

# BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP & ECONOMY NEWSLETTER

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



iSimangaliso  
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## About the Biodiversity Economy Project

The Biodiversity Economy Project is a five-year project, funded by the Global Environment Facility, that aims to boost the biodiversity economy around protected areas in South Africa. The project builds on South Africa's *National Biodiversity Economy Strategy*, which seeks to balance the conservation of biodiversity with sustainable use and achieve economic development and equitable distribution of benefits. The project is focussed on increasing benefits to local communities who are involved in conservation by improving the capacity to implement initiatives within the biodiversity economy.

The World Bank is the implementing partner for the Biodiversity Economy Project, which is executed by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), South African National Parks (SANParks), South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA) and iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority (IWPA).

Project activities will focus on three landscapes spread across the country in areas with strong potential for vibrant biodiversity economies. They include the Greater Addo-Amathole node in the Eastern Cape, the Greater Kruger-Limpopo node in Limpopo, and the Greater iSimangaliso node in KwaZulu-Natal. The project will work with communities in these nodes to bring biodiversity rich areas under conservation through the biodiversity stewardship programmes. It will also increase economic opportunities by providing support to small businesses, improving governance capacity, and benefit sharing to communities neighbouring protected areas.

For more information on the Biodiversity Economy Project, please contact Mahlodi Tau at [M.Tau@sanbi.org.za](mailto:M.Tau@sanbi.org.za) and Lucia Motloung at [LMotloung@dffe.gov.za](mailto:LMotloung@dffe.gov.za)

## About the Biodiversity Stewardship and Biodiversity Economy Newsletter

The Newsletter serves as an informative communication of the initiatives and activities being implemented in area related to biodiversity stewardship and the biodiversity economy. It contributes to raising awareness about the impact and benefits of conservation, to increase involvement and share knowledge with a broader audience.

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**Biodiversity stewardship** is an approach to securing land in biodiversity priority areas through entering into agreements with private and communal landowners, led by conservation authorities, with non-governmental organisations often playing a key supporting role.

**Biodiversity economy** encompasses the businesses and economic activities that either directly depend on biodiversity for their core business or that contribute to conservation of biodiversity through their activities.

# Greater Kruger Limpopo Node Co-ordinator takes pride in empowering communities

By Faranani Lalumbe

*Faranani Lalumbe is the appointed Greater Kruger Limpopo Node Co-ordinator. He shoulders a multitude of responsibilities, ranging from project management to building relationships with various stakeholders. Lalumbe emphasises ongoing efforts to provide leadership and governance support, including consultant-led training and small business incubation programs. Despite obstacles, the Co-ordinator takes pride in facilitating transformative initiatives...*

In the heart of Limpopo province lies the Kruger Biodiversity Economy node. Here Faranani Lalumbe, with deep roots in the community, serves as the Greater Kruger Limpopo Node Co-ordinator. With a background in Geography and Environmental Management from the University of the Free State, Lalumbe's educational journey equipped him with the understanding of rural geography and historical injustices, laying a solid foundation for this role.

Growing up in Hamakuya village, which neighbours the Kruger National Park, ignites his passion for community empowerment. An intimate knowledge of the community's needs drives a commitment to foster sustainable development in the area.

A Node Co-ordinator shoulders a multitude of responsibilities, ranging from project management to building relationships with various stakeholders. The role involves integrating biodiversity economy initiatives into local municipal planning processes and fostering collaboration with communities, municipalities and sector partners.

Reflecting on the challenges encountered, Lalumbe acknowledges that historical injustices were worsened by the conservation sector. In addition, there are internal community conflicts, and barriers to participation faced by women, youth, and those affected by illiteracy. Despite these obstacles, the Co-ordinator takes pride in facilitating transformative initiatives, such as a learning exchange between livestock farmers, which has paved the way for sustainable practices and progress in negotiations toward biodiversity stewardship declarations.

Looking ahead, the vision is to see communities actively leading sustainable biodiversity economy projects in



Faranani Lalumbe, Greater Kruger Limpopo Node Co-ordinator

the greater Kruger landscape. Efforts are ongoing to provide leadership and governance support, including consultant-led training and incubation programmes for Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). Additionally, a Small Grants Programme aims to support local infrastructure and essential needs, paving the way for investment-ready projects within the node. These activities are helping to develop capacity in the communities.

