to ensure that animals stay healthy and vaccinations to address foot-and-mouth disease. Farmers also practice sustainable farming methods such as rotational grazing.

Five Kruger to Canyons farmers (right) recently generated an annual turnover of R481,816,000 from sales through Meat Naturally.



PEOPLE

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES: HERDING FOR HEALTH

2,000

FARMERS HAVE SIGNED
CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS
WITH CSA THROUGH
HERDING FOR HEALTH

2030 TARGET **500,000**

JOBS

3,000

TO DATE ON SITES IN SA (INCLUDING GROEN SEBENZA, YES, SEF

2030 TARGET **10,000**

PEOPLE WITH ACCESS TO MARKET

140 IN SA

20,000

TO DATE

BY 2030



SUSTAINABLE WOOL FARMING

Integrating small stock – like sheep and goats – has enabled Conservation South Africa to increase the percentage of women and youth participants in implementation of sustainable agricultural practices in the Umzimvubu Catchment. In 2023-2024 women comprised about half of the total participants.

Sustainable agriculture leverages conservation actions that increase wool quantity and quality while restoring biodiversity and improving livelihoods. Because small stock are browsers, rather than grazers like cattle, they reduce woody plant encroachment and boost grass grazing for domestic and wild grazers alike. They also strengthen and expand livestock value chains for communal farmers.

In 2022 and 2023 a total of 410 farmers benefitted from extension support for animal welfare and health, market access and participation in various skills development training incentives. Accredited skills courses organised by AgriEnterprises and facilitated by the National Wool Growers Association supported and capacitated the mobile sheepshearing initiative implemented by community members at 3 sites. Once the sheep were shorn the wool was classed, baled and transported to BKB for auction by community members.

Farmers earned an average of USD 129 from wool sales, which exceeded the project target of USD 50.



13,660 HA

OF COMMUNAL LAND UNDER CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

IN 2022 AND 2023

410

FARMERS HAVE BENEFITTED

3

MOBILE SHEARING SITES
IN THE UMZIMVUBU CATCHMENT PRODUCED

11,550KILOGRAMS OF WOOL

HOPE IN SPRINGS

Written by Zinathi Jikeka

Natural springs are vital sources of water for more than half of rural South African communities. When they are damaged and degraded by drought, pollution and land-use changes, water security is threatened and the inequality in access to water is deepened.

Conservation South Africa works with communities, local leaders and government to rehabilitate community springs by fencing them off to prevent contamination by livestock, installing pipes to transport clean water to storage tanks, and ensuring sustainable access to safe drinking water. These efforts align with the national objectives of comprehensive catchment management and building resilience to climate change.

