

One Future
Africa Year
in Review
2024

The Nature
Conservancy 

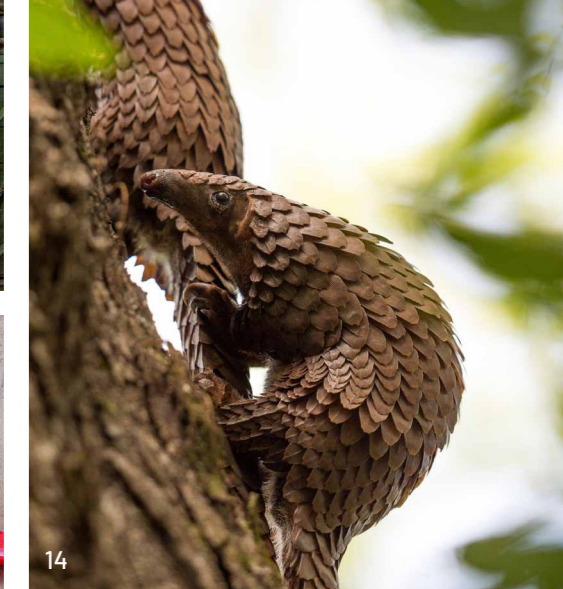




**Pamoja.
Ensemble.
Saam. Junto.
Together.**

As we face the urgent and unprecedented challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change, we are determined and hopeful. Why? Because of the power of science and partnership —with local organizations, communities, governments, the private sector, and **YOU**.
Together, We Find a Way.

Cover: Cheetahs, Tarangire National Park, Tanzania © Brenden Simonson. **Left:** Prisca Urrio (center), a gender and education officer for TNC, meets with members of the Wanawake Ukakamavu Community Conservation Bank who gathered to clean the fish landing site in Rukoma Village, Lake Tanganyika, western Tanzania © Roshni Lodhia.



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Place + Pathways

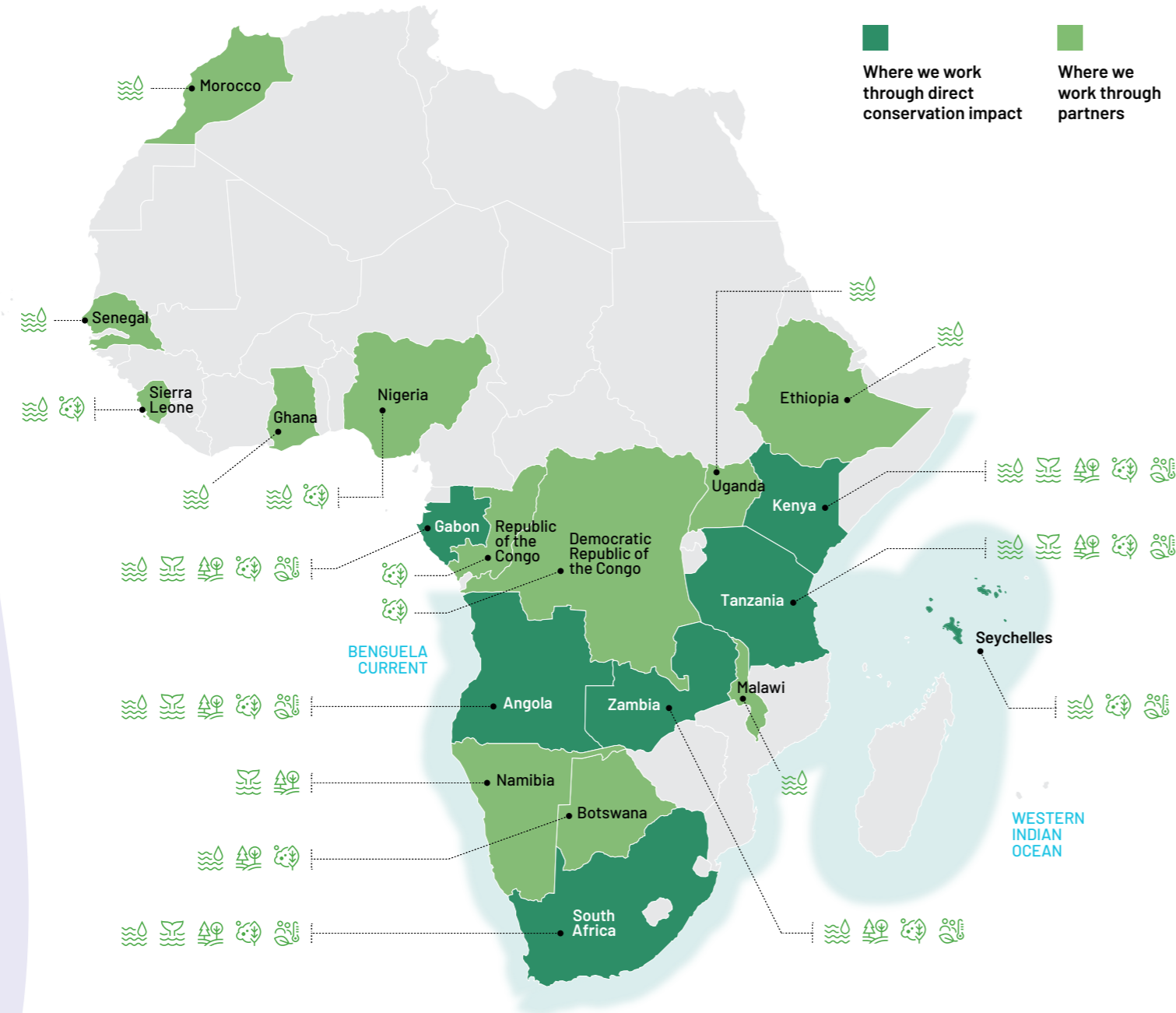
When TNC began working in Africa in 2008, we used science to identify the most ecologically important places to protect. We recently updated this prioritization analysis, integrating the impacts of climate change, and refined our regional strategic plans in alignment with TNC's Global 2030 Goals. These are ambitious targets to address the interconnected crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Our pathways to success are:

Protect ocean, land, and fresh water

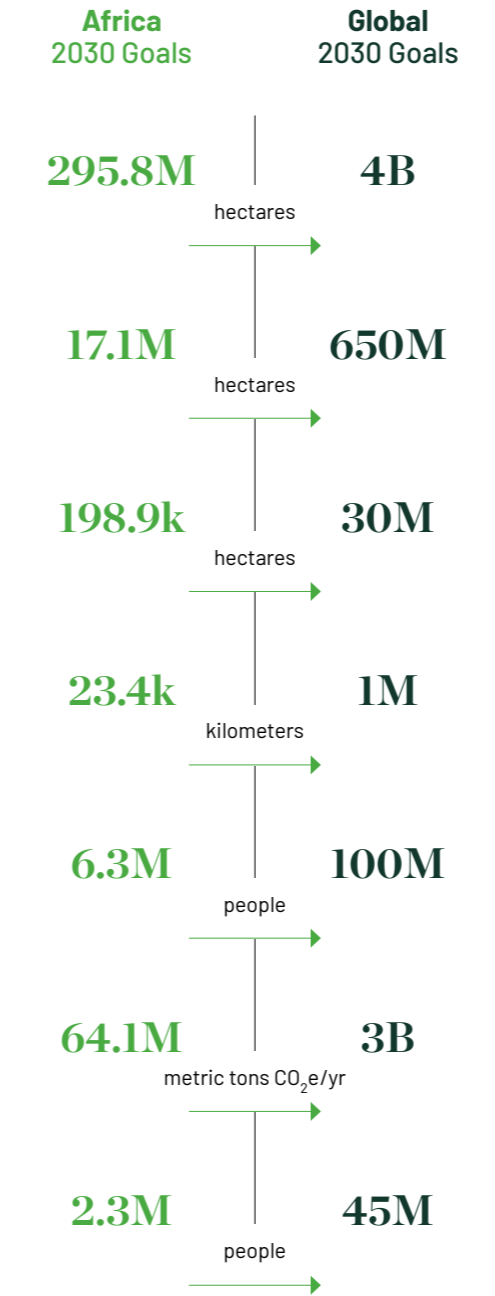
Tackle climate change

Provide food and water sustainably

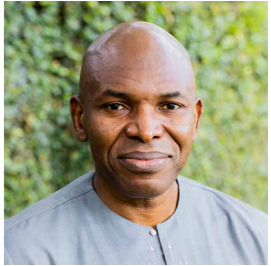
To achieve the 2030 Goals, TNC launched a global fundraising campaign, **One Future: Together, We Find a Way**. Our work will not stop in 2030, but the actions that people take now are vital to set us on a course to a livable climate, healthy communities, and thriving nature.



- Healthy Oceans
- Healthy Lands
- Lakes & Wetlands
- River Systems
- Climate Adaptation
- Climate Mitigation
- People Benefiting



One Future: Together, We Find a Way



Dear Friends,

Over the past year, I've had the privilege of visiting some amazing places where we're making a difference in Africa—together. From Freetown to Cape Town, this continent is a mosaic of stunning forests, rivers, savannas, and much more. Yet the plant that most inspired me in 2024 will surprise you: cabbage.

In July, I visited Kinangop, a village 40 kilometers from Nairobi, in the watershed of Kenya's mother river, the Tana. TNC began working here five years ago to reduce pressure on the river and the wildlife-rich upriver forests of the Aberdare Mountains. Research revealed that achieving our goals would require partnering with local organizations and government—and more than 50,000 farmers who carve out their lives on steep slopes between tree line and riverbank.

On this trip, I met Beth Macharia on her 1-hectare farm, where rows of cabbages lined the red Kenyan soil. With pride, Beth shared her inspiring story. Previously, she grew 300 cabbages per year, watering them manually from a hand-dug well. Now, with two 100,000-liter rainwater harvesting pans and water-saving drip irrigation equipment provided by the water fund, she grows 15,000 heads, including in the dry season, when cabbages can fetch up to 70 shillings each, compared to as little as four shillings each during the rest of the year. She now earns over \$15,000 annually, income that she is using to upgrade her family's home, establish a tree nursery, and support her two children through university.

To me, Beth's story captures why I am so driven to achieve the 2030 Goals—and why I feel confident that, together, we will. The crises of biodiversity loss and climate change demand that we work at ever greater pace, scale, and complexity. Yet TNC has demonstrated that when local people are meaningfully engaged and conservation makes their lives better, we find new ways to create a brighter future.

With 2024 coming to a close, I hope you'll take a moment to celebrate Beth's story and the other inspiring stories and great news you'll find in the pages ahead. On behalf of the entire TNC Africa team, I extend my sincerest gratitude for your partnership in this grand story that we share.

Kind regards,

Ademola Ajagbe, Regional Managing Director, Africa

Protect Ocean, Land, and Fresh Water

Africa holds unparalleled opportunities for conservation on sweeping scales at a fraction of the costs seen elsewhere in the world.

Habitat loss is the greatest threat to biodiversity, contributing to a 70% decline in wildlife populations globally since 1970. Though Africa still holds vast wilderness areas, a devastating amount has been lost. For example, just 5% of historical lion habitat remains today. With climate change pushing us to work faster and smarter to increase protection of priority ecosystems, we are building from our successful site-based projects and working at ever-larger scales.

There is an extraordinary opportunity before us: Nearly 200 nations, including all in Africa, have committed to 30x30—an international agreement to protect 30% of the world’s land, freshwater, and ocean habitats by 2030. With our strong local partnerships and global team of experts, we are well positioned to support nations to achieve this ambition. Here we highlight 2024 milestones that illustrate our three pathways to success: **Transformative Management and Protection, Nature Bonds, and Enduring Earth.**

“Most of Africa’s wildlife live in places stewarded by Indigenous and traditional communities. We aim to support them to lead on—and benefit from—conservation.”

Patricia Mupeta, TNC Global Director of Human Rights in Conservation

MILESTONE ►

We are working with the Enduring Earth coalition to support Kenya to conserve an additional 3% of its land to reach a total of 30% by 2030, and to effectively manage the combined 18 million hectares. Community conservancies make up most of Kenya’s conserved land, so we conducted the first-ever comprehensive national assessment of wildlife conservancies to guide our work to strengthen the model and deliver benefits that matter most to local people. We also supported the Kenya Wildlife Service to create a national plan to address human-wildlife conflict challenges and compensate those who suffer losses.

Get Wild! Watch episodes of a Kenyan TV series that feature *TNC at nature.org/NTVWild*.

Right: Reticulated giraffes, Samburu National Park, Kenya © Panoramic Images/Alamy Stock Photo.



PROTECT OCEAN, LAND, AND FRESH WATER MILESTONES



■ TRANSFORMATIVE MANAGEMENT | ZAMBIA

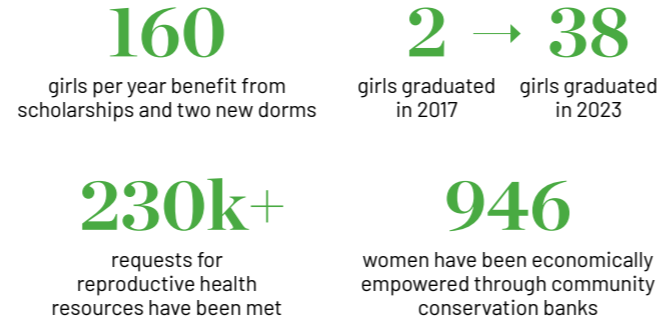
This year, we signed a sweeping formal partnership with the national government to transform natural resource management across millions of hectares of community lands that encircle Kafue National Park. The agreement enables us to expand efforts with partners to support communities to manage their resources sustainably and derive tangible benefits from them. It puts TNC into the role of lead partner, supporting the government; coordinating the work of partners; disbursing funds from public and private sources—including \$15 million of foreign government aid—to the most effective entities; and ensuring delivery of outcomes. Our community-centered efforts complement a parallel partnership between African Parks and the Government of Zambia to strengthen management of the park itself. Combined, we are advancing conservation across a 6.8-million-hectare landscape.

■ NATURE BONDS | GABON & SEYCHELLES

In 2023, TNC and the Government of Gabon completed a Blue Bonds for Ocean Conservation deal, which refinanced \$500 million of national debt and is expected to generate \$163 million for conservation. The government has now put key implementation components in place, including a steering committee and structure for effective and transparent financial management, and can now begin developing a marine spatial plan (MSP) for protection and sustainable use of 30% of its ocean territory.

TNC's first Blue Bonds for Ocean Conservation deal in Africa was completed in 2016 with the Government of Seychelles to refinance part of its national debt and generate up to \$430,000 per year for conservation and climate adaptation. The government is nearing completion of its MSP, which will span 1.35 million square kilometers of ocean.

Tuungane Project gender empowerment



■ TRANSFORMATIVE MANAGEMENT | TANZANIA

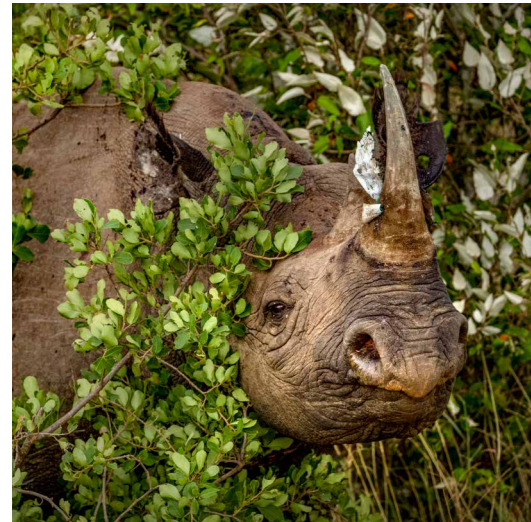
The Greater Mahale landscape is home to 90% of Tanzania's chimpanzees. Here, we are supporting communities to develop Village Land Forest Reserves (VLFRs) and new forest-friendly enterprises such as beekeeping. This year, seven new VLFRs were created across 44,090 hectares in a priority corridor for chimpanzees, bringing the total to 30 VLFRs encompassing 208,000 hectares. We also supported training for 60 community scouts to monitor and protect the reserves.

This work is part of the holistic Tuungane Project, named for the Kiswahili word meaning "let's unite." Through Tuungane, we collaborate with Pathfinder, other partners, and communities to integrate forest and freshwater conservation with improving lives for local people, from better health care and education to improved food security and economic opportunity.

