



From Crisis to Solutions: Changing the Conversation on African Conservation

A FORUM ON AFRICAN CONSERVATION IMPACT

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IMPACT FORUM 2017

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Summary

- **Leading African conservation organizations presented** their impact models, key results and challenges to ongoing impact in the field.
- **African conservation funders shared** their perspectives and approaches for effectively supporting high performing, results focused organizations.
- **Participants discussed solutions** to challenges in measuring impact, connecting funders to high-impact organizations, and ways to invest in talent and human capital.
- **Participants identified** the potential value in creating better links between funders and practitioners, and improving flows of information.
- **Maliasili Initiatives committed** to following up with participants about desired next steps for additional convening and communication opportunities.

Overview & Rationale

In the face of conservation challenges such as soaring human population growth, rising consumption and infrastructure development, and weak governance institutions, there is a growing cadre of African organizations that are developing the kinds of models and practices that are needed to meet today's conservation challenges. A key strategic challenge for conservation in Africa is ensuring that these kinds of organizations have the resources, capacity, networks, and skills that they need to sustain and grow their impacts. This meeting fostered a unique conversation amongst a group of leading African conservation organizations and funders around how to strengthen and support effective, impactful conservation models and organizations.

Delivering Impact in the Field

The first session featured leading organizations working to develop ecologically impactful and economically viable community-based conservation models in Namibia (John Kasaona, [IRDNC](#)), Kenya (Latif Boru, [Northern Rangelands Trust](#)), and Tanzania (Damian Bell, [Honeyguide](#)). The second panel of speakers comprised a diverse group of organizations that have developed important models for delivering conservation outcomes in wildlife, forest, and marine conservation, and are at different stages of scaling up those models and impacts. These organizations are field-leaders in wildlife (Leela Hazzah, [Lion Guardians](#)), marine (Alasdair Harris, [Blue Ventures](#)), forestry (Makala Jasper, [Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative](#)), and protected areas management (Peter Fearnhead, [African Parks](#)). The discussion explored different aspects of each organization's impact model, as well as common constraints related to scaling up their work, including talent recruitment, funding, and replicating or adapting their models in different contexts.

Funder Perspectives

Following the practitioner speaker panels, a diverse group of four funders provided perspectives on funding for impact. These funders presented a variety of different perspectives on investing for impact in conservation:

- **Rodger Schlickeisen** from the Wildcat Foundation shared their specific focus on law enforcement and anti-trafficking strategies, and described ways of supporting the public-private partnerships required to address these issues, as well as challenges facing local organizations in their efforts to scale within this space.
- **Greg Alexander** of Acacia Conservation Fund, shared how Acacia applies business investment principles and years of experience evaluating companies and their leaders to conservation work, and emphasized the importance of an organization's ability to prioritize and focus on results, and to communicate about its work, while rewarding those organizations that perform with long-term and largely unrestricted funding.
- **Bernie Tershy**, conservation advisor with the Mulago Foundation, described a similar focus on outcomes and the provision of core unrestricted funding to organizations that deliver and that are ambitious in their aims to grow and scale, and drew on Mulago's experiences developing fellows programs and with funder collaboration.
- **Peter Riger**, described the perspective from the Houston Zoo, as a focus on cultivating supportive long-term relationships with local conservation leaders in order to find ways to help local organizations deliver better impact on the ground.

Recommendations for Increasing Impact

The final session of the meeting divided participants into three small groups to discuss ways of addressing key constraints to increasing conservation impact as identified by the participants. These created three categories:

1. Delivering Results:
2. People- skills and talent;
3. Funding.

The groups developed suggestions for each of these categories, which are summarized below:

Delivering Results

- The community of practice in African conservation should develop a more efficient “marketplace” for outcomes through which funders can identify organizations creating the impacts that align with their philanthropic goals and “buy” outcomes directly from the practitioners in the field.
- Having a more efficient ‘marketplace’ depends on funders and conservation groups aligning on what the right metrics are for providing evidence of ‘results’ and impact.
- It is important to invest time in discussing what the right metrics and variables are for measuring and documenting impact. Using the wrong metrics or failing to provide context or rationale for those metrics can do a great deal of harm by focusing attention on the wrong issues and outcomes.
- In order to design meaningful and appropriate metrics, organizations need to invest time and resources into the processes, such as strategic planning, which result in clarity around what an organization is trying to achieve, and how it goes about that work (e.g. key goals and theory of change). Funders have a role to play in supporting and participating in those processes that will result in better metrics and document investment impact.
- Funders should support not only the programmatic work, but also the development and implementation of Monitoring & Evaluation systems required to collect the right data and information.

