

Wilderness Programs for Social and Environmental Reform in South Africa

Conservation in South Africa



Today South Africa has more land and wildlife under conservation than over the past 200 years

Just under 15% of South Africa is under some form of conservation land use



Conservation in
context

HIV Aids &
poverty

The challenges facing us



Only 11% of all South Africans have experienced their natural heritage

Our approach



Sustainable nature conservation must be social, as well as economic and biological

A crucial spark for a conservation ethic is the direct, personal experience of wild nature

Wilderness trails
Opinion leaders
Imbewu/Pride



Working models



Imbewu

Traditional knowledge links wild lands, trees, animals and birds to the heart of the people.

Highlights creative use of existing conservation role models

Working models



Opinion Leader Trails provide a direct experience of wildlands and fosters open communication between conservation decision makers, members of parliament and informed grassroots social & environmental activists



UMZI WETHU

nature nurture future

The goal of Umzi Wethu is to fulfil the employability potential of resilient, motivated youth displaced by HIV/AIDS and poverty by using the power of the wilderness, promoting personal wellness in a nurturing home context, providing credible training, and securing sustainable job placements in hospitality and eco-tourism establishments – while extending the program’s social outreach to others.

Umzi Components



WILDERNESS TRAILS

Personal growth and leadership
Overcome fears and challenges
Teach conservation principles
Share conservation ethos



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Umzi Components



ACCREDITED TRAINING

Integrated practical work
Broad exposure to work field
Shadow work experience
Opportunity for advancement
Job placement on graduation



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Successes to date



- More than **95%** job placement rate across the first 5 intakes (70 students)
- **85%** of graduates are employed (May 2010)
- One graduate from each intake awarded a scholarship for further career development
- 10% of graduates accelerated to middle management positions
- Very low absconding rate
- Model has been fine tuned for replication
- New Catering Unit to generate jobs and for further training of graduates



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WETHU

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PRIDE OF GROENDAL



Just what happens on a Pride trail?

1. Learners are collected from a central pick up point and transported into the Groendal wilderness area, near Uitenhage.
2. Umzi Wethu/WF trail guides take students on an experiential education trail in the beautiful Groendal Wilderness area.
3. Students are taught about the importance of conserving local plants and animals.
4. Umzi students (trained as peer educators earlier in their program) round off the day with a interactive workshop focused on issues of HIV/AIDS, self-esteem, values etc.
5. Before going home, learners receive a light meal
6. Learners complete journals and feedback forms which help them reflect on all they have learned about nature and themselves.





Central ethic
of wilderness is
sustainability -
social and
environmental