Beyond traditional economic sectors like tourism and game meat operations, there are emerging opportunities such as waste management and improved rangeland management practices. With funding opportunities already available, these can become integral components of the biodiversity economy, offering sustainable solutions that benefit both communities and the environment.

Faranani concludes by adding that the Biodiversity Economy Project will not only change perceptions but has also propelled negotiations toward biodiversity stewardship declarations in the future. The Kruger Biodiversity Economy node is in a position to become a beacon of sustainable development, where communities thrive while preserving the natural beauty of the landscape.



# Over \$700 000 awarded to community projects across three Biodiversity Economy Nodes

By Anele Moyo

*Over \$700 000 worth of grants have been awarded to 15 community projects under the Small Grants Programme to support community wildlife economy initiatives in the Greater Kruger-Limpopo, Greater Addo-Amathole, and Greater iSimangaliso Biodiversity Economy Nodes. These grants target marginalised communities and aim to contribute to South Africa's economy...*

A total of 15 projects have been awarded funding worth more than \$700 000 under the Small Grants Programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-SGP) across the three pilot biodiversity economy nodes of the Greater



*Ceramic products from Juja Clay, Greater Addo-Amathole Node.*

*Fifteen community organisations to receive small grants for wildlife economy projects*

Name of Grantee	Project title	Grant Amount (\$)
<b>Greater Kruger -Limpopo Node</b>		
Seloane CPA	Seloane community eco-tourism	50 000
Madilika Art and Craft Cooperative	Madilika arts and crafts	50 000
Mdluli Traditional Council	Community ecotourism project	50 000
Universal Greening Organisation	Awelani community conservation area project	50 000
Nsamana Community Development	Nsamana poultry farming	50 000
Hisekelani Community Cleaning	Hisekelani waste management	50 000
Ndindani Lala Palm	Ndindani Lala Palm (handicraft and agriculture)	50 000
Bushbuck Crafts	Bushbuck skin and hide production	50 000
<b>Greater Addo-Amathole Node</b>		
Likhayaletu CPA	Brakfontein Community Reserve: Abattoir and game meat production	50 000
NukaKamma Talent Development Centre	Youth hospitality training and placement; homestays and arts and craft	50 000
Juja Clay NPC	Ceramic training and beneficiation	50 000
Ekuphumuleni Kenton-on-Sea	Line fishing project	35 000
<b>Greater iSimangaliso Node</b>		
Dukuduku-Khayelisha Fisheries Coop	Sizabantu community fishing project	50 000
Siyazama St Lucia Market Primary Cooperative	St. Lucia arts and craft project	50 000
Nibela Fisheries	Nibela fisheries project	35 000





*Woman showcases her arts and craft products at Siyazama St. Lucia market, Greater iSimangaliso Node.*



*Hand-made fishing boat from Nibela Fisheries, Greater iSimangaliso Node.*

Kruger-Limpopo, the Greater Addo-Amathole and the Greater iSimangaliso. The Small Grants Programme is a corporate programme of the GEF implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, providing grant funding to communities and civil society organisations to enable them to implement projects in the conservation of the environment and climate change.

The projects focus on community initiatives around the wildlife economy, in support of the implementation of the 2016 National Biodiversity Economy Strategy

(NBES). The community projects will complement the ongoing efforts under the Biodiversity Economy Project implemented by the World Bank and executed by DFFE, SANParks, iSWPA, South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA) in the three identified project biodiversity economy nodes.

The GEF Operational Focal Point from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), Ms. Shakhira Parker, mentioned the news during a National



*Woman stands in front of glass bottles collected to make handicrafts from Madilika Craft Centre, Greater Kruger Node. Beads made from recycled glass bottles.*



Steering Committee meeting of the GEF-SCP that approved the grants. "We would like to thank SANParks and iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority for their support during the community consultations and application process in the three nodes and we are looking forward to working with them during the implementation of these projects," said Ms Parker.

Dr. Ozius Dewa the Chairperson of the SGP Committee in South Africa said, "On behalf of the Committee, we would like to congratulate the successful applicants and trust that the grant support will act as catalytic funding to aid in the growth of these community enterprises."

Committee member, Ms Busi Ngcobo said, "I am looking forward to these recipients using this funding for bigger things within their reach and for the growth of their social enterprises in pursuit of playing in the bigger economic space of South Africa. Even if they do not get to the level of big businesses, as long as they maintain a level of contribution to the country's GDP."

The funded projects will focus on game meat processing; curio production; community ecotourism; biodiversity conservation, small-scale fisheries, waste management, as well as enterprises feeding into park value chains through agricultural products.

## The Ndindani community Lala Palm Project to receive \$50 000 from the Small Grants Programme

*By Zandile Verna Ngobeni*

*Ndindani village in the Greater Giyani Municipality, adjacent to Kruger National Park, secured a \$50 000 grant for their Lala Palm Project. The initiative was started a decade ago and focuses on cultivating Lala Palm trees for various craft items...*

The Ndindani village is situated in the Greater Giyani Municipality within the Limpopo province and lies adjacent to the Kruger National Park. It has received approval from the United Nations Development Programme Global Environment Facility – Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) for a grant totalling \$50 000. The funds are earmarked to support their community Lala Palm Project. The community of Ndindani has been involved in different biodiversity projects, including the planting of medicinal plants in the village donated by South African National Parks.

Initiated approximately a decade ago, the Lala Palm Project is the brainchild of the Kruger National Park's Socio-Economic Transformation Department, supported by Total Energies and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. The primary objective of this initiative is centred on the cultivation of Lala Palm trees which can be used for crafting various items such as baskets, mats, chairs and more.

This is a long-term project, given that the Lala Palm trees require a considerable period to mature, which can take up to thirteen years or more before they can be utilised. Despite the challenge posed by such an extended



*The Ndindani Lala Palm Project.*

timeframe, the community project has persevered, planting almost 300 trees. Furthermore, members continue to learn handcraft skills from a group of women in the Limpopo province.

At present the project depends on an annual permit from SANParks, enabling them to harvest the Lala Palm plant.

They also continue planting additional Lala Palm trees fostering their growth and sustainability.

With the financial support from the GEF-SGP, they plan to implement essential upgrades including a new advanced irrigation system, a borehole system and other needs within the project.



Site validation visits at the Ndindani Lala Palm Project with the National Steering Committee of the Small Grants Programme.

## iSimangaliso Wetland Park empowers communities through writing workshop for funding proposals

By Mloni Mdletshe, supported by Zoleka Mkhize and Mpho Ratshikhophu

*The iSimangaliso Wetland Park team collaborated with local stakeholders to organise a transformative Proposal Writing Workshop in response to the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme. The workshop aimed to support local small business owners in completing project proposals for funding opportunities of up to \$50 000...*

In a recent collaboration between the iSimangaliso Wetland Park team and local stakeholders, a transformative workshop unfolded to boost community development. A call from the Global Environment Facility – Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) offered a lifeline opportunity for small projects seeking funding of up to \$50 000. The iSimangaliso Biodiversity Economy Project team responded by inviting local aspiring small business holders to a Proposal Writing Workshop in July 2023, to provide hands-on assistance with the completion of





project proposals and document submissions for the small grants programme.

The invitation was broadened to include departments, local municipalities, and representatives of the GEF-SGP who provided guidance and clarified queries related to project proposals. Communities living in and adjacent to iSimangaliso welcomed this opportunity and came out in numbers to listen and fill out grant application forms accordingly. This meeting came about after the SGP team visited iSimangaliso to present the call for proposals and

visited some small community-owned businesses that would like to be assisted through this funding.

Municipalities present included the Big 5 Hlabisa, Mtubatuba, Jozini, and uMhlabuyalingana, as well as the uMhlosinga Development Agency. Beyond paperwork, this initiative signifies a commitment to sustainable development as local community businesses and municipalities join forces. The workshop can become a catalyst for prosperity, echoing far beyond the borders of iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

## iSimangaliso Wetland Park conducts scoping exercise with potential project sites

*By Mlondi Mdletshe, supported by Zoleka Mkhize and Mpho Ratshikhopha*

*The iSimangaliso Wetland Park team conducted a successful scoping exercise to identify sites for the Biodiversity Economy Project, engaging communities, small businesses, trusts and traditional leadership to gather project and business ideas...*

The Biodiversity Economy Project team from iSimangaliso Wetland Park conducted a scoping exercise for the communities where project activities will be implemented. The identified projects will benefit communities living

in and adjacent to the Park in various ways, including creating businesses and job opportunities in the biodiversity economy value chain. During the visit, communities, including Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), trusts, and traditional leadership were provided an opportunity to share their project or business ideas that can be implemented as part of the Biodiversity Economy Project to support community development.