Funding

- Funders should be pro-active in recognizing the challenges inherent to short-term and project-based funding models, and develop solutions with practitioners.
- Funders should conduct due diligence- listening to different sources and/or conducting field visits- so that they align their funding with effective and impactful conservation work.
- Competition amongst organizations- both practitioners and funders- is wasteful and counterproductive. Funders that are informed and pro-active can help alleviate this problem and promote collaboration.
- Trust funds are an important and expanding model for establishing long-term funding required for effective and lasting conservation work.
- There is a role for a clearinghouse mechanism that connects smaller funders with smaller organizations, and improves the overall efficiencies of these interactions and networks within the conservation space. It is equally challenging for Africa-based conservation organizations to identify and connect with funders who are dispersed around the US, as it is for funders to identify effective African-based organizations.
- There is no existing obvious African conservation convener, which is a gap within the broader community of practice. The lack of convening results in:
 - » The absence of good mechanisms for funders to talk to each other,
 - » The perception that Africa is a difficult place to operate as a funder, and
 - » The need to do a better job of showcasing success in African conservation.
- Most funding for African conservation comes from bilateral and multilateral public aid agencies that are often heavily constrained, but smaller amounts of strategic, flexible private funding can leverage and amplify those larger funding sources.

People and Talent

- Practitioners need to recognize the value of skills beyond science and conservation, particularly skills related to:
 - » Management & mentoring,
 - » Fundraising & donor relationship management,
 - » Communications, and
 - » Strategic planning.
- Practitioners need to be realistic about overheads and push back against funders, armed with rationale for the needed funding; 'be sure to ask for the resources that you really need.'
- Organizations need sufficient and flexible budgets to invest in and retain top talent, with an intent of building capacity over a 10 year time frame -- a break from the current, predominant short-term nature of hiring.
- Conservation needs more women in senior positions in conservation organizations.
- Funders need to have an interest in and be willing to invest in how conservation organizations are managed and governed, supporting the investment in people through organizational development grants, professional development, and other mechanisms.
- Overall, there is a need for safe communities of practice to share challenges, build relationships, and develop collaborations between African conservation organizations.

Next Steps

There were recurring themes around the need for better communication both between funders and practitioners, as well as between funders. The current community of practice suffers from inefficiencies around due diligence and information asymmetry between funders and practitioners. Participants expressed some interest in exploring the potential for additional convening, funders' dialogue and education, and more efficient due diligence. Maliasili Initiatives will be following up with participants to gather additional feedback and chart a course of action.

PARTICIPANTS | Impact Forum 2017

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Andrea Heydlauff | **African Parks**

Bernie Tershy | **Mulago Foundation**

Damian Bell | **Honeyguide**

Elizabeth Singleton | **Maliasili Initiatives**

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Greg Alexander | **Acacia Conservation Fund**

Jason Haggins | **Sall Family Foundation**

John Kasaona | **Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation**

Ken Cameron | **US Fish & Wildlife Service**

Kenneth Coe | **The Nature Conservancy Africa Council**

Kent Wommack | **Liz Claiborne & Art Ortenberg Foundation**

Latif Boru | **Northern Rangelands Trust**

Leela Hazzah | **Lion Guardians**

Lucy Morgan | **Kenya Wildlife Trust**

Madison Ayer | **Farm Shop**

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Nick Lapham | **BAND Foundation**

Peter Fearnhead | **African Parks**

Peter Lindsey | **Wildlife Conservation Network**

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