Left: Lechwe, Kafue National Park, Zambia © Morgan Trimble/Alamy Stock Photo. **Right:** Trained scout Rosie Namba, Greater Mahale landscape, western Tanzania © Roshni Lodhia.



Black Rhinos Return to Loisaba



On a Monday, it was Barry's turn. He'd grown up on Lewa Conservancy as the youngest calf born to Solio, one of the first female black rhinos at Lewa. Over the course of his 12 years, Barry had seen dozens more rhinos born in this secure and peaceful home.

To the untrained eye, Lewa's 93,000 acres look like plenty of space for 260 rhinos to live. But when a rhino sanctuary reaches a certain number of animals, the rhinos stop breeding and begin fighting.

So Barry was likely ready to be somewhere less crowded—a wide open space with lots of food, water, and room to roam. Luckily for Barry, he was headed to the brand-new rhino sanctuary at Loisaba Conservancy.

Preparing a new home

Eastern black rhinos were almost hunted to extinction in the 1970s and '80s, but collective action and investment from government, communities, donors, and conservation organizations prompted a remarkable recovery from fewer than 300 individuals to more than 1,000 today. The main limiting factor now is space. The 2024 opening of Loisaba's rhino sanctuary—Kenya's 17th—has reduced crowding elsewhere and will contribute toward increasing the overall population.

Loisaba's journey to host rhinos began when TNC's donors and other partners protected this incredible landscape from development. Loisaba then spent years preparing for the rhinos' arrival, and experts studied the area to ensure the habitat would be suitable. New infrastructure was built, including a rhino-proof fence that encircles about half of the conservancy and keeps rhinos in while allowing other animals to go over, under, through, or around it. In addition, rhino rangers were hired from local communities, and high-tech monitoring equipment was installed.

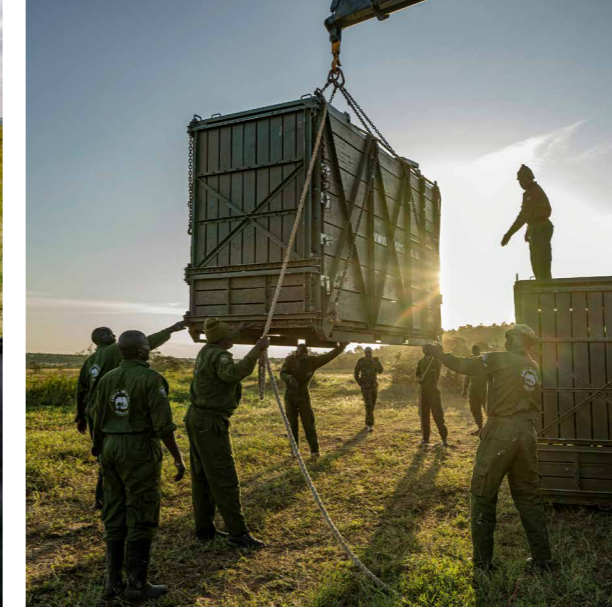
Funding raised by TNC, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, and Space for Giants is covering five years of operating costs, including ongoing veterinary care, habitat management, and community awareness.

An orchestrated operation

Led by Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the mammoth relocation effort required the close collaboration of a large team of partners. The 21 rhinos were moved over the course of about two weeks in January, three at a time. KWS veterinarians provided expertise with tranquilizing and handling rhinos, round-the-clock monitoring, and quick thinking in the face of unexpected challenges.

Since the operation concluded, Loisaba rhino rangers have been keeping a close eye on the new residents through GPS tracking and visual observation. The rhinos have settled in quickly and love is already in the air: As of August, 12 of the 21 rhinos have been involved in mating activity.

Every rhino represents promise for the survival of the species, and we hope new arrivals in 2025 will continue their baby steps away from extinction.



Clockwise from top: KWS veterinarian Dr. Mukami Ruoro-Oundo darts a black rhino in Nairobi National Park, Kenya; black rhinos arrive at Loisaba Conservancy in special transport containers; the Ewaso community lines the street to welcome the first black rhinos back to this landscape since the last one was poached about 50 years ago; KWS experts and locals from nearby Morijo Village watch as rhinos are released. **Left:** Diamirza, a female black rhino, settles into her new home. All photos © Ami Vitale

Tackle Climate Change

Africa is home to vast forests, grasslands, and ocean ecosystems that absorb enormous amounts of carbon every day.

What we do between now and 2030 will determine whether we can avoid the worst impacts of climate change. We must drastically reduce emissions and remove carbon from the atmosphere while helping communities adapt to the changes already underway.

In Africa, we are capitalizing on locally proven approaches, global tools, and indigenous expertise to craft solutions that are distinctly African and uniquely effective. We are also ramping up efforts to drive climate policies at national and regional levels that create better conditions for implementing nature-based solutions. Here we highlight 2024 milestones that illustrate our three pathways to success: **Natural Climate Solutions, Adaptation, and Clean Energy Transition.**

“Africa contributes a negligible percentage of the world’s carbon emissions, yet it is home to the largest share of populations vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.”

Kevin Juma, TNC Africa Climate Director

MILESTONE ►

In 2024, the TNC Africa climate team launched a new strategic framework to accelerate and maximize our progress on the continent. Built on deep scientific analysis, the plan zeros in on approaches that work best in local contexts; where the best opportunities lie; and where and how TNC can make the greatest impact.