The recently established team of the Biodiversity Economy Project was introduced to stakeholders and communities by the Socio-Economic, Environment and Development Department of iSimangaliso Wetlands Park. The team



*Homestays in the kwaDapha community within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park.*

visited kwaDapha to meet with the community and view the state of homestays that will be rehabilitated through funding from the Biodiversity Economy Project. The team also visited Madlangula Boating Concessions to view the state of boats that are owned by the community and see how they operate. The Madlangula Boating Concessions had been trained and received their boating permits through the SMME programme of iSimangaliso Wetland Park. The Biodiversity Economy Project will also assist these communities by building a boat harbour where they will receive their passengers.

The team then visited Kosi Mouth to view a possible project site to build an eco-friendly high-end accommodation facility and uMkhuze Game Reserve to view the abattoir owned by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The purpose of this visit was to get an idea of how iSimangaliso can implement a community owned and operated abattoir through the Biodiversity Economy Project. The team also visited Mabasa traditional leadership to introduce the newly appointed project team

members and to discuss in detail how the implementation process will unfold for the Mabasa Community Conservation Area.

iNkosi Nxumalo, representing traditional leadership, guided the project team to the suggested community conservation area. The scoping process ended with the team visiting Makhasa to view the community-owned conservation area and also give community leadership a chance to engage with the team and identify their specific needs.

The scoping exercise was a huge success. It gave the project team an idea of the type of communities that they will be working with and how the Biodiversity Economy Project will help these communities to meaningfully participate in the biodiversity economy. This culminated in the appointment of Social Facilitators through the database of service providers of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park. To date, engagements with various stakeholders have commenced, including project beneficiaries, traditional councils, municipalities and other stakeholders.

## Unlocking economic potential at the Anglo-American Impact Finance Network

By Fhumulani Kevin Khobo

*The Kruger National Park team recently participated in a two-day event organised by the Anglo-American Impact Finance Network. The event aimed to showcase and explore diverse economic opportunities in Limpopo, fostering dialogue and support for enterprises and investors...*

In a bid to showcase and explore diverse economic opportunities in the vibrant region of Limpopo, the Kruger National Park team of the Biodiversity Economy Project recently participated in a two-day event organised by the Anglo-American Impact Finance Network. The event was held in October/November 2023 in Polokwane and served as a crucial platform for stakeholders to connect, engage and explore possible avenues for economic growth.

One of the primary objectives of the event was to facilitate meaningful dialogue and support for enterprises and investors in the region. By providing a space for engagement, the organisers aimed to bridge the gap between key players, fostering an environment conducive to collaboration and growth. The event successfully brought together decision-makers from various sectors,

creating a unique opportunity for networking and partnership building.

A noteworthy aspect of the event was its ability to showcase projects under the Global Environment Facility's seventh funding cycle (GEF 7). The Biodiversity Economy Project, aligned with the country's sustainable development goals, was presented to a diverse audience of investors and potential partners. The spotlight on the Biodiversity Economy Project initiatives not



Panel discussion session at the Anglo-American Impact Finance Network event. Picture by Fhumulani Kevin Khobo.



only demonstrated a commitment to environmental stewardship but also showcased the region's potential for sustainable and impactful investments.

The event underscored the vast array of opportunities available in the Limpopo province, ranging from

agribusiness and renewable energy to tourism and infrastructure development. Through showcases of investable opportunities and topical panel discussions, participants gained insights into the economic landscape of the region and identified areas ripe for growth and investment.

## Building resilient and sustainable wildlife economies in Africa

By Musa Floyd Mabasa

*The Business of Conservation Conference 2023 gathered conservation leaders, policymakers and experts to discuss "Building Resilient and Sustainable Wildlife Economies." The conference featured engaging sessions, including fireside chats with figures like Edward Norton, discussions on the Wildlife Economy Investment Index, and insights from parallel sessions on sustainable finance for conservation...*

In an exciting gathering of conservation enthusiasts and thought leaders, the Business of Conservation Conference 2023, was hosted by the School of Wildlife Conservation at the African Leadership University in Kigali, Rwanda in August 2023. The conference marked a significant milestone of the fifth Business of Conservation Conference. The conference brought together leaders from conservation, politics, business, government, technology, philanthropy, media and other fields.

Faranani Lalumbe, the Co-ordinator of the Greater Kruger Limpopo Node, and Musa Mabasa, a member of the Greater Kruger Limpopo Node team, had the privilege of attending this vibrant assembly of wildlife economy enthusiasts. It was sponsored by the World Wide Fund South Africa (WWF) – Khetha Program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Khetha Program is working closely with the Biodiversity Economy project in the Gidjana-Bevhula local community.

The overarching theme of the conference, *"Building Resilient and Sustainable Wildlife Economies"*, resonated with the commitment of the Biodiversity Economy Project to advancing wildlife economy efforts in the Greater Kruger region. The primary objectives of the conference included building a community that believes in Africa's wildlife economy, launching the Wildlife Economy Investment Index, and addressing the need for capable



Business of Conservation Conference 2023. Photo by Kwita Izina.



Musa Mabasa (right) and Faranani Lalumbe (left).

African conservation leaders. The emphasis was on turning conservation into an economic growth opportunity to ensure the well-being of current and future generations on the African continent.

The conference featured a diverse array of sessions, including virtual fireside chats, panel discussions, ignite talk sessions and parallel sessions.



*Panellists discussing the development of wildlife economies in Africa. Photo by Kwita Izina.*

Notable highlights from day one of the conference included an engaging fireside chat with Edward Norton, who emphasised the need for communities and governments to gain more from conservation-focused businesses. Dr Sue Snyman presented the results of the Wildlife Economy Investment Index, revealing South Africa's leadership in the rankings. Day one also witnessed discussions on the politics of conservation, the role of communities in the wildlife economy, and ignite talk sessions providing examples of successful projects in forest conservation and community carbon initiatives in Kenya. These sessions set the stage for meaningful conversations and collaborations.

Day two focused on the Jennifer Oppenheimer Memorial Fireside Chat, which highlighted philanthropic endeavours supporting groundbreaking initiatives like the Biodiversity Intactness Index. Discussions also revolved around creating an enabling environment for the wildlife economy, conservation leadership for Africa, and the essential role of women in conservation.



*Fred Swaniker (left) and Danai Gurira (right) on stage for a live fireside chat. Photo by Kwita Izina.*

Musa Mabasa of SANParks actively participated in parallel sessions hosted by the Sustainable Finance Coalition, gaining insights into sustainable finance for conservation. The Sustainable Finance Coalition emphasised integrated approaches and advocating for environmental tax incentives to encourage biodiversity conservation. In three sessions, the coalition discussed developing tailor-made finance solutions in landscapes and exploring the role of Conservation Trust Funds in catalysing sustainable finance. The key takeaways highlighted collaboration, strategic investment, flexibility, innovation and a community-centred approach.

The conclusion of the Business of Conservation Conference 2023 was celebrated with a lively gathering, celebrating the success of the event. Participants, including attendees, speakers, sponsors and organisers, engaged in a relaxed atmosphere, reflecting on the impactful discussions and collaborations that took place. The participants share a commitment to the cause of conserving Africa's natural heritage and building wildlife economies.

## Uniting forces for conservation: A transformative experience at the community practitioners conference

*By Noxolo Kindness Mbebe*

*The Greater Kruger Node team recently participated in the Community Practitioners Conference. The conference facilitated discussions, idea-sharing, and collaboration aimed at enhancing community well-being. Keynote speakers, including Mr. Oscar Mthimkhulu and Professor*

*Bram Büscher, highlighted the evolving landscape of community development and emphasised the pivotal role practitioners play in conservation...*

The Greater Kruger Node team of the Biodiversity Economy Project had the privilege of participating in the Community Practitioners Conference which was held at



the Wits Rural Facility in Limpopo in October/November 2023. The conference was co-ordinated and hosted by the World Wide Fund (WWF) – Khetha Program. It was an enriching and empowering event that brought together community practitioners from various backgrounds to discuss and share ideas for the betterment of communities.