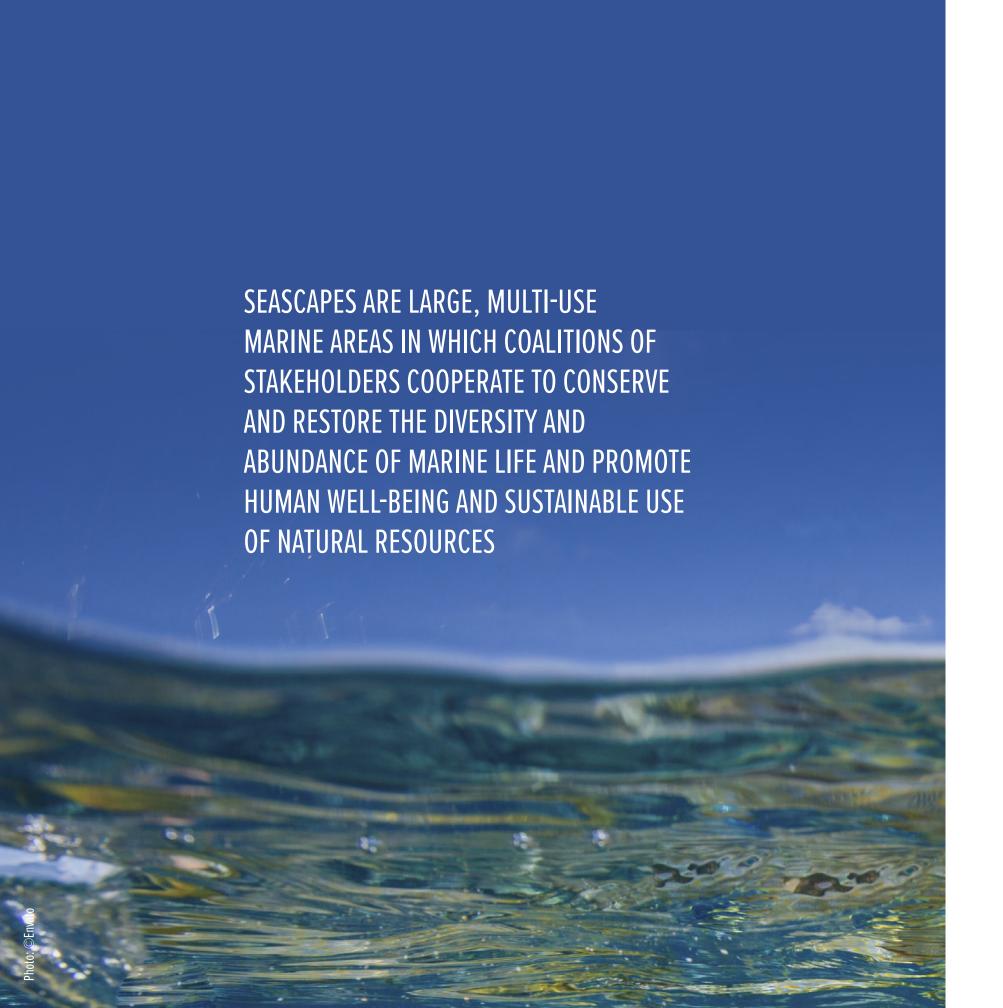
Mvenyane community member, Mama Nophumzile Gunundu says access to clean water has been restored in Upper Mvenyane Village: "We no longer struggle, and the water is beautiful and clean."

In Thaba Chicha, communities in Mapoleseng and Nicefield used to endure long waits at communal water tanks that often ran out of water. The rehabilitated spring now provides water to approximately 25 households in Mapoleseng and 27 households and a primary school in Nicefield. "One can fill up as many buckets as they wish without having to wait in long queues," said one of the residents.

At schools in Ndakeni, <u>Yes4Youth</u> has been installing tippy taps – simple yet effective handwashing stations that improve access to clean water and help prevent the spread of germs and illnesses among children.







SEASCAPES FOR AFRICA

SECURE THE OCEAN'S BOUNTY

Conservation South Africa is harnessing Conservation International's experience to protect, manage and restore key marine areas.

Conservation South Africa's ocean flagships lie adjacent to terrestrial stewardship programmes in the Succulent Karoo Biodiversity Hotspot in Namakwa. In Mozambique, Conservation South Africa and African Parks are supporting the government to strengthen protection of Tofo and Great Bazaruto, vital biodiversity areas within the broader Inhambane seascape.

NAMAKWA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY: PORT NOLLOTH AND HONDEKLIPBAAI

Feasibility assessments and business plans have been carried out to explore value chains for:

- Wild kelp as a biostimulant and ingredient in livestock feed.
- Partnering with <u>Abalobi</u> to process line fish locally to create jobs and improve market access for small-scale fishers.
- Abalone and aquaculture.

Socioeconomic baselines, climate response planning and skills assessment studies further support viability of the seascape approach for this area.

IMPACT AND TARGETS

- Sustainable management of marine resources, which includes aquaculture projects to support restoration and enhancement of kelp ecosystems and their marine life
- Reduced harvesting pressure on wild kelp.
- Enhanced capacity of fisher cooperatives and communities. Communities (small-scale fishers) realise their rights and heritage, and access to livelihoods, jobs and food security improves.
- **■** Climate-resilient communities.
- Science, skills development and job creation empower communities to comanage their resources sustainably.
- An **enabling policy platform** for the blue economy and locally managed marine spatial planning.
- **Scaling** biodiversity conservation and management that connects habitats on land and at sea.
- Sustainability of the seascape and value chains through innovative finance mechanism(s) like blue carbon.

