

You cannot protect the environment unless you empower people, you inform them, and you help them understand that these resources are their own, that they must protect them.

WANGARI MAATHAI

*KENYAN SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVIST
AND FIRST AFRICAN WOMAN TO WIN THE NOBEL PRIZE*

WE NEED NATURE TO THRIVE

Empowering people to live sustainably is central to Conservation South Africa's philosophy and practice. In collaboration with communities, sponsoring partners, civil society groups, trainers and developers, scientific research institutions, government and other stakeholders, CSA empowers communities to develop skills and improve rural livelihoods through education, training and technology.

In 2018-2019 CSA helped 1,808 livestock farmers implement better rangeland management practices and access vaccinations and other essential veterinary services, as well as much-needed fodder during a period of intense drought.

A group of unemployed young people and eight women completed a twelve-month formal qualification in professional herding at the Herding Academy at the South African College of Tourism in Graaf Reinet.

Local farmers were assisted by livestock sales facilitated by Meat Naturally: 1,398 community farmers who participated in improved rangeland management activities were able to earn R10,879,000.00 between them.

Green jobs were generated for 759 individuals and 113 small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) were offered mentorship and training. Apart from alleviating poverty among rural families, this intervention fostered an understanding of the natural world and an awareness of the value of investing in sustainable rural economies.

CSA introduced 2,468 young people and 12 scout leaders to conservation methods, environmental awareness, career-mapping and entrepreneurship training. A further 2,437 schoolchildren were given access to technology through the provision of computer centres and other forms of digital media. They also participated in environmental outreach activities.

PEOPLE

PEOPLE

DEVELOPING LIVELIHOODS

With support from a farming cooperative affiliated to Conservation South Africa, a young woman was able to make a living as a goat farmer in the poverty-stricken Namakwa District, where unemployment is rife and opportunities for youth are minimal.

Candice Claasen and her four-year-old daughter live in an informal dwelling in Kharkams on the Leliefontein Commonage in the Namakwa District. Candice has a temporary job at the Community Work Programme and is taking Adult Education and Training classes in Afrikaans, Health Care and Life Orientation. Candice joined the Saamwerk Bewarings Inisiatief, an initiative to work together for conservation, and a farmers' cooperative supported by CSA. Her interest in livestock and farming, her engagement with the cooperative and her desire to learn prompted one of the farmers to give Candice a sickly goat, which she nursed back to health. Tourists who read Candice's story on social media financed a second goat. She now has three goats and her dream of becoming a goat farmer has become a reality. Candice is pursuing a career in sustainable livestock farming that promotes good rangeland management, protects the environment and provides her with a livelihood. In this way, CSA helps people like Candice to profit from protecting local resources.

SHEARING SHEEP FOR EXTRA INCOME

In 2018, Meat Naturally piloted a sheep-shearing enterprise in Colana, in the uMzimvubu Catchment. Twenty-one out of 22 farmers supplemented their incomes by shearing 754 sheep. Sheep-shearing had not previously been considered an option for generating income in the area. Over and above the income the farmers received from the sale of the wool, Meat Naturally generated a 15% profit from the experiment. A key factor was the efficiency of the operation, which made it possible to shear 150 to 250 sheep a day.

The success of this trial resulted in an overwhelming demand for sheep-shearing in 2019. Over 6,000 sheep were shorn at nine sites, and five new associations signed conservation agreements. Although the future market price for wool is unpredictable in the future, the need for the product is consistent. Through this pioneering experiment, Meat Naturally opened up an additional revenue stream and boosted the morale of local sheep farmers.

GREEN WORK EXPERIENCE FOR UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Conservation South Africa collaborated with YES for Youth, a business-led initiative that secures corporate sponsorships. YES for Youth aims to give work opportunities to one million unemployed young people.

In November and December 2019, 168 unemployed youth participated in a YES for Youth programme that provided training in career readiness for conservation-related work experience. Climate-smart work experience and ecosystem restoration work offer the youth short- to medium-term work exposure in a range of jobs over periods of one to three years.

Youth who complete the training can apply for work placements in rangeland restoration, ecotourism, disaster management and youth education across Conservation South Africa's demonstration sites in the Namakwa District and the Kruger Park to Canyons Biosphere, as well as at the South Africa College for Tourism, a non-profit facility run by Conservation South Africa's partner, the Peace Parks Foundation.

PEOPLE

ACCESS TO EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY, SPORTS AND RECREATION

Increasingly, empowering rural youth involves offering skills and knowledge to make use of digital platforms for learning and mentoring, research, job-seeking, access to essential services, and interacting with peers.

Acorns to Oaks

Acorns to Oaks Comprehensive High School was built in 2015 in CSA's Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region demonstration site as a centre of excellence for mathematics, science and technology. With an annual pass-rate well above the national average, the school is a regional support hub for other secondary schools in the region. A computer laboratory at the school enables both youth and adults to access the internet. In March

2019, state-of-the-art sports facilities, sponsored by Italtile, were launched at the school. Facilities include a soccer pitch and netball and tennis courts.

JSE investment challenge

In 2019, 68 learners from Acorns to Oaks and other schools in the area participated in a virtual trading game, which taught them basic economic principles and the value of investing in the future. Winning teams receive JSE stocks and a trip to the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Scouts

CSA facilitates safari tours for local scouts and school learners to encourage appreciation of the abundant wildlife in the Kruger National Park. More recently, virtual educational safaris have been introduced.



This programme is exciting for us since it will further embed the role of conservation in the country's job creation and sustainable development agenda. We expect to benefit a greater number of deserving youth through partnerships with more corporate organisations.

KGOMOTSO MATTHEWS
GREEN ECONOMY DIRECTOR,
CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA