



LIVING LANDSCAPES SHORT COURSE: NEW THINKING ON INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Lecturer & participant profiles

Kleinmond, Cape Town,
South Africa

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Prof Moenieba Isaacs

University of the Western Cape

Moenieba Isaacs is a Full Professor with the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of Western Cape (UWC). She is the academic manager for postgraduate teaching, co-coordinator of accredited short-course training on the Political Economy of Land Governance in Africa and on Convivial Conservation: new thinking on integrating biodiversity and social justice in southern Africa. Her research focus currently is on developing the concept of blue justice linking it to spatial injustices, the gendered dynamics of women in living landscapes in and around enclosures in the blue economy. She has worked extensively with communities in South Africa and in an engaged and reflective research where she develops her thinking tools. She is currently lead PI on setting up and develop an effective convivial conservation evidence campaign and coalition that builds the basis for a systemic redesign of the conservation sector in Southern Africa called Living Landscapes in Action. Country coordinator for Small-scale fisheries (SSF) project on Vulnerability to Viability (V2V). Team member transformative social innovations in the governance of small-scale fisheries in the Indian ocean region. She was co-PI on African food systems and Covid-19 PLAAS - one-year action-oriented project entitled "The Impacts of Covid-19 Responses on the Political Economy of African Food Systems". She was the regional coordinator and founding member a TooBigToIgnore – a global network of small-scale fisheries research. She co-chaired the Human Dimension Working Group on Integrated Marine Bio-geo-chemistry Ecosystem Research (IMBER) 2010-2015. She formed part of the UN Committee on Food Security's High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) on the Role of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture for Food Security and Nutrition.

Thembele is a Professor in the Department of Human Geography, and is cross-appointed to the Department of Global Development Studies, University of Toronto, Canada. He has interdisciplinary training, including an undergraduate training in agriculture and land use planning. Over the last few years his research interests have been in the areas of land rights, rural resistance politics, politics of development and political ecology. His field research has mostly been in southern Africa, particularly his home country, South Africa, but has also carried out research in Liberia, Somalia and in Canada. In addition to publishing over 60 peer-reviewed journal articles, he has co-edited four books, on topics that include land claims; rural revolts; freedom and politics of conservation. In 2020 Kepe was awarded the Fellowship of the Society of South Africa Geographers (FSSAG), which recognizes outstanding contribution to the field of geography. At the University of Toronto he teaches courses on political ecology, conservation, land justice and research design in development fieldwork.



Prof Thembele Kepe

University of Toronto



Dr Lerato Thakholi

Wageningen University

Dr Lerato Thakholi is an assistant professor in the Sociology of Development and Change Group, Wageningen University (WU). Her research investigates the historical development of property rights in land and environmental resources and how this has evolved in tandem with shifts in labour regimes. Empirically, she studies this in southern Africa using ethnographic and archival methods which enable her to critically analyse the impacts of conservation land use in rural landscapes. Soon after completing her PhD, Lerato joined a successful grant writing team with five colleagues from PLAAS, WU and the University of Cape Town. The proposal, titled, Living Landscapes in Action project was funded by the Oak Foundation to create the basis for a systemic redesign of the conservation sector in southern Africa. Lerato worked as a senior researcher in the project with a focus on the Mapungubwe landscape. Lerato continue to teach at WU while also working on her project Conservation real estate: Interrogating the rapid rise of European second homes in southern Africa's conservation areas. Conservation real estate, was awarded the Veni grant from The Dutch Research Council (NWO).



Dr Aaniyah Martin

The Beach Co-op

Aaniyah brings over 20 years of experience in the conservation sector, with a strong focus on aligning environmental and social justice. Her work explores the space where ecological and human needs meet, often navigating complex, interconnected challenges. She is the founder of The Beach Co-op, a South African initiative that fosters community-driven care for the environment. Across Africa, Aaniyah is a founding fellow of the Women for the Environment in Africa leadership programme and has served on its delivery team since 2022. Internationally, she joined Homeward Bound in 2022 as a faculty member, contributing to its global leadership programme for women in STEMM, centred on planetary sustainability. In 2024, Aaniyah earned her PhD from Rhodes University, where her research explored co-creating a pedagogy of care for South Africa's hydrocommons. Her study examined the deep-rooted relationships Black and Brown communities have with water, focusing on both historical and present-day connections. Through her work, Aaniyah continues to advocate for inclusive conservation approaches that honour both people and the planet.