PEOPLE

100 PART-TIME JOBS* CREATED TO DATE

*beach clean up, restoration of dunes, vegetable gardening with kelp and recycling

BY 2030

TO HARVEST KELP
SUSTAINABLY

MARKET ACCESS FOR LINE
FISH OUTSIDE OF NAMAKWA

MORE THAN

180 JOBS

FOR FISHERS, YOUTH AND
WOMEN



THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S KELP MARKET

Diversifying South Africa's kelp market with methods like aquaculture could boost profits and realise its economic, social and ecological potential while reducing harvesting pressure on wild kelp. Studies indicate good feasibility for sea-based kelp farming, particularly in Saldanha Bay on the West Coast. Although commercial kelp farming does not yet exist in South Africa, ongoing experiments in Saldanha Bay may lead the way for its development.

R 9.8 MILLION

TOTAL MARKET VALUE OF KELP USED FOR ABALONE FEED

FURTHER READING

- 1. Abalone farming in South Africa: an overview with perspectives on kelp resources, abalone feed, potential for on-farm seaweed production and socio-economic importance
- 2. Kelp value chain analysis, market assessment and roadmap for development of kelp farming in South Africa

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MEANS, MAPPING AND MONITORING

FASTER. BROADER. DEEPER.

FUNDING TO GET THERE: OUR FINANCING STRATEGY

Conservation International's Nature Finance Division (NFD) employs innovative funding strategies, financial instruments and business models to unlock nature investments at scale and address the climate and biodiversity crises.

Large-scale finance to key landscapes and seascapes enables protection-linked livelihoods and builds the capacity of communities and governments.

Most funding for natural climate solutions is untapped; less than 3% of all climate funding goes to natural climate solutions. The Nature Finance Division team is working to increase this percentage.

SUSTAINABLE FINANCING FOR CONSERVATION

Support conservation work in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) and oceans in South Africa and Mozambique with sustainable financing mechanisms that facilitate conservation activities to unlock long-term sources of finance.

PROTECTION-LINKED LIVELIHOODS

Empower and support village-led climate responses and biodiversity protection processes through appropriate conservation financing mechanisms.

CAPACITY AND GOVERNANCE

Support partners, both external (NGOs, government) and internal, to develop sustainable finance capacity and governance structures to mobilise conservation finance flows.



We establish grazing areas through a mapping process that considers the regions with pasture and located very close to water sources. The professional herders were selected from the communities, and trained by the Southern African Wildlife College. They are teaching their communities and implementing rotational grazing techniques. DELCIO JULIAO, HERDING FOR HEALTH IMPLEMENTATION MANAGER LIMPOPO NATIONAL PARK https://www.peaceparkstv.com/herding-for-health-celebratesfive-years-in-limpopo-national-park/

TECHNOLOGY TO

GUIDE AND MONITOR

AFRICA RANGELAND WATCH

Africa Rangeland Watch (ARW) is being developed by CI to monitor rangeland impact. The aim of ARW is to help users to quantify land-use and climate impacts on savannas, grasslands and shrublands over time and space, using remotely sensed satellite imagery and supplemented by ground-based rangeland monitoring. ARW can thus be used in rangeland management as a decision support tool, as well as to inform science and policy.

CLIMATE POSITIVE LAND USE STRATEGY

Climate Positive Land Use Strategy
(CPLUS) is a framework and decision
support tool created by Conservation
International and Conservation South
Africa to bridge the gap between project
planning and high-level nature and climate
goals. CPLUS generates multi-stakeholder
support for landscape initiatives by
identifying high quality natural climate
solutions for potential funders, and scales
science-driven action aligned with global
strategies.

Teams that use CPLUS can develop a strategic and unified landscape vision, prioritise the most impactful and cost-effective interventions, and determine where to take action to achieve the vision. A well-crafted landscape plan can also support the development of strong proposals by demonstrating to funders the potential for significant, scalable impacts and how funding can contribute to broader environmental and socio-economic benefits, such as improved water quality, carbon sequestration and enhanced livelihoods.

CPLUS also enables users to assess the trade-offs associated with conservation actions. An example is brush cutting: thinning out encroaching trees benefits the landscape and provides a source of fodder, but also has the effect of removing a mechanism for carbon capture (trees) from the ecosystem.

A key feature of CPLUS is its flexible approach. CPLUS recognises that different stakeholders will have unique perspectives on the importance of various outcomes, be it climate mitigation, biodiversity, livelihoods, or others. Rather than prescribing rigid judgments on which outcomes should be prioritised, CPLUS allows stakeholders to define their own desired outcomes. CPLUS serves as a roadmap of where activities could be scaled up, rather than guidance on how.