Right: Glacier on Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. Since 1912, 85% of ice cover on the mountain has disappeared. More than a quarter of the ice cover present in 2000 was gone by 2009.*
© Javier Sánchez Martínez/
TNC Photo Contest 2021



TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE MILESTONES



■ ADAPTATION | EAST AFRICA

Our work in Africa began in the grasslands of Kenya and Tanzania through our collaboration with Indigenous pastoralist communities to implement land management approaches that blend science and traditional expertise. By collectively following sustainable grazing practices, including rotational grazing, pastoralists increase carbon stored in the soil, which improves water retention and protects root systems. Communities also set aside a portion of their rangelands for coexistence with wildlife.

With climate change driving catastrophic drought in the region, increasing the resilience of grasslands is a matter of survival for people and wildlife. Therefore, we are expanding our efforts to support communities to adopt sustainable grazing practices and to secure revenue for soil carbon stored in well-managed grasslands.

■ CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION | ANGOLA

TNC-led research revealed the potential damage to freshwater ecosystems of developing large hydropower dams on the Cubango River system, threatening fisheries and other livelihoods that support communities in remote, impoverished areas, as well as water flow to the spectacular Okavango Delta in Botswana. Based on new modeling, we developed a plan to help achieve the Angolan government's renewable energy goals while minimizing damage to ecosystems by shifting focus to solar. The national government has endorsed the plan and is now partnering with a U.S.-based company that is developing solar generating capacity to bring electricity to hundreds of thousands of Angolans living without it.

AFCC combined potential impact by 2027

21M

tons of CO₂e avoided/year

26.1M

hectares benefiting

3+M

people benefiting

22+

projects in 9+ countries

■ NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS | REGIONAL

Through our innovative Africa Forest Carbon Catalyst (AFCC), we are working to accelerate the growth of promising small-scale carbon projects by supporting them through the complex and costly stages of project development, achieving third-party verification and, ultimately, selling carbon offset credits.

In 2024, drawing on three years of successes, lessons learned, and partner input, we conducted a thorough design evolution and launched AFCC 2.0. Priorities include diversifying the pipeline to include more blue carbon projects as well as soil carbon projects in grasslands and peatlands. In parallel, TNC scientists are strengthening methodologies for measuring carbon storage and benefits of community-led grassland management—data that is essential for earning and maintaining verification of soil carbon offsets.

The AFCC is also ramping up advocacy efforts to make it easier for projects to get necessary government approvals. A new recoverable grants program will help bridge the gap between early project implementation and project verification.

Left: Meeting of a grazing committee, Selela Village, Tanzania © Roshni Lodhia. **Right:** Elephant family, Tarangire National Park, Tanzania © Brenden Simonson.





Deep in the forests of northwestern Zambia, the tiny white-bellied pangolin, shy and nocturnal, clambers into treetops and hangs from its tail, curling its scaly, armored body—roughly the size of a football—into a nearly impenetrable fortress. Yet this endangered species has no defense against the hunting and deforestation that threaten its survival.

With help from Agness Chuulu and her fellow forest guards, the pangolin may still stand a chance. In villages across the landscape, 100 scouts—nearly a quarter of whom are women—are on the move each day, keeping watch over the forest. They work in 15 Community

Guardians of the **Forest**

Forest Management Groups (CFMGs) around Kafue National Park, an expansive, unfenced wilderness of savannas, miombo woodlands, lakes, and rivers.

Keeping watch

Every morning, Agness rises early, sends her children off to school, and heads for the CFMG headquarters, where she makes sure her bicycle is in working order, packs her rations—baked beans, canned fish, and biscuits—and sets out on patrol.

Riding along rough roads, covering about 30 kilometers a day, the pedaling patrollers are on the lookout for illegal activities. They submit reports, complete with GPS coordinates, equipping officials to take action. Recent patrols have intercepted a half dozen poachers.

“I have a passion for conservation,” says Agness, who has used her new income to buy farm tools and support her family. She is proud of her progress and proud to be protecting the forest she loves. “I wanted to do something with my life,” she says, “in terms of serving my community.”

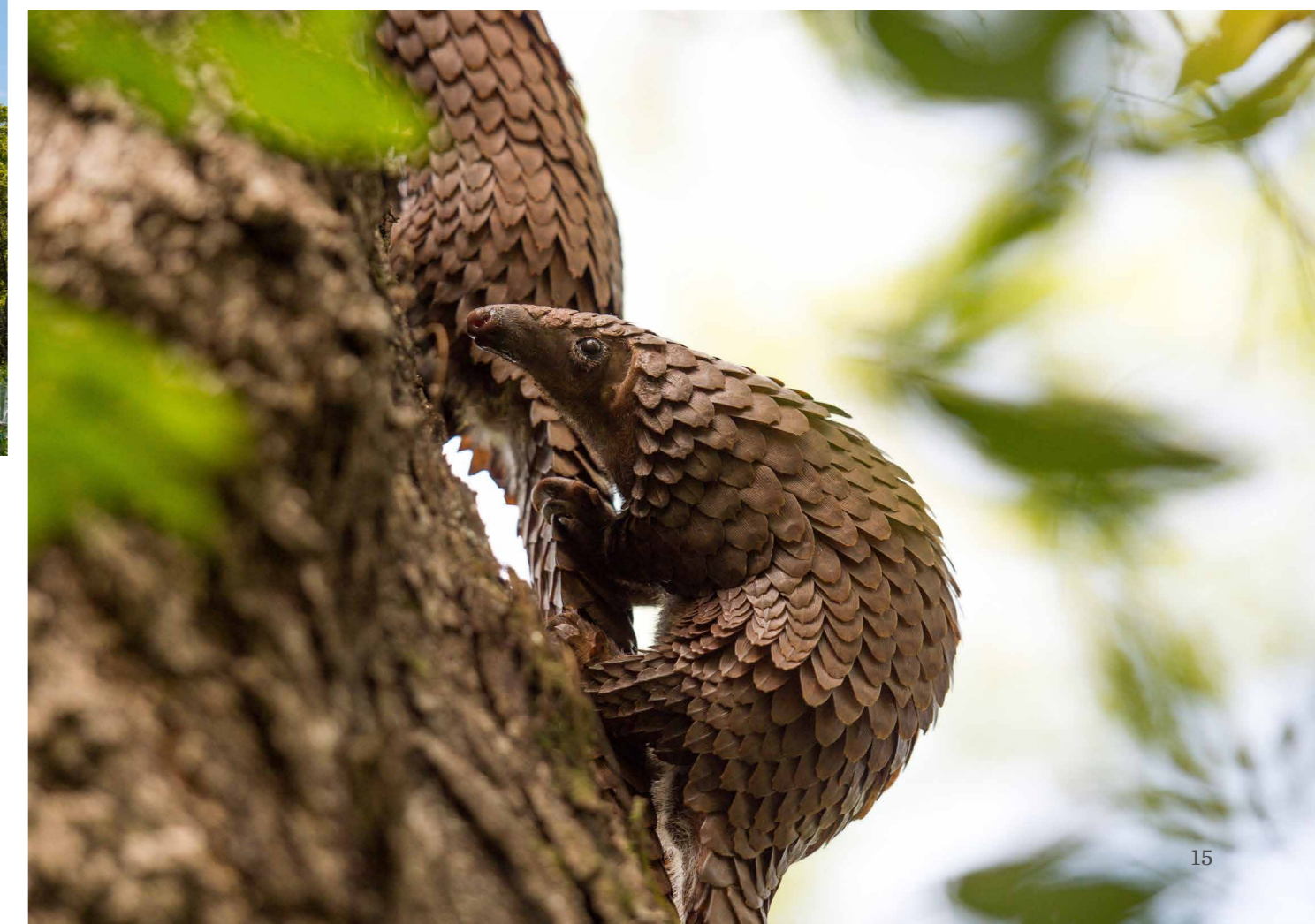
The big picture

Agness’ community in West Lunga Province sits within one of 16 Game Management Areas (GMAs)

established by the government to buffer the national park. Paradoxically, the GMAs are now putting heavy pressure on park borders: Expanding agriculture, unchecked fire, poaching, and other threats are escalating. While our partner African Parks works to strengthen management of the park itself, we are focusing on the GMAs, where we aim to bolster local governance, improve management of lands and waters, and ensure communities benefit from their natural resources, including forest carbon.

TNC’s Africa Forest Carbon Catalyst supports the West Lunga Landscape Project with training for carbon monitoring, business development, and bridge funding to cover costs on the path to verification, including salaries and resources for forest guards. The project increases protection for 1.2 million hectares and the wildlife that live here—including pangolins and a host of other species. Once verified, the project has the potential to avoid 328,000 tons of CO₂ emissions annually and aims to benefit 20,000 local people. With help from Agness and the bicycle brigade of forest guards, we are on the move each day, making progress toward a more sustainable future.

Go Deeper into the Forest! Watch a video about this project at nature.org/ForestCarbon.



Clockwise from top: Racket-tailed roller (*Coracias spatulatus*), Greater Kafue landscape, Zambia © Kenneth K. Coe; forest resource mapping © Roshni Lodhia; Agness and fellow forest officers on patrol © Roshni Lodhia; white-bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tricuspis*) © Theresa Roemer; beekeepers in Ntambu Chiefdom © Roshni Lodhia. **Left:** Agness Chuulu, forest officer in Ntambu Chiefdom © Roshni Lodhia.

Provide Food and Water Sustainably

Nature’s capacity to sustain life is already buckling under pressure—and Africa’s population in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to double by 2050. But there is hope.

The conversion of land for agricultural purposes is the primary driver of habitat loss globally. Yet more than 700 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live with food insecurity, and the effects of climate change are laying waste to crops and rangelands. Meanwhile, freshwater ecosystems—essential sources of water and protein — experience two to three times the rate of biodiversity loss compared with terrestrial and marine habitats.

Together with partners and communities, we are working to transform how we use nature to meet our needs by blending cutting-edge science, practical approaches, and traditional expertise. Here we highlight 2024 milestones that illustrate our three pathways to success: **Regenerative Food, Resilient Fresh Water, and Thriving Fisheries.**

“**In Africa, biodiversity, water, and climate change are lost causes if we don’t mend agriculture.**”

Michael Misiko, Director of Sustainable Agriculture, TNC Africa

MILESTONE ►

In 2024, we conducted an in-depth strategic review of our work with partners and communities through the Tuungane Project and created a road map for increasing the scale and durability of our efforts. The plan prioritizes reducing farming impacts on rivers that link the steep slopes of the Mahale Mountains to Lake Tanganyika, the world’s largest tropical lake. We expanded conservation-smart agriculture training to another nine villages in priority areas. Our monitoring indicates that farmers who apply these methods consistently over multiple years can see yields increase from eight bags of maize per acre to as much as 29 bags. One village, Nkonkwa, has seen such convincing results over recent years that it has declared that all farms in the community will practice conservation agriculture going forward.