Mphatheni (Mphathe) Makaulule is the Indigenous Knowledge Practitioner, walking the path of makhadzi role. Her father was a traditional healer, farmer, and traditional leader. Since she graduated from the University of Venda in 1998, she returned to communities to learn from elders and document the indigenous knowledge; however, during those times, the indigenous knowledge was recognised as culture and mupo. She established Luvhola Cultural village in 2000 and worked at Ribolla Tourism Association as a cultural tourist guide and community coordinator. In 2004, she was selected to be a Clinton Democracy Fellow at City Year and went to the USA to deepen her vision. In 2005, she met the African Biodiversity team and together established the programmes for integrating cultural biodiversity and indigenous knowledge with schools. In 2007, she founded the Mupo Foundation, which then the communities of Venda re-registered as locally-based organisation, Dzomo la Mupo NPC in 2015. For more than 35 years Mphathe has been working with the Venda elders and youth, particularly women on reviving indigenous life practices of Vhavenda nation. She has been igniting enthusiasm to bring Mupo back as a principles attached to Vhavenda cultural traditions. Mphatheleni works closely with the Makhadzi of the communities – (women or we-moon as she prefers to call 'women' Mphatheleni is a board member/non-Executive Director of the Wild Law Institute. She is an activist and defender of the sacred sites through her vision for reviving indigenous knowledge into communities of practice for safeguarding the indigenous forests. She facilitates the interaction on issues of environmental injustices through community ecological dialogues and facilitates ecological mapping of the indigenous knowledge. She learnt the methodology of Ecological mapping from the Columbian Amazon, where through African Biodiversity and Gaia Foundation she got opportunity to travel to Columbia Amazon. She is the eco mapping facilitator at Earth Life Africa, focusing on working with communities on ecological mapping of the territories and ecological mapping of ecological calendar for advocating for the impact of projects that interfere with the ecosystems, indigenous forests, and the livelihoods rooted in African traditional cultural values. She is an Earth Life Africa activist and community mobiliser on unearthing community knowledge, particularly of the marginalised communities, through equipping them and their youths on current issues and concepts to support the Just Transition alternative. She collaborates with the University of Venda, Unisa Ekurhuleni Community Engagement, Earthrise as an activist and elder, Project Biome SA Seed and Wildlife Protection Forum S.A. She is on the board of Wild Law Institute.



Mphatheleni Makaulule

Indigenous Knowledge
Practitioner

**Dr Stha Yeni**

University of the Western Cape

Dr. Stha Yeni is a researcher and activist with nearly two decades of experience in civil society, working at the intersections of land, food, water and environmental justice in Southern Africa. She has published on land and social reproduction, land rights violations and resistance from below, land and belonging, popular education and feminist organizing. Her work combines scholarship and activism. She has co-produced popular education toolkits on water justice in Africa and on the intersections of gender, food systems, and climate change in Southern Africa. She holds a PhD in Poverty, Land, and Agrarian Studies from the University of the Western Cape.

Ruth Hall holds the position of Director of PLAAS from 2025 to 2030. She holds a DPhil in Politics from the University of Oxford, where she studied as a Rhodes Scholar, and where she previously obtained an MPhil in Development Studies. Her first two degrees were from the University of Cape Town. She has published extensively on land reform, tenure and governance in Africa, with a focus on transnational land investments. She convenes a continent-wide accredited short course for land professionals, activists and officials on the Political Economy of Land Governance in Africa. She has served on the Scientific Committee of the African Union's Conference on Land Policy in Africa and is a member of President Cyril Ramaphosa's Advisory Panel on Land Reform and Agriculture. Professor Hall is an editor of the Journal of Peasant Studies. She has co-founded several regional and global research networks: the Land Deal Politics Initiative (LDPI), the BRICS Initiative in Critical Agrarian Studies (BICAS), the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI), and the Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA). She has published several books, including *Global Land Grabbing and Political Reactions from Below*; *Another Countryside? Policy Options for Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa*; *Land, Memory, Reconstruction and Justice: Perspectives on Land Claims in South Africa*, *The Land Question in South Africa* and *Africa's Land Rush: Rural Livelihoods and Agrarian Change*. Professor Hall previously held the South African Research Chair in Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, which is funded by the National Research Foundation from 2020 to 2024, and has simultaneously been Acting Director of PLAAS since May 2024.

**Prof Ruth Hall**

University of the Western Cape

**Alex Kennaugh**

Wild5

Alex is a conservation funding strategist and systems-change practitioner with over 25 years of experience working across biodiversity, philanthropy, and impact finance. As Director of Wild5 and an independent consultant, I strive to help design and mobilise innovative finance mechanisms that align ecological outcomes with social justice and community agency. Recent work has explored how philanthropic capital, blended finance, and locally-anchored models can bridge the biodiversity funding gap and create equitable access for custodial communities. Writings include a feature for Alliance Magazine on philanthropy's evolving role in conservation finance. In the upcoming presentation, titled "Accessing Conservation Finance: What's Working, What's Not, and Where We Go Next", Alex will share some insights on unlocking capital, narrowing the pipeline, and embedding equity in nature-finance design and is eager to listen and learn from the participants where they are experiencing challenges and where they see opportunities.



Nelson Alfredo
Mozambique

Nelson Alfredo hailing from Mozambique holds a Masters degree in Law from the University of Minho, Portugal. He is a collaborator at Centro Terra Viva – Environmental Studies and Advocacy for about 15 years. His work promotes the defense and respect of the rights of local communities to secure access to land and natural resources, especially those living in and near nature conservation areas. This is aimed at fostering harmonious coexistence between them and the managers of these areas, as well as reducing human-wildlife conflicts. These actions also extend to coastal areas, aiming to reduce the destruction of sensitive ecosystems such as primary dunes to make way for the construction of tourism developments and the exploitation of mineral resources, especially heavy sands. He carries out this work through legal, technical, and legal assistance, training communities, paralegals, and local government technicians, and monitoring community participation processes in the management of forest and wildlife resources. As a lawyer, he provides legal assistance to communities in negotiating with conservation area managers in all conflicts to find alternative livelihoods and support civil society organizations in legal matters and strategic litigation actions in various locations throughout the country.

Nancy Barisoa is an award-winning advocate for environmental sustainability and gender equality from Madagascar, with over six years of driving change across Africa. She currently serves as the Regional Focal Point for Africa of the UNCCD Youth Caucus, an AWF-Wall Policy Fellow with the African Wildlife Foundation, and a Regional Youth Parliament member within the Indian Ocean Commission. She is the founder of the EcoShe Project, recognized with a Climate Justice Award at the Global Landscapes Forum in Nairobi, and created the Tanora Revolution Podcast to empower young Africans to better understand and stay updated on multilateral environmental agreements. She received the 50 Outstanding African Women in Development Award, and was featured on the cover of the Responsible Citizen magazine in Botswana. She has represented Madagascar and African youth at major global forums, such as UNCCD COP16, AMCEN-20, and other international policy platforms. Guided by her belief in the power of youth, Nancy works to connect global policy with local action for more practical, inclusive, and sustainable solutions that benefit both communities and the environment.



**Nancy Barisoa
Andriamiarimbola**
Madagascar



Tiffany Appollis
South Africa

Tiffany Appollis is a Field Ranger at Mapungubwe National Park, a transfrontier and World Heritage Site. She is adaptable, committed, and eager to learn, with experience in both land and marine conservation. Her focus on habitat monitoring, protecting species, and putting strategies in place to preserve biodiversity. Her journey in conservation started as a Tourism Monitor at West Coast National Park. I then moved into environmental monitoring and quickly discovered my passion for protecting nature. Since then, she gained experience in both land and marine environments, which has helped her understand how these ecosystems are connected and support each other. In 2024, she joined Mapungubwe National Park, where she helps protect its unique landscapes and support its heritage status. She enjoys combining practical fieldwork with a focus on long-term sustainability. Through her work, she has learnt how important community engagement is and how it can make a real, lasting difference. Her goal is to keep growing in conservation and to make a positive impact for both people and nature.



Enrico Mitch Aseb

Namibia

Enrico Mitch Aseb from northern Namibia from a small san village call Tsintsabis. He is a Hai||om San, who is open and attended various workshops and training linked to Indigenous peoples issues and Climate Change. He is like an open book and willing to learn more about Indigenous peoples rights so that he could also help his fellow indigenous communities and not only Hai||om indigenous people but indigenous communities at large. He has the pleasure of working with different types of organisations, namely the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC), who invited him to verify workshops such as the Project Management, Media Trainings and Capacity Building Programs. Advancing Rights in Southern Africa (ARISA) invited him to Financial and Project Management Program and also funded an Organization call People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) to do mapping within three countries namely Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. He was selected to help with mapping project and had to train the trainer and choose 15 champions to help with the project within the villages and it's still a on going project. Namibia Indigenous Peoples Advocacy Platform NIPAP is a national platform which work with different types of indigenous groups within Namibia in area's of Human Rights, Natural Resources, And Protection of indigenous peoples lands as well as protecting indigenous peoples intellectual property with different types of projects like villages schools which are teach in Indigenous languages by indigenous peoples themselves so that the traditions don't die out. He also worked with Nelson Mandela University with different types of programs.

Atuhaire Owen is a Project Officer at the Uganda Biodiversity Fund (UBF). He is a passionate forester and conservation professional with over two years of experience in ecosystem restoration, sustainable land management, and community livelihood improvement. At UBF, he works at the intersection of biodiversity conservation, resource mobilisation, and community engagement. He has coordinated diverse projects ranging from delivering Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) demonstrations to support post-harvest handling and value addition initiatives. His work includes training communities in post-harvest handling, delivering honey extractors, cassava milling machines, and tree seedlings to rural beneficiary groups, and strengthening local capacity for sustainable natural resource use and income generation. His expertise extends to planning, monitoring, and reporting on restoration and conservation projects, engaging stakeholders across government, civil society, and the private sector. His passion lies in linking people, nature, and opportunities to drive solutions that protect critical ecosystems while empowering communities. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Forestry from Makerere University and continues to broaden his skills in conservation finance, project design, and communication. He is dedicated, innovative, and results-oriented. He also contributes to advancing UBF's mission of conserving Uganda's rich biodiversity for future generations.



Owen Atuhaire

Uganda



Nichodimas Cooper

Botswana

Nichodimas Cooper is a climate justice activist, Indigenous rights advocate, and emerging documentary filmmaker from the NamaKhoen community of Lokgwabe, in Botswana's Kgalagadi District. For several years, he has been active in Indigenous heritage and human rights advocacy, with a strong focus on climate change, cultural survival, and self-determination. He is the incumbent Executive Director of the NamaKhoen Network of Heritage Advocacy, where he addresses challenges facing the Nama people, including cultural erosion, language loss, exclusion from governance structures, and climate-related threats to food security. He is also a 2025 Indigenous Journalism Fellowship (1st Cohort) Fellow, expanding his skills to amplify Indigenous voices through media. Cooper has represented his community at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, COP28, and the Indigenous Peoples Network of Southern Africa (IPNeSA), where he engages on biodiversity, resource rights, and historical justice. Currently, he is helping prepare for the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Botswana, ensuring community voices are heard. He is a graduate of the Wildlife Film School, he produced the short documentary Chobe's Giants – The Struggle for Balance. His film-making and advocacy emphasise inclusive conservation and Indigenous-led solutions to global challenges.

Leopoldina de Carla Gouveia is a Program Officer at the Affirming and Securing Land Rights, Natural Resources and Traditional Knowledge, at Natural Justice and Green Rights Global Coalition Ambassador. Hailing from Mozambique, she holds a Masters Degree in Environmental Law (by the University Jean Moulin Lyon 3) and Certificated on Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Africa (by the University of Pretoria). She participated on the Forest Law Reform, Land Policy and Law Reform in Mozambique advocating for more meaning participation in natural resources related decision through the inclusion of the Right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent in Mozambique legal system. She is currently implicated in the Environmental Policy and Law Reform.



Leopoldina de Carla Gouveia
Mozambique



Mahlodi Lefty Mpya
South Africa

I am Mahlodi Lefty Mpya, a People and Conservation Officer and conservation enthusiast with over a decade of experience in environmental management and community engagement. I worked at the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa, where I introduced learners to the wonders of wildlife and environmental awareness. At WESSA, I supported education programs that encouraged young people to take action for the environment. My time at the West Coast Fossil Park allowed me to share the story of ancient ecosystems while guiding visitors through fossil discoveries. Currently, with the City of Cape Town, I facilitate programmes that connect communities with nature and promote sustainable living. I also had the privilege of serving as a Cultural Representative at Walt Disney World, proudly showcasing South African heritage and culture to audiences from around the globe.

Nthatsi Miriam Lesala is a certified Sustainability Practitioner and Environmental Management Specialist from Thaba-Tseka, Lesotho. She currently serves as the Community Relations and Conflict Management Officer at the Libokung Youth Grazing Association, where she plays a critical role in addressing complex rangeland management issues in the highlands of Lesotho. With a strong commitment to sustainable development, Nthatsi focuses on strengthening community-based approaches to land and natural resource governance. Her work centers on facilitating dialogue and building consensus among herders, local leaders, and grazing associations to promote sustainable rangeland use, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience. She designs and leads capacity-building workshops on land conservation, environmental stewardship, mediation, and conflict resolution. Her training sessions also address the socio-environmental dynamics of climate change and encourage adaptive strategies for vulnerable highland communities. Nthatsi actively contributes to the development and implementation of local policies and frameworks that align with national environmental strategies and global sustainability standards. Her work ensures that grassroots voices are represented in policy discussions and that conservation practices are culturally relevant and community-driven. She brings a nuanced understanding of environmental justice and sustainable land management, making her a vital contributor to Lesotho's environmental and climate resilience efforts.



Nthatsi Miriam Lesala
Lesotho



Kamogelo Mabowa
South Africa

Kamogelo Mabowa currently works as a Field Ranger in the Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site. He started my conservation career in 2015/6 when he completed his National Diploma in Nature Conservation at Tshwane University of Technology. He has nine years of experience in law enforcement, anti-poaching, land rehabilitation, research in a protected area, and administrative duties in relation to conservation and/or protected areas.

Ntwanano Mendes is a Project Knowledge and Learning Officer at the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). She works nationally on biodiversity stewardship and the biodiversity economy, with a strong focus on monitoring, evaluation, reflection and learning. Ntwanano convenes communities of practice, facilitates learning exchanges, and contributes to policy processes such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and the development of OECM norms and standards. Her work bridges conservation and livelihoods by documenting lessons from communities, practitioners, and landowners to inform more inclusive and effective biodiversity conservation in South Africa.



Ntwanano Mendes
South Africa



Nompendulo Mgwali
South Africa

Nompendulo Mgwali has 14 years of experience in rangeland ecology, land restoration, and rehabilitation, working with communal farmers to promote regenerative practices. Her expertise includes rangeland and livestock management, biodiversity stewardship, and improving livelihoods through livestock and wool production. As a committed land steward, she fosters coexistence between communities and nature, establishing Rangeland Associations and conservation agreements in South Africa. Currently employed by WWF-SA, she focuses on nature conservation initiatives and is pursuing a PhD on the ecological and socioeconomic impacts of climate change in the Eastern Cape Drakensberg grasslands to inform sustainable community conservation practices.

Simthandile Ponti works as a smallholder farmer extension office with the Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve, since July 2024, and his main responsibilities is to engage and educate the smallholder farmers while raising awareness on sustainable, conservation and ecological agriculture practices. He studied Agricultural Management at the University of Free State where he majored in Animal Science and Agricultural Economics, and also completed his Honours degree. He is very passionate about fostering long-term resilience in agriculture. His work emphasises not only food production but also stewardship, empowering smallholder farmers to see themselves as custodians of the environment while improving livelihoods and ensuring sustainability for future generations. He has developed a strong interest in regenerative agriculture, and through this, he has attended workshops to learn more about regenerative agriculture. He believes that equipping smallholder farmers with these principles, can help them cultivate healthier soils, protect water resources and maintain the delicate balance between land, plants and animals.



Simthandile Ponti
South Africa

**Xolani Prince Tshaka**

South Africa

Xolani Prince Tshaka from Mtubatuba in KwaZulu Natal, is a Butterfly specialist working for Inkanyamba Development Trust and managing the Butterfly dome. He is passionate and has attended training in Conservation. Involved in Dukuduku rehabilitation and food security programs in Dukuduku Community. Has worked with African Conservation Trust in Butterfly awareness in the community and Schools. Working with the Munster Conservancy in the lower south coast in environmental awareness in kwa Nzimakwe, Port Edward.

Job Morris is a Botswana-based researcher, community leader, and Indigenous rights advocate with extensive experience in advocacy, communications, and community organizing. He currently serves as the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Advocacy and Communications Officer for the Community Leaders Network, where he supports regional engagement, policy dialogues, and strategic communications to amplify community voices in land governance and conservation. Job is also the Executive Director of the San Youth Network (SYNet), where he leads initiatives on cultural preservation, youth empowerment, and land and resource rights. His work emphasizes bridging grassroots struggles with regional and international platforms, ensuring Indigenous perspectives are included in decision-making processes. Academically, Job is pursuing a Master's degree in Politics and International Relations. His research focuses on political ecology and the marginalization of Indigenous peoples, particularly the San/Bushmen of Botswana. His thesis, *Land, Language, and Livelihoods: A Political Ecology of Marginalization of the San/Bushmen in Botswana*, critically explores how state policies, conservation frameworks, and global development agendas affect Indigenous survival and resilience. Through the Living Landscapes Short Course, Job seeks to deepen his knowledge of interdisciplinary landscape approaches, integrating Indigenous knowledge with conservation strategies to promote culturally grounded, socially just, and environmentally sustainable futures.

**Job Morris**

Botswana

**Phindile Mthimkhulu**

South Africa

Phindile Mthimkhulu is a Social Ecologist with the Community Conservation Unit at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. She has been with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife from 2011, and started as an intern for the Integrated Environmental Management Unit. She then work as a Research Technician for the Socio-Ecological Research Unit for 6 years before joining the Community Conservation Unit. She is currently the coordinator for the Provincial People and Parks Programme and works in the PA Land Claims and Co-Management space which she is passionate about. She is currently pursuing a Bsc Honours in Environmental Management, and once completed hopes to do a Masters in Environmental Management, exploring beneficiation models for Conservation Land Claims.

Lewis Mutuku Mweu is an Environment, Conservation, and Climate Change Officer with the County Government of Laikipia, Kenya. He holds a BSc in Management of Environment and Agroecosystems from the University of Nairobi and a Postgraduate Diploma in Environmental and Social Impact Assessment from Africa Nazarene University. Over the past five years, he has specialized in natural resource management, climate change adaptation, and participatory development planning in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). Lewis has played a central role in establishing 15 Ward Climate Change Planning Committees in Laikipia and developing a five-year county climate action plan, enabling community-driven climate resilience. His professional contributions include policy design, participatory climate risk assessments, rangeland restoration, and human-wildlife conflict management. He has also supported the Laikipia Forest and Landscape Restoration Plan (FOLAREP) and worked with partners such as the World Bank, FAO, and NEMA. Beyond his technical expertise, Lewis is deeply passionate about sustainable and inclusive landscapes. His rural upbringing shaped his drive to ensure that conservation and development efforts benefit local communities, particularly pastoralists and smallholder farmers. His research interests focus on climate change, land governance, and pastoral livelihoods in the Ewaso Nyiro Basin. He continues to bridge policy, science, and community knowledge for lasting impact.



Lewis Mweu

Kenya

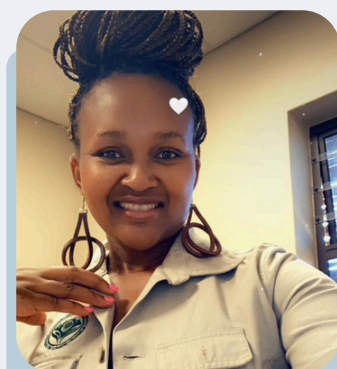


Anathi Nikelo

South Africa

Anathi Nikelo is a passionate and dedicated professional with a background in criminology, community development, and rural sustainability. She holds a Bachelor of Social Sciences in Criminology & Forensic Studies, and Psychology, as well as an Honours degree in Criminology and Forensic Studies from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. During her time at the university, she also served as a mentor, supporting and guiding fellow students academically and personally—an experience that reflects her commitment to assisting others in bettering their lives. Currently, Anathi works as a Local Field Officer with Meat Naturally Africa at the Engcobo Catchment, where she plays an active role in rangeland restoration and sustainable land management. In this position, she partners with rural communities to promote practices that protect the environment while also enhancing livelihoods. Her work also involves research collaboration, which also strengthens her skills in data collection, analysis, and community engagement. As a proud member of the Golden Key International Honour Society, Anathi has been part of initiatives that blend leadership, service, and academic excellence. With her combined passion for criminology, mentorship, and community development, she aspires to continue creating meaningful impact by empowering individuals and fostering sustainable, resilient communities.