THE CPLUS GUIDEBOOK

MONITORING CITIZEN SCIENCE

Written by Moleboheng Makashane

A quiet revolution is unfolding in Mvenyane, a tiny rural village in Eastern Cape province, South Africa, as local women and youth are learning the science of stream monitoring, a domain usually reserved for distant experts.

Although they were initially hesitant, they soon took to their new-found roles as environmental stewards with skills that include measuring water quality, identifying pollutants and tracking changes in aquatic life.

Not only has the health of the stream been transformed, but the shift in perceptions has also shown that science belongs to everyone.

Today, these citizen scientists continue to monitor their environment, empowering their community to protect its natural resources and breaking norms in the process.



Photograph: Fezile Matandela

COMMUNITY-LED RESEARCH RESILIENT FOOD AND WATER SYSTEMS

The <u>Trade-offs On Communal Areas in South Africa (TOCASA) project</u> worked with 6 communities in the Matatiele area of Eastern Cape Province to explore alternative rangeland management strategies that yield livelihood benefits for local people and improve ecosystem benefits.

The project tested the roles of intensive grazing and corralling of community livestock, in conjunction with removal of invasive alien plants to increase primary production of grassland, soil carbon and fertility and water availability, and improve livestock productivity. Modeling enabled assessment of multiple types of grazing and fire approaches without risk, and strengthened confidence in the *maboella* (seasonal grazing) approach.



WATCH THE VIDEO

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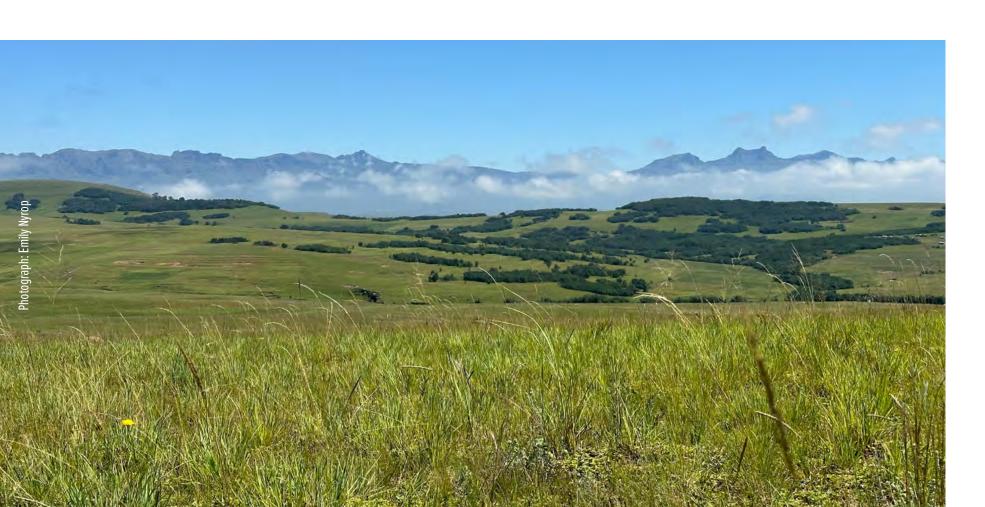
WILDER RANGELANDS:

GOOD FOR PEOPLE, CLIMATE, AND BIODIVERSITY?

A multidisciplinary team of researchers from South Africa and Europe uses the term 'wilder rangelands', to describe landscapes in which local people determine which ecosystem processes, wild plants and animals, and domestic livestock to restore.

In their theory of change the team describes how wilding can benefit the climate, biodiversity, and societies through diverse income streams. The form this takes and how it is monitored depends on the context: reintroducing a fire regime to bring back plant diversity and habitat for birds and invertebrates while providing grazing for domestic and wild herbivores, or restoring wetlands to encourage bird tourism. Other communities may decide to go all-in and re-introduce wild herbivores like eland and hartebeest that were there before, and build ecotourism around this. 'Bush thinning', another form of wilding that provides jobs and improved grazing, mimics the structure elephants once maintained, allowing other grazing animals to benefit from enhanced grass growth.

