

## **Conservation projects in Africa: How effective are we?**

The African continent is home to a vast array of biodiversity; it boasts several centres of endemism, some of the world's largest terrestrial migrations, bountiful freshwater and marine resources, verdant tropical forests, and productive grasslands. In 2022, these natural resources support the livelihoods of nearly 1.4 billion people, with this expected to increase to ~2.5 billion people by 2050. Meeting the needs of this rapidly growing population will require escalating investment in infrastructure development and agricultural expansion, all against a backdrop of climate change and current biodiversity loss that threaten human health and safety, food and water security, and socio-economic development. In short, we need to make good policy decisions, invest resources wisely, and implement effective projects to ensure the long-term sustainability of Africa's natural resources, guarantee their continued value to future generations, and achieve global conservation targets. Faced with these challenges, how do governments and civil society actors ensure that they use the scarce resources allotted to biodiversity conservation wisely and efficiently? Are we doing the right projects? How much impact do they have? Do they represent the best use of our time and resources? And what about factors beyond our control? In this talk, I will use case studies from southern Africa to illustrate some of the challenges in doing effective conservation and some of the things we can do about them.