The opportunity provided a platform for community practitioners, leaders and activists to exchange ideas, discuss key themes linked to their work, share success stories, and address challenges that many practitioners and organisations face when implementing community development projects. The diverse array of themes and attendees created a vibrant tapestry of experiences, creating an environment conducive to learning and reflection.

The keynote speakers, Mr Oscar Mthimkhulu, the Kruger National Park Managing Executive, and Professor Bram Büscher, from Wageningen University, set the tone for the event. They offered insights into the evolving landscape of community development, the crucial role practitioners play in shaping the future of conservation and radical ideas for a conservation revolution. Their passion and expertise ignited a collective sense of purpose among attendees, reinforcing the idea that together, we can make a substantial impact on our communities.

One of the standout aspects of the conference was the interactive panel discussions. These sessions covered a wide range of topics, from effective community engagement strategies to innovative approaches



*Tonderai Makoni, Vhembe Biosphere Reserve Director, shares his thoughts in a breakout session.*

for tackling common challenges. The networking opportunities were invaluable, allowing like-minded individuals who share a common commitment to community development to connect.

The Greater Kruger Node team extends their gratitude to the WWF – Khetha Program for hosting such a successful conference and providing the team with an opportunity to participate. The success of this conference reaffirms that when communities and organisations come together, we can create a stronger, more resilient future for our environment.

## Unlocking effective communication strategies for the two GEF funded projects in the Greater Kruger

*By Musa Floyd Mabasa*

*A Communications Planning Workshop focused on enhancing communication strategies for two Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded projects being implemented in the Greater Kruger region. Attendees participated in sessions to address communication challenges, identify audiences and about effective storytelling. The workshop used collaborative group activities, insightful presentations and comprehensive overviews of the GEF programmes. Participants left with a deeper understanding of the nuances of communication, equipped to contribute to more effective strategies for the success of GEF initiatives in the region...*

In an exciting and collaborative gathering, two projects funded by GEF 6 (*Strengthening Community Capacity to Reduce the Rate of Illegal Wildlife Trade*) and GEF 7 (*Biodiversity Economy Project*) took part in a Communications Planning Workshop in November 2023, at the Mopani Rest Camp in the Kruger National Park. Facilitated by the World Wide Fund – Khetha Program, the workshop aimed to enhance communications for internal and external stakeholders involved in the GEF projects in the Greater Kruger region.

The day kicked off with a warm welcome from the organiser Lara Rall, Project Implementation and Communications Manager, WWF South Africa, and



*Collaborative breakout sessions: Attendees engaging in group discussions, brainstorming and sharing insights on effective communication strategies for the Greater Kruger.*



*Noxolo Mbebe (right), Manager: Biodiversity Stewardship for the Greater Kruger Node, leading a group activity to identify internal and external stakeholders for the Biodiversity Economy Project.*

introductions of all those in attendance, setting the tone for a day filled with insightful presentations, collaborative group activities, and planning. Linda Hlengwa, GEF 6 Co-ordinator, and Faranani Lalumbe, Node Co-ordinator for the Biodiversity Economy Project (GEF 7) in the Greater Kruger Node, provided comprehensive overviews of their respective projects. Attendees gained valuable insights into the goals, priorities and expectations of both projects.

The first session delved into the critical aspect of communication challenges. A group activity aimed at identifying key challenges associated with both internal and external communication in their projects. The insightful presentations provided a foundation for understanding the areas that require improvement.

The importance of identifying key audiences was emphasised by the facilitator in the second session. Through a presentation on why audiences matter, participants engaged in a group activity to identify key stakeholders, understand their interests and acknowledge their needs. The session laid the groundwork for tailored communication strategies needed to effectively communicate with the various stakeholders in the Greater Kruger region.

Highlighting the power of storytelling, the third session focused on effective communication strategies. A presentation noted the impact of storytelling, and participants engaged in a group activity to identify impactful stories related to these two projects. Powerful suggestions emerged on how to ensure that positive stories in the region are effectively communicated by the co-ordinators and their teams.

The workshop concluded with a final discussion where participants shared suggestions about the need for further training, insights gained, key takeaways and everyone's



*Bridget Masina, from the Strengthening Community Capacity to Reduce the Rate of Illegal Wildlife Trade project (left), and Musa Mabasa, from the Biodiversity Economy Project (right) engaged in a discussion on impactful stories related to these two projects.*



contributions. The collaborative spirit throughout the day demonstrated a collective commitment to enhancing communication strategies for both projects.