Right: The Tuungane Project offices in Buhingu Village, western Tanzania. The Tuungane Conservation-Smart Agriculture Project is teaching farmers about practices that increase yield, improve soil health, and reduce sediment flow into Lake Tanganyika. © Roshni Lodhia



PROVIDE FOOD AND WATER SUSTAINABLY MILESTONES



■ THRIVING FISHERIES | ZAMBIA

This year, we signed a formal partnership agreement with the national government to drive uptake of the community fisheries co-management model that has proven to be successful in our work with fishers on Lake Tanganyika. We are providing resources to facilitate community engagement and have helped 14 villages establish interim fisheries management committees across the Greater Kafue landscape. In parallel, we are launching a new initiative to combat use of illegal monofilament nets on Lake Itzhi Tezhi. Clear and virtually invisible, these nets indiscriminately catch turtles, birds, and other animals. Now, together with partner organization African Parks, we will support fishers to switch to lower-impact legal gear.

■ REGENERATIVE FOOD | KENYA

In Kenya's Central Highlands, climate change is driving disastrous drought, putting people and nature in competition to survive. With a broad coalition of partners, TNC launched the Central Highlands Ecoregion Foodscape, or CHEF, an ambitious effort to transform the region into a regenerative foodscape where farmers, pastoralists, and wildlife can get the water and space they need. Regenerative practices include reducing water waste; rotating crops to improve soil health and yields; growing drought-resistant crops; and "banking" grass as hay to feed livestock during dry periods. Participating farmers and pastoralists secure additional benefits, such as training and access to fair and reliable buyers.

Upper Tana-Nairobi Water Fund

288k+
hectares improved

2 billion
liters of rainwater harvested

495
kilometers of river benefiting from improved management

263k+
people in farming families benefiting

■ RESILIENT FRESH WATER | KENYA

Africa's first water fund has achieved the ultimate goal: self-sustaining independence as a fully endowed charitable trust. Launched in 2015, the Upper Tana-Nairobi Water Fund (UTNWF) supports farmers to reduce erosion and other impacts on the Tana River—the primary water source for 9 million citizens in the watershed and Nairobi. In turn, farmers see livelihood benefits from sustainable practices such as terracing, crop rotation, and rainwater harvesting. Many have planted vegetation that stabilizes soil, including 1.3 million avocado trees that are generating \$67 million for UTNWF farmers annually. Earnings from the water fund's \$5 million endowment will fund ongoing conservation action. The sale of 1 million carbon credits is furthering growth of the endowment.

Left: Women harvesting snow peas on Samson Kithinji's farm, Kenya. Through CHEF, Samson now has access to a fair buyer for his crops year-round. **Right:** CHEF farmer John Maina. Both photos © Roshni Lodhia.



PROVIDE FOOD AND WATER SUSTAINABLY



Trailblazers of Tuungane

Life can be challenging in western Tanzania, and no one knows this better than the women who live there. Women who bear an average of seven children. Women who must fetch water from the lake's shoreline every day. Women who overcome many obstacles to complete their education.

Strong women are the key to more than a decade of conservation success through the Tuungane Project, our collaboration with Pathfinder, government, communities, and other partners to create healthier families, fisheries, and forests where Lake Tanganyika meets the Mahale Mountains.

Meet three brave women who are building better lives for their families and inspiring others to follow their leads.

PROVIDE | Agriculture innovator

It was not so easy for Nusura Sadiki to convince her husband to test the conservation farming methods she learned in a Tuungane Project training. "Before I learned, I farmed randomly, planting zigzag, without knowing where to put the seeds, and the harvest was poor," Nusura said. New methods would take more work, but she told her husband they would stop if their efforts didn't increase their crop yields. Soon, their 2-acre farm went from producing an average of eight 100-kilogram sacks of maize to more than 40 sacks, and her husband joined her as a conservation farming champion. Their extra income allowed them to build a modern house and pay school fees. "To my fellow women, I am telling them to follow sustainable ways of farming—to plant in lines, to till their farms, to plant

and sow in time—and then they definitely will see a very big difference," Nusura said.

PROTECT | Microfinance leader

In 2016, Tuungane mobilizers visited Rukoma Village, where Doris James lives with her family, to discuss the benefits of microfinance groups called community conservation banks (COCOBA). Doris overcame her initial fears that her investment would be lost and she is now a leader in the group. She was able to borrow capital to open a tailoring shop, and her earnings have allowed her to send her daughter to university. "I won't get tired of advising my fellow women to conserve the environment and educate their children," says Doris. "And of showing the community how we are benefiting from these groups," Doris said.

CLIMATE | Champion for trees

In Lugonesi Village, hours away from the edge of the lake, the forest holds the key to the community's livelihoods. Here, Velena Ponsian has learned how to monitor and nurture seedlings planted in a woodlot. Villagers now harvest these trees for household uses instead of cutting the natural forest. With support from donors, the Tuungane Project has planted more than 10 million trees in the Kigoma and Katavi regions with an incredible 86% survival rate, thanks in large part to monitors like Velena. "Forests have so many benefits: the quality of air, fertile soil, and more. So I tell my fellow Tanzanians, every province, every district, every county, we must think of ways to take care of forests because of the benefits they have."



Clockwise from top: Nusura Sadiki waters the cocoyams in her home garden, western Tanzania; Velena Ponsian at home in Lugonesi Village; Doris James' daughter Jeniroza walks to her mom's tailor shop in the Rukoma Village market; Zaituni Sadi, another tree planting champion, collects firewood from the woodlot in Lugonesi Village; a transaction at a meeting of the Wanawake Ukakamavu COCOBA. Left: COCOBA group leader Doris James. All photos © Roshni Lodhia



Clockwise from left: Cape sugarbird (Promerops cafer), South Africa © Richard Du Toit; Richard Bugan and Mange Sokudela measure water flow © Nyani Quarmyne; a herd of bontebok (Damaliscus pygargus) in fynbos landscape © Kenneth K. Coe; Cape Kurper (Sandelia capensis) © Jeremy Shelton; scientists Albert Chakona, Xiluva Mathebula, and Nkosinathi Mazungula from the South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity conduct monitoring activities © Jeremy Shelton.

