

# MAXIMISE IMPACT

How can we maximise the impact from our conservation efforts?

by Dr Julia Baum



Red coral, Ponta do Ouro, Mozambique.



Mangroves, Mozambique.



Under its 'Mangrove Management Strategy' launched on 26 July 2020 the Mozambique government intends to bring environmental, social, and economic benefits to the people.





Coral reefs are some of the most diverse ecosystems on Earth. Known as the 'rainforests of the sea', they are home to more than a quarter of all marine species.



Photo © A Herbst



**IUCN Conservation Status:**  
Vulnerable



Photo © Benny Marty

Hippopotamus or hippo (*Hippopotamus amphibius*), St Lucia Estuary in iSimangaliso Wetland Park, which forms part of Lubombo TFCRA.



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wasted, especially when the design, planning, and implementation of conservation action lacks a long-term vision, a clear mission, and the inclusion of relevant stakeholders. All these aspects are key to creating impact.

**What does impact mean to you?**

Most dictionaries define impact as 'a marked effect or influence'. An influence is the weaker version of the explanation, as it is questionable whether an influence would last, whereas an effect speaks more of the journey towards a solid result.



I prefer the term 'change' when thinking about impact. An impact, to me, is an actual change of the status quo – a transformation that guides a context along a new trajectory into a different future.

**C**onservation is a vital yet challenging endeavour. Its complex context often presents obstacles towards achieving success. Efforts can go



**CASE STUDY 1:**

**Marine and coastal protection within the Maputo Environmental Protection Area, Mozambique.** The park, co-managed by ANAC and Peace Parks Foundation, falls within the Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation and Resource Area (TFCRA) and is one of the most biologically diverse and endangered ecoregions on Earth. Sitting at the core of the programme are four highly functional, beneficial habitats: mangroves, seagrasses, coral reefs, and dune systems.



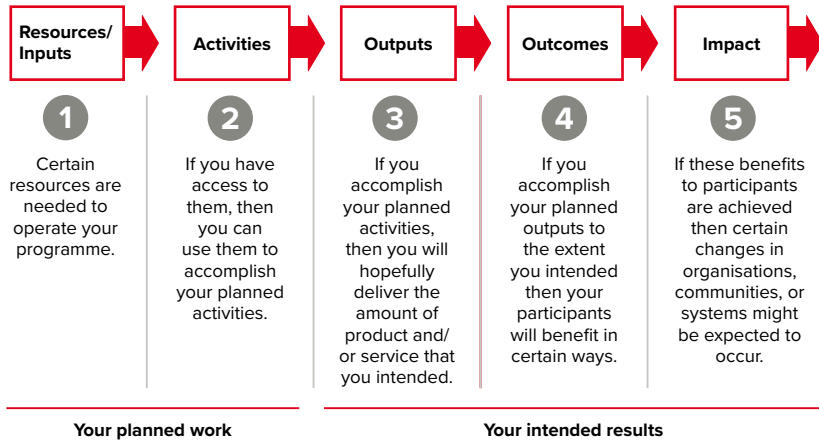
Scan the QR code or visit [www.peaceparks.org/blue-action-fund-boost-marine-protection-in-mozambique](http://www.peaceparks.org/blue-action-fund-boost-marine-protection-in-mozambique) to read all about it.





Photos © JC Strauss

Image 1:



Impact is the big-picture end result that you intend to achieve through your personal activities, which have direct outputs and lead to desired outcomes (see image 1). For example, based on received funding, you design and conduct training for up-and-coming wildlife rangers (your activities), which leads to 20 participants graduating (your output). All these new rangers find employment in protected areas, and apply the methods they have learnt (your desired outcome). This leads to several overarching successes (your intended impact), such as secured livelihoods, improved skills to manage wildlife, and an increase in tourists visiting the areas.

Note that only the activities carried out within your planned work are fully under your control. Outputs, outcomes, and impact are less controllable in declining order. Yet, there are ways of channelling your overall success: i.e., by building your theory of change. In other words, designing a framework that helps you to implement your activities and monitor everything else.



Photo © JC Strauss

**CASE STUDY 2:**  
**Environmental Monitors training at Eco Ranger Academy, South Africa.**

The National Environmental Monitors Programme started as a response to rhino poaching that increased over a number of years and has now grown to cover all biodiversity challenges. An objective of this programme initiated by South African Government is to provide additional support for hosts (wildlife reserves and conservancies) through conducting patrols, biodiversity monitoring, research, and environmental awareness creation in communities. Another core objective is to provide capacity for hosts to achieve their mandates for biodiversity and ecosystem services through selected skills development programmes.



Scan the QR code or visit [www.ecoranger.co.za](http://www.ecoranger.co.za) to read all about training courses offered by Eco Ranger Academy.



Photo © JC Strauss



“ Impact is the big-picture end result that you intend to achieve through your personal activities, which have direct outputs and lead to desired outcomes. ”

**1 Firstly**, start with the big picture. What is the end result that you want to achieve? Why are you engaging in the work you do? Contemplate the purpose of your action. This is your **vision**. It entails your intended impact.

**2 Secondly**, work backwards towards more detail. Ask yourself what you need to do to make this vision a reality. Through which strategies can you attempt your work? This is your **mission**. It entails your desired outcomes.

**3 Thirdly**, break down your mission into small, actionable steps. Which outputs do you want to produce? This is your **action**. It helps you to identify your activities and the resources you will need.



Photo © Kate Thompson-Gory

Photo courtesy of Kruger to Canyons UNESCO Biosphere.



 An all-women Environmental Monitors team, in action: Overseeing our heritage, the Kruger to Canyons (K2C) cluster.

Employing this process will lead to a better understanding of your challenges and opportunities. It will shape a frame of reference for your specific context, which you can revisit whenever you feel the need to refocus. Such a theory of change is usually developed at organisational scale, yet it can be applied even when planning a single project. It also creates a dynamic cycle because you should ideally measure your impact, analyse any lessons learnt, and improve your action going forward.

White rhinoceros or square-lipped rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*).

Photo © Quintus Strauss



IUCN Conservation Status:  
Near threatened.