In closing, the event underscored the significance of robust communication in fostering positive change.

Attendees left the workshop equipped with a deeper understanding of communication challenges, audience identification, and the power of impactful storytelling. The knowledge gained during this event is expected to contribute to more effective communication strategies, enhancing the success of these two initiatives.

## Greater Kruger Limpopo Node participates in meeting of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area co-operative agreement

By Faranani Lalumbe

*The Greater Kruger Limpopo Node Co-ordinator participated in the joint management committee meeting of the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area co-operative agreement. The meeting provided updates on their activities, which helps in leveraging support, identifying opportunities, and promoting collaborations with other key stakeholders in the landscape that are vital in catalysing finance and capacity in the Greater Kruger Node...*

The Biodiversity Economy Project, being a project facilitating biodiversity stewardship and the biodiversity economy in the Greater Kruger landscape, takes part in the quarterly meetings of the joint management committee of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) co-operative agreement, South African region. The Greater Kruger Node Co-ordinator participated in the quarterly meeting which took place at Timbavati Game Reserve in December 2023. The Biodiversity Economy Project was provided with a slot to present its report.

The governments of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique signed a treaty for the establishment of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park with the desire to promote ecosystem integrity, biodiversity conservation and sustainable socio-economic development across international boundaries.

The signatories of the GLTFCA co-operative agreement in the South African region, include communal property associations, private nature reserves, state-owned reserves, community trusts and non-profit companies in the Greater Kruger landscape. The parties have established a joint management committee to drive and co-ordinate the implementation of the agreement and to advance and



*Faranani Lalumbe, Greater Kruger Limpopo Node Co-ordinator, presenting at the joint management committee meeting of the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area co-operative agreement in Timbavati Game Reserve.*

represent the common interests of the parties in matters concerning the management of the Greater Kruger.

Officials responsible for operations within the Kruger Node have a slot in these meetings to provide an update on their activities, which also helps to leverage support, identify opportunities and promote collaborations with other key stakeholders in the landscape. The connections are vital in catalysing finance and capacity in the Greater Kruger Node.

# The Kariega Foundation's transformative approach to ecological protection and social services

By Wisani Lubisi

*The Kariega Foundation, established in 2017, shifted its focus from rhino protection to a broader approach of habitat and people in conservation, emphasising youth involvement. Through its vibrant youth development model, which incorporates social and emotional learning, the foundation aims to empower rural youth, rejuvenate communities and foster a collective will for conservation...*

Representatives of Kariega Private Game Reserve attended the community learning exchange organised by the South African National Biodiversity Institute in October 2023 at the Greater Addo-Amathole Node in the Eastern Cape. They presented on the collaboration between private game reserves and local communities, with a focus on community development. The presentation delved deep into the journey of the Kariega Foundation and its value added to the communities living near and around protected areas, particularly the youth.

The Kariega Foundation, established in 2017, originated with a primary focus on the protection of rhinos. Recognising the interconnectedness of habitats, wildlife and local communities, the foundation underwent a strategic shift, transitioning towards an approach of habitat and people in conservation. This pivotal decision led to the launch of the youth practitioners in 2018, emphasising the active involvement of young individuals in conservation efforts. In June 2019, Kariega Foundation strengthened its commitment by joining the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency's (ECPTA) biodiversity stewardship programme as part of INDALO, underscoring its dedication to sustainable conservation practices

that benefit both nature and people. The Foundation, comprised of nine game reserves in the Eastern Cape, registered as Protected Environments under the biodiversity stewardship programme, managing 12 500 hectares of land.

Through ECPTA, the Kariega Foundation has been involved in the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project, which integrates ecological, protection and social services in its conservation approach. The Foundation also plays a significant role in community development, aiming to create a sustainable impact by empowering local youth and fostering various forms of employment and skills development within the neighbouring communities. The emphasis on training and creating leaders from within the local communities reflects a thoughtful and inclusive approach to conservation efforts.

The Foundation has developed a vibrant youth development model that focuses on building the social, emotional and academic capacities of youth in rural communities living within and alongside conservation areas. The model aims to create socio-economic opportunities, rejuvenate communities and foster a collective will to protect and preserve wild animals and wilderness areas. The youth development model offers a range of development opportunities for youth across sports, environmental education and computer literacy. However, the unique and most transformative aspect of this program is youth development through social and emotional learning.