Conservation at scale demands data to support mounting evidence that wilder landscapes sequester more carbon, release less methane, control fire, reduce erosion, and allow the free flow of nutrients and water. We need to rethink land-use models with the people who live there, and rectify some of the unjust land tenure arrangements and disruptions of the past. Finally, to support classification of wilder rangelands as a natural climate solution, members of the same team are testing and co-creating a vision of wilder rangelands in the grasslands of the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany biodiversity hotspot.



A COMMUNITY-OWNED PLAN FOR CLIMATE RISK AND RESPONSE

Written by Malinda Gardiner

Local communities in 10 villages in the semi-arid shrublands of Namakwa District are leading conservation and climate resilience efforts with place-specific Climate Risk and Response plans for their villages and rangelands. Planning what to do to mitigate climate risks — and how to react and recover — are essential to the survival of vulnerable communities at the climate change coalface.

In November 2024, the community organised workshops to consolidate their input and update their plans. They noted, for instance, an increase in wind speed in Kamieskroon from 14 to 16 metres per second, which is considered a moderate gale. They also added ideas on how to shelter during extreme weather events, deal with damage to homes and speed up

search and rescue if people go missing during an extreme weather event. Community members also discussed the importance of shrublands to their culture: a degradation of shrublands, worsened by the impacts of climate change, would erode their way of life. Restoring shrublands is one way to ensure its survival.

Kamiesberg Municipality has invited communities and Conservation South Africa to include their plans in the municipality's Integrated Development Plan, which shows how communities are being empowered to advocate for changes to policy and how local wisdom can enrich and inform our collective knowledge.



10 CLIMATE RISK AND RESPONSE PLANS

2,500SEF JOBS (2022-2024)

Community members in Nourivier update the Climate Risk and Response Plan for their village and rangelands. Photo: Conservation South Africa

MVENYANE CLIMATE CHAMPIONS: BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

NUMBER OF COMMUNITY GROUPS THAT PARTICIPATED

YOUTH

GROUP

FARMER GROUPS

WOMEN'S GROUP

COMMUNICATION CHAMPIONS

14

WATCH THE VIDEOS

WOMEN

MEN



A NATURE-POSITIVE **POLICY LANDSCAPE** FOR SOUTH AFRICA AND BEYOND

Between 2021 and 2023 Conservation South Africa, Cl Liberia and CI Madagascar collaborated to convene stakeholders from civil society, the private sector, local communities and policymakers to share learnings on community-led natural climate solutions in rural communities. Community members communicated directly with policymakers in each country and learnings were shared with other Sub-Saharan African countries to inform global policy negotiations under the Convention on Biological Diversity and subsequent revisions of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans. The local programme, Voices from Africa, implemented at Conservation South Africa sites in Namakwa District and in Mvenyane in Alfred Nzo District, was financed through SwedBio, a programme for biodiversity and equitable development at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

KWAKTHI KE KALOKU KA NTSOMI – AND SO THE STORY BEGINS

Written by Zinathi Jikeka

In the rural community of Mvenyane, 10 climate champions – the Mvenyane Climate Women's Group – brought the SwedBio project to life through powerful storytelling. Participants shared how climate change threatened their livelihoods and how natural climate solutions, such as the 2021/2022 War on Wattle project, restored grasslands by clearing 2,310.11 hectares of grasslands infested with wattle. This effort revived critical water sources, such as the Vatrue River, and created jobs for 770 community members, transforming lives and building resilience.

These lived experiences became the foundation for a policy brief that shaped South Africa's contribution to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework – a testament to the power of people-led solutions.

> **RIGHT:** A Yes4Youth participant captures the story of one of Mvenyane's climate champions.

> > **Photo:** Danisa Mazinywana



RESEARCH

CLIMATE-FRIENDLY FUNGI

Vast underground networks of mycorrhizal fungi – fungi associated with root systems – are found in soil everywhere on the planet, from forests to grasslands to croplands. Even after they die, they play an essential role in retaining carbon in soil where about 75% of Earth's terrestrial carbon is stored.

A groundbreaking <u>study</u> led by Conservation South Africa scientist, Heidi Hawkins, quantifies the amount of carbon plants pull out of the atmosphere and send to mycorrhizal fungi. Hawkins says their potential to keep climate-warming carbon out of the atmosphere and in the soil is massive and may play a bigger role in the carbon cycle than anticipated.



Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi growing with a plant root. Photo: Dr. Yoshihiro Kobae

We always suspected that we may have been overlooking a major carbon pool. Understandably, much focus has been placed on protecting and restoring forests as a natural way to mitigate climate change. **But little attention has** been paid to the fate of the vast amounts of carbon dioxide that are moved from the atmosphere during photosynthesis by those plants and sent below ground to mycorrhizal fungi.

HEIDI HAWKINS, FUNGI: OUR NEW CLIMATE ALLIES?

PUBLICATIONS

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CASE STUDIES AND POLICY BRIEFS

CSA (2024) Kelp as a Natural Climate
Solution: Highlighting Kelp Adaptation
and Mitigation Opportunities and Gaps

CSA (2023) Policy Brief: Achieving South Africa's 30x30 target through strengthened local governance and traditional leadership

CSA (2023) Policy Brief: Voices from Africa

— Individual stories from Mvenyane's

Women's Climate Group

CSA (2023) Policy Brief: Essential role of community voices in biodiversity policymaking: examples from South Africa

Khomotso Mokono, Petra Holden, Graham von Maltitz, Mlungele Nsikani, James Gambiza, Barney Kgope, Jane Turpie, Amber Abrams, Gina Arena, Norman Mathebula, Vincent Mokoka, Lutendo Mugwedi, Alanna Rebelo (2024). Research themes for Ecosystem-based Adaptation in South Africa. University of Cape Town. Poster.

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WHO WE WORK WITH

Conservation South Africa's work is wholly dependent on partnerships with government, civil society and the private sector. We are deeply grateful for these collaborations and would like to thank the following organisations:

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT





LOCAL GOVERNMENT

DISTRICT MUNICIPALITIES





























EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

























UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN





NGOs AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES













Aligning with donors whose missions overlap with our own drives greater impact; they push us to grow, hold us accountable to our communities and encourage innovation. Long-term donor commitments build trust and belief within communities that inspires action. Communities that can see the results of their efforts take ownership, continue the work independently and encourage others to join them. Our sincere gratitude goes to all the individual donors, foundations, corporations and governments that sponsor our work so generously, and without which none of what we do would be possible.

Agence Française de Développement

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Kruger to Canyons Biosphere region Lima Rural Development Foundation

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One Tree Planted

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Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

Peace Parks Foundation (PPF)

Rob Walton Foundation

South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)

Susman, Simon

SwedBio/Stockholm Resilience Centre

Toyota South Africa Motors

Waverley Street Foundation

World Bank

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) South Africa

Youth Employment Service (Y4Y)

INVESTMENT AND AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

REVENUE

Conservation South Africa receives generous support from a wide range of foundations, individuals, businesses, governments, and multilateral agencies. This diversity of funding sources allows us to continue our work in our 3 landscape demonstration sites with the assistance of research and technical teams, as well as strategic support staff located in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

- In FY23, our revenue (R65 million) decreased by 34% compared to FY22 (R98 million), primarily due to the conclusion of the Jobs for Nature Programme, which supported over 700 beneficiaries through a short-term initiative in FY22.
- In FY24, our revenue (R112 million) increased by 72% compared to FY23 (R65 million), due to the Jobs for Nature Programme, which supported over 2,994 beneficiaries.