Khuselwa obtained her National Diploma in Nature Conservation at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in 2011. In 2022, she completed my Post Grad in Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of Western Cape. To date, she has 14 years of experience in the Environmental sector and currently working for the City of Cape Town, under the Biodiversity Management Branch as a Reserve Supervisor: Witzands Aquifer Nature Reserve in Atlantis (398 ha) and currently based at the Edith Stephens Wetland Park in Phillip (39 ha). As she grew up in the rural areas, she has livestock and agricultural background as her family practice subsistence farming. She is passionate about natural resources and special interest about flora in different vegetation types of South Africa. Working in the urban conservation sector, she has developed love for her involvement in restoration projects of the degraded vegetation types that are deformed by invasive alien species, human impact and wildfires. Making efforts to restore the beauty of biodiversity and protect the remaining declining species listed on the SANBI red data. She enjoys conducting the community conservation education awareness programs with communities close to the nature reserve about the conservation issues facing conservation and help to plough a seed of conservation in the young minds and youth to consider Nature conservation/Environmental studies as career choice, and community members to practice sustainable living. Through environmental education, she want to create awareness about conservation values, the importance of conserving it, practicing sustainability and appreciation of the environment.



Khuselwa Mabuyane

South Africa

**Thabiso Mokoena**

South Africa

Thabiso Mokoena is an SMME Development Specialist with expertise in community conservation and socio-economic development. With nearly a decade of experience in conservation practice and community engagement, he has developed a strong profile in designing and supporting initiatives that connect environmental stewardship with sustainable economic opportunities. He holds a degree in Nature Conservation, a BSc Honours in Environmental Management, and is currently pursuing an MSc in Environmental Management with a research link to Social/Political Ecology. His academic and professional journey reflects a deep interest in understanding the relationship between protected areas and local communities, and in shaping approaches that advance both conservation and livelihoods. In his role, Thabiso focuses on fostering partnerships, building capacity, and empower communities to actively participate in conservation while deriving tangible benefits. Guided by a belief in people-centered conservation, he continues to advocate for strategies that balance ecological integrity with social justice, contributing to the vision of resilient communities living in harmony with nature.

Sophie is a lawyer and biodiversity policy expert passionate about land rights and inclusive conservation. She holds an LLB, a post-graduate diploma from the Kenya School of Law, and a master's in international relations specializing in Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, where her research focused on advancing land ownership rights for the Lenguruma pastoralist community. Sophie is passionate about legal empowerment on land tenure security, biodiversity conservation, documentation of traditional knowledge, including community biocultural protocols, and advocating for inclusion of IPs&LCs – rights and interests, in policy processes. Currently working with WWF International as Expert, Global Biodiversity Framework Policy – Africa, Sophie supports the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, in advocating for inclusive conservation and direct financing for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs&LCs). Sophie is eager to connect with like-minded professionals to amplify African voices in global conservation and policy spaces, and to strengthen a unified African voice in biodiversity conservation.

**Sophie Odhiambo**

Kenya

**Winile Shangase**

South Africa

Winile Shangase is a forestry professional based at Futululu State Forest, where she serves as a Senior Officer. With a career spanning over two decades, Winile has developed strong expertise in natural resource management and conservation. She has a Baccalaureus Technologiae in Nature Conservation and a BSc Honours in Environmental Management. Prior to joining Futululu State Forest in 2017, Winile worked with KZN Wildlife from 2005 to July 2017, gaining valuable experience in wildlife management and conservation. Her dedication and passion for the environment have driven her to excel in her roles, and she is committed to promoting sustainable forestry practices and protecting biodiversity. As a Senior Officer at Futululu State Forest, Winile plays a key role in managing and conserving the forest's natural resources, ensuring the long-term health and productivity of the ecosystem. Her experience and knowledge make her a valuable asset to the organization, and her commitment to sustainability and conservation inspires others to join her in protecting the environment. With her extensive experience and expertise, she is a respected professional in her field, dedicated to making a positive impact on the environment and the community.