Social and emotional learning involves the systematic teaching of core skills and competencies that enable children and adults to break limiting patterns and



Youth development training.



mindsets inherited from growing up in poverty and under-resourced communities. It encourages a shift away from being emotionally reactive to daily challenges and experiences to choosing a response aligned with personal goals, values and the well-being of self and the community. The foundation teaches social and emotional learning from Grades 1 to 6 at local primary schools and integrates it into all aspects of the program.

The Kariaga Foundation has funding to train 10 youth development practitioners in 2024. The training, valued at R20 000 per candidate, will take place over six months. The Kariaga Foundation's youth development model is an excellent example of how investing in youth development through conservation can transform communities and contribute to sustainable development and environmental conservation.

## SANBI hosts the inaugural Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures Bootcamp

By Tshimangadzo Nndwakhulu and Ntwanano Mendes

*The primary goal of the National Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) Bootcamp was to formulate a plan outlining how the country could effectively implement OECMs. The bootcamp brought together experts and stakeholders to foster a comprehensive understanding of OECMs and establish a collaborative roadmap for their successful integration into South Africa's conservation initiatives...*

In a significant stride towards expanding conservation areas for sustainable development and livelihoods, the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and partners hosted South Africa's inaugural national Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) bootcamp. The event garnered support from various stakeholders representing all spheres of government, conservation authorities, traditional healers, conservation non-government organisations and research institutions.



Mahlodi Tau, officially opening the National OECMs Bootcamp.

The two-day bootcamp, held in November 2023, provided a collaborative platform within the biodiversity sector to share lessons from OECM pilot projects in Africa, fostering robust discussions on their successes, challenges and



A, delegates participating in discussions during the breakaway sessions; B, Nomsa Sibeko highlighting the spiritual and cultural aspect in the OECMs.

opportunities for implementation at national, provincial and local level.

Key thematic areas of discussions revolved around understanding the domestication of OECM criteria, legal frameworks, mapping, governance, institutional arrangements, and expanding OECM opportunities across South Africa.

The event commenced with an introduction on how OECMs can be integrated into South African conservation efforts and contribute to the expansion of the protected and conservation estate. The objective is to align the OECMs work with Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework and deepen the understanding of how this work can contribute towards achieving the 30x30 target. To achieve this will require an understanding of the OECMs definition in the South African context and establish a common plan for the implementation of the OECM programme of work.

The four comprehensive sessions addressed critical aspects. Firstly, a session on the legal framework and mapping aimed at finding an appropriate legislative framework for OECMs within the existing biodiversity legislation. Secondly, a session on the domestication of the OECM criteria explored the criteria applicable to various areas, such as terrestrial, marine and Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs). Participants assessed potential OECM sites, considering factors like communal land, private land, spiritual and cultural values, Ramsar Wetlands, biosphere buffer zones, wildlife ranching, and more. Thirdly, the session on governance and institutional arrangements focused on Standard Operational Procedures for OECMs at a national level, emphasising the need for endorsed Biodiversity Management Plans and practitioner capacity building. During the fourth session, the focus was on exploring opportunities for expanding OECMs, with a particular emphasis on landscapes. The session highlighted the importance of conducting additional assessments in marine spaces.



*Ayaka Peter, presenting the next steps for implementing OECMs.*

The bootcamp concluded with a roadmap for future actions, highlighting the urgency of creating specific metrics for South African OECMs, as it was evident that more unpacking of the OECM criteria was needed to identify and agree on these metrics. Additionally, integrating OECMs into the legal framework is paramount, recognising that finding the appropriate home for the mechanism will create policy certainty, improved credibility, legal security and a standardisation for implementation. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to work on building capacity for implementation through training and co-developed implementation strategies within provincial structures, and strengthening partnerships across the landscape to improve co-ordination and implementation by 2030.

As South Africa moves forward with OECMs, the bootcamp marked a significant step in achieving sustainable conservation and biodiversity goals. The insights and collaborative efforts during the event laid the foundation for a transformative approach to conservation and reaching the 30x30 target. Despite the progress, it's clear that there is still substantial work ahead as the event concluded.