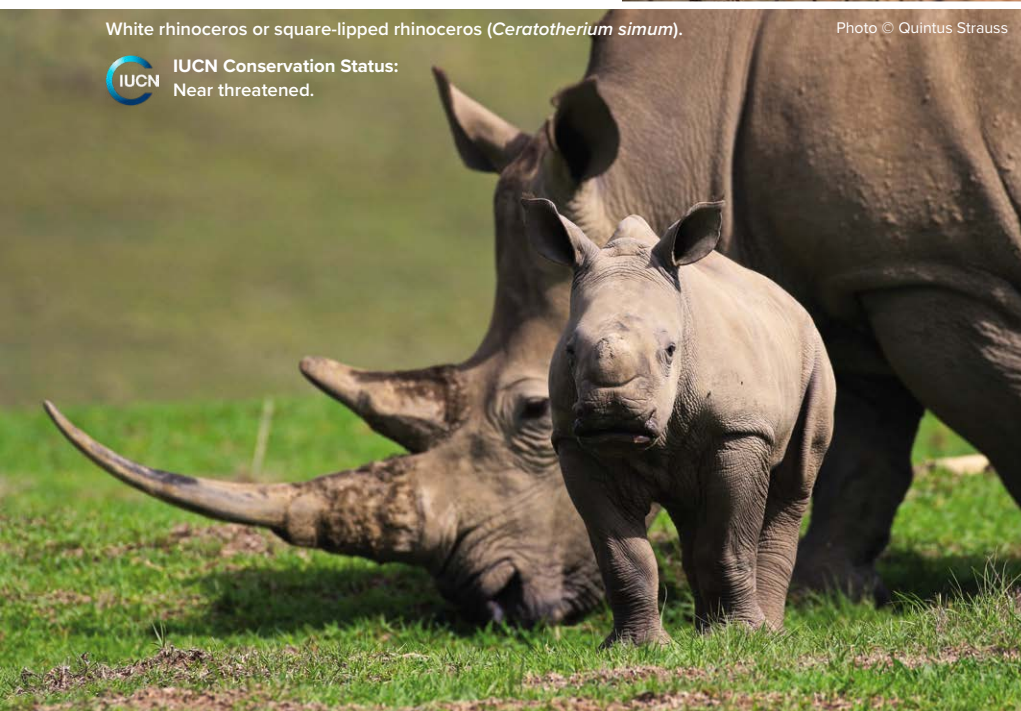






Photo © Alta Oosthuizen



African bush elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) utilises trees such as marula (*Sclerocarya birrea*) for nutrition and may strip bark, break branches or push trees over as they forage.



IUCN Conservation Status: Endangered.



Just once a year, in February and March, marula trees bear delicious fruit. The elephants are drawn by the mysterious scent and travel far for a taste.

### What does conservation mean to you?

Internationally, many voices state that biodiversity is under continuous loss and ecosystems are under continuous degradation, despite decades of conservation efforts.

### The question is: where is the effect of all our efforts? Why have we not yet achieved a reverse trend?

In my opinion, there are two key aspects to be considered in this light: **the meaning of the impact**, and **the inclusion of audiences**.

**1 First**, conservation seemingly has to go way beyond its activities. Efforts need to be better explained as contributing towards a desired big-picture result. The **meaning** of such intended impact needs to be better defined and

emphasised. What is the overarching vision, and why is change desirable? Often, conservation efforts seem to take place through limited concepts that do not communicate such broader meaning sufficiently clearly.

**2 Second**, conservation seemingly has to become more aware of its **audiences**. Who is involved or affected, and at what point during the process? Who will (or will not) benefit from the change? Who can and wants to (or can't and does not wish to) support achieving the desired results?

I believe that in many scenarios, there is a strong disconnect between the intended impact and its potential audiences. Meaning gets lost. Phrased differently: are the conservation efforts speaking to all **relevant** audiences? Some audiences may not be immediately apparent. They may have to be identified, and proactively engaged.





**CASE STUDY 3:**  
**The Amarula success story, South Africa.**

The Amarula Trust is responsible for the conservation and community projects that help to protect elephants and provide people with a better quality of life. The Trust was established to manage Amarula's corporate social investments under one umbrella and the Amarula Trust supports over 60 000 rural people in the Phalaborwa region. Community members hand-harvest the ripe, yellow fruit from which juice is collected for processing.



Scan the QR code or visit <https://amarula.com/en-za/amarula-trust/> to read all about it.

Biodiversity, ecosystems, and their resources are the fundament of our existence and well-being. Conservation, or the sustainable use as well as protection of nature, needs to become mainstream.

**All sectors** of society should act accordingly. Nature needs to be valued as the asset it actually is.

This is the concept of the **conservation economy**. Conservation-related action should no longer be perceived separately from social and economic action. Indeed, the three types of action

should all be integrated so that they can contribute significantly towards restructured value chains, and ultimate transformation. The largest potential for managing such integration is **leveraging partnerships**. Partners can be encouraged to share knowledge, collaborate, design, and implement new solutions in a cross-sectoral manner, with the goal of incorporating their capacities that may range from financial, legal, and technological, to marketing-related and more.



**PLCNETWORK OF THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE**

PLCnetwork of the Southern Hemisphere is a unique networking platform and consulting firm with a passion for private land and community conservation across South America, Africa, and Asia & Pacific.

Our vision is to achieve a paradigm shift in the conservation sector towards a global conservation economy for inclusive transformation.

Our mission is to apply a *Conservationpreneurship* approach to implement community development and nature-based solutions with conservation actors.



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- [info@plcnetwork.co.za](mailto:info@plcnetwork.co.za)



**→** Amarula first appeared on the South African market in 1989 and has since grown into a world leader and been ranked sixth in a Top 10 Hot Liqueur poll by the respected publication Drinks International. It is enjoyed in more than 160 countries on every continent.

With a shared vision and mission, carried out by partners through combined social, economic, and environmental activities, conservation can achieve its positive impact. ■