The Pursuit of Proof

“This is my happy place.” Richard Bugan is all smiles as he splashes into the tumbling Du Toits River. He plunges his hand into the clear, cold water and pulls out a gadget that resembles a mini-rocket. The device is a sensor that quantifies the volume of water flowing in the river over time.

The Du Toits is one of seven priority watersheds for the Greater Cape Town Water Fund (GCTWF), which was launched by TNC and the city government in 2018. In his role as manager of science and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) for TNC in South Africa, Richard is looking for proof that the work of a broad set of GCTWF partners is achieving results.

The stakes are extraordinarily high. With climate change driving longer droughts in this semiarid region, the city faced running out of water the same year that the GCTWF was launched, a chilling possibility that was dubbed “Day Zero.” The city’s stressed water supply is sourced from one of the planet’s rarest and most biodiverse floristic regions: About 70% of the over 9,500 plant species—called fynbos—are found nowhere on Earth but a sliver of South Africa.

Research leads the way

TNC-led analysis showed that we could reclaim 55 billion liters of water annually by removing massive infestations of water-guzzling invasive pines. Crews of people hired from local communities previously cleared 32,347 hectares and have repeated the process on 25,124 of those to keep the pines from taking root again.

Richard led a team of specialists to design a rigorous system to track what happens when the pines are gone. “The MEL system enables our team to learn and adapt to achieve our targets,” he explains. As a result, we have scientific proof that the GCTWF is increasing streamflow by a whopping 34%, adding 17.6 billion liters—7,000 Olympic-sized pools!—to the city’s water supply each year.

“With more water now reaching rivers, particularly during the summer baseflows, we are seeing benefits to the aquatic habitat for threatened and endemic Breede River redbfin and giant redbfin, as well as other underwater critters,” he says. “And we’re seeing healthy rivers and beautiful fynbos return to cleared areas.”

Proof builds momentum

The GCTWF positioned TNC to establish a full-fledged South Africa program with a growing portfolio of freshwater, terrestrial, and ocean projects. The GCTWF proof of impact has also helped spread the water fund model across Africa from just two in 2020 to 17 now underway, most of which are led by inspired partners.

“The GCTWF provides evidence that sustained investment in MEL is critically important. It tells a story that would otherwise be hidden and makes our impact tangible and lasting,” says Richard.

Dive In! A new short film by freshwater scientist and filmmaker Jeremy Shelton celebrates overlooked biodiversity in the Greater Cape Town region’s rivers through underwater videography and cool animations. Watch at nature.org/RiverFlows.



Bead by Bead



When the women of BeadWORKS gather together, beading needles in hand, conversation humming, strands of thread rising and falling, up and around, forward and back, each colorful design emerges slowly, meticulously, bead by bead. This is a community in motion, a collective force for good.

Their creative talents support their families and help boost community support for conservation. And thanks to Joanna Brown, a TNC Africa Council member and longtime TNC supporter, their handiwork has found a global market.

When she first volunteered in 2015 to help strengthen BeadWORKS—a microenterprise program of TNC-supported Northern Rangelands Trust in northern Kenya—her own life was forever changed. “These women have had such a huge impact on me,” says Joanna, who picked up and moved to Kenya for a year, sharing her sales and marketing expertise as a Colorado bookstore owner and forging deep bonds with many of the women and their families.

Since then, Joanna, who is also a member of TNC’s Africa Affinity Group for Women and Girls, has returned to Kenya several times each year, sometimes joined by her husband, Stuart Brown, who is a TNC volunteer leader in Africa, Colorado, Alaska, and globally. Stuart credits his grandmother, who helped found TNC’s Kentucky chapter, with his passion for conservation. “She put an appreciation for nature directly into my DNA,” he says, recalling their Sunday walks through the woods. It’s an appreciation he and Joanna have passed on to their four children.

It’s a match! There’s never been a better time to give to Africa. Contact Cori at cmessinger@tnc.org to learn about match opportunities that will multiply the impact of your generosity.



The Brown family has traveled and lived around the world, and their support for TNC reflects their commitment to the idea that we need to think big, beyond our own borders.

“It’s a new mindset,” says Stuart, noting that TNC’s science-based priorities mean donors can have an impact in the places that matter most—including in Kenya, where they recently made a \$1 million matching gift to support the country’s 2030 conservation goals.* It’s an effort with the potential to be part of what Stuart calls “the biggest success in conservation history.”

These days, whenever the Browns return to northern Kenya, they are greeted like family. That idea—that we are all family and share the same home—is precisely what has powered the Browns’ philanthropy and conservation leadership. Like the artisans who work with patience and painstaking purpose, bead by bead, we must all come together to design a more beautiful future for our planet, our home.

Africa Council

Teresa Beck	Bogolo Kenewendo
Wendy Bennett	Edwin Macharia
Joanna Brown	James Mworira
Shona Brown	Mary Anne Rogers
Dickson Kaelo	Karim Shariff
Dennis Keller	Fred Wakeman



Left to right: Stuart and Joanna Brown © Cori Messinger; BeadWORKS artisan at work, Kenya © Roshni Lodhia; Flamingos, Namibia © Dongmei Li/TNC Photo Contest 2021. **Back cover:** Nusura Sadiki, a Tuungane Project farmer, with her husband, Shabani Eddi, and daughters Najati and Madina, western Tanzania © Roshni Lodhia.

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