EXPENSES

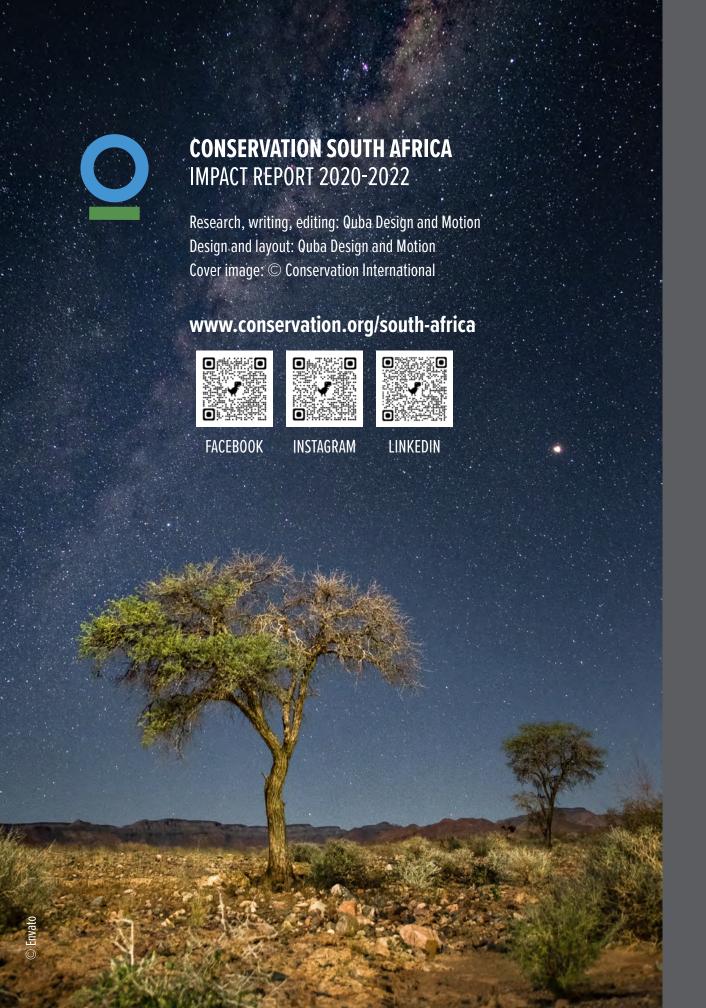
We strive to ensure that Conservation South Africa has robust systems in place to effectively manage and support our complex work across the landscapes and that it is fully accountable to a wide range of donors with rigorous compliance requirements, while carefully managing our costs to maximise funding of our programmes and partners.

- Expenditure in FY24 totalled R112 million, an R18 million increase from R94 million in FY22. This significant increase in expenditure was the result of programme costs associated with the Jobs for Nature programme.
- Our largest investment in FY24 was in our landscape demonstration sites, amounting to R73 million, or 65% of total expenditure. Additional investments were made in our support portfolios of research, policy, regional integration, and conservation finance.
- 81% of expenditure during the period under review is linked directly to implementation and management of project activities and only 2% of funding was allocated to overhead costs.

INVESTMENT AND AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

	2024	2023	2022
REVENUE			
Grants, Contracts & Contributions	R 108,903,528	R 61,495,021	R 86,335,814
Foundations	R 34,471,006	R 21,291,432	R 17,786,228
Individuals	R 3,310,076	R 7,032,309	R 4,394,832
Corporations	R 12,868,694	R 12,291,936	R 6,107,374
NGO / University	R 15,543,993	R 11,117,703	R 23,630,054
Multilateral	R 784,747	R 511,004	R 448
US Govt	R 39,493	R 0	R 0
Non US Govt	R 41,885,519	R 9,250,637	R 34,416,878
Other income	R 4,032,757	R 3,999,665	R 12,626,158
Miscellaneous Income	R 3,822,908	R 3,806,592	R 12,463,078
Investment Income	R 209,849	R 193,073	R 163,080
TOTAL REVENUE	R 112,936,285	R 65,494,686	R 98,961,972
EXPENSES			
Landscape Demonstrations	R 73,676,918	R 32,938,377	R 55,752,302
Namakwa Landscape	R 19,038,052	R 6,626,349	R 7,960,977
Umzimvubu Landscape	R 25,187,433	R 12,542,422	R 27,511,015
Kruger to Canyons Landscape	R 29,451,433	R 13,769,606	R 20,280,310
Regional Support Costs	R 20,325,976	R 17,138,590	R 14,096,037
Research and Technical Support	R 10,860,664	R 10,225,080	R 10,170,412
Executive & Leadership	R 4,887,918	R 4,268,673	R 12,502,770
Management & Operations	R 3,028,371	R 1,631,422	R 1,935,643
TOTAL EXPENSES	R 112,779,847	R 66,202,142	R 94,457,165
Change in Net Assets before Non-Operating Activity	R 156,438	R -707,456	R 4,504,807
Finance Costs	R 4,494	R 2,300	R 1,752
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS	R 151,944	R -709,756	R 4,503,055
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	R 3,032,846	R 3,742,601	R -760,454
Changes in Net Assets	R 151,944	R 709,756	R 4,503,055
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	R 3,184,790	R 3,032,846	R 3,742,601

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