



# CATALYSING WOMEN-LED CONSERVATION IN AFRICA

**Summary:** WildTeam UK is launching a 3-year education project that will provide 600 African female conservationists with training bursaries to cover the costs of online courses in key conservation skills. These skills will help them progress their careers, raise more conservation funds, and conserve wild areas more effectively. This will lead to indirect social and economic benefits for the conservationists involved and their families. This project will help create a more diverse and inclusive conservation sector and help mobilise the people power needed to meet the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. We have already secured some matching funds for the project and are now looking to raise the remaining funds needed to cover the costs of training bursaries and staff time.

[www.wildteam.org.uk](http://www.wildteam.org.uk)

Registered charity in England and Wales number 1149465

## Challenge

There is a lack of diversity and equity in the wildlife conservation sector, which is dominated by white men from relatively rich backgrounds. Women have historically been underrepresented in all levels of environmental and conservation decision making (1). Women also face discrimination that impedes their career as a conservation professional (Box 1). This situation is even more difficult if they are black, indigenous or a person of colour, all of whom continue to be underrepresented in conservation organisations (3) and disenfranchised from conservation practices in general (4). These conditions are particularly acute in African countries with a colonial past (5).

As well as this situation being unjust, it also means conservation efforts will continue to fail, because we are mobilising only a tiny, unrepresentative fraction of the people power needed to meet the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. The lack of diversity in the sector, particularly in leadership positions, also means that many conservation projects will not reflect the values and aspirations of those affected at a national or local level. This situation is caused, in part by a lack of access to the professional conservation skills training that could otherwise help progress conservationists' careers (Box 3).

## Solution

In this 3 year education project, we will provide 600 African female conservationists with training bursaries to cover the costs of WildTeam online courses in key conservation skills such as leadership, project planning, and stakeholder engagement.

The skills they gain are expected to help them progress their careers, raise more conservation funds to support their work, and conserve/restore wild areas more effectively (Box 3). This will lead to indirect social and economic benefits for the family of each conservationist and the many thousands of local community members involved in the conservation projects that the trainees are working on.

### Box 1. Barriers to women conservationists.

*"The vast majority of women conservation leaders reported encountering four or more of these challenges: Salary inequality and difficulty negotiating, formal exclusion, informal exclusion, harassment and inadequate organizational response, assumptions of inadequacy, and assumptions of wrongness."* (2)

### Box 2. Demand and accessibility of professional conservation training.

From our 2022 survey of 275 conservationists, we know that the average conservationist wants to take 4 of the 6 courses WildTeam offer, but 92% of conservationists could not afford to cover the training course cost.

### Box 3. Training testimonial.



*"I would recommend WildTeam's courses because it is a marvellous learning experience that brings important and relevant contents to anyone who wants to know more about how to manage wildlife projects"*

**Lu Cambula, LUPA, Mozambique.**

Ultimately the spectacular, rich biodiversity of Africa will also be better protected in the long-term. These emerging female conservation leaders will also help inspire the next generation of women to get involved. These benefits are expected to continue for the 20-30 year career of each conservationist. We will measure the impact of this work through the number of skills gained (assessed through course exams), and an annual survey to assess how the training has benefited the career and work of those involved.

## Team

**WildTeam UK** is a registered charity in England and Wales (number 1149465). At WildTeam we believe every conservationist should have access to the education (they need to progress their career and ultimately make a meaningful difference to our natural world, no matter who they are and where they are from. Since our inception in 2012, we have:

- **Developed 5 best practices**, which have been downloaded over 4,000 times (Figure 2).
- **Trained over 1,400 conservationists** who have applied their new skills to progress their careers (30% reporting taking on more responsibility at work, 7% reporting securing a conservation job) and collectively manage 5.25 million km<sup>2</sup> of wild areas more effectively.
- **Created the online WildHub community** with 3,000 members across 140 countries.



This project will be managed by WildLearning specialist Dr Beth Robinson, who has a PhD on conservation and certification as an adult learning professional. Beth has 6 years of experience designing, creating, and delivering courses in professional conservation skills.

## Budget

This 3 year project has a total budget of £186,000, of which we have already secured £82,000. We are looking for contributions to help cover the remaining **£104,000** (Table 1).

**Table 1. Project budget.**

Funding	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Secured	£35,000	£27,000	£20,000	£82,000
Requested	£27,000	£35,000	£42,000	£104,000
Total	£62,000	£62,000	£62,000	£186,000



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