

PRESS RELEASE

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JRS SUPPORTS COMPETITION IN AFRICA AWARDING CASH PRIZES FOR USE OF BIODIVERSITY DATA IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

SEATTLE, Washington – November 14, 2019 – The JRS Biodiversity Foundation is proud to announce our third grant award to the [South African National Biodiversity Institute \(SANBI\)](#) for biodiversity informatics capacity development. This \$ 321,000 grant will fund the *African Biodiversity Challenge: Unlocking Decision-Data Pathways for Sustainable Development*. In this second edition of the African Biodiversity Challenge, scientists and decision-makers from three African countries will compete for cash prizes for best linking biodiversity data to decision-making. The teams will identify a need for biodiversity data based on a current conservation issue, and package user-friendly information for use in policy decisions that impact biodiversity. This competition supports JRS' [Capacity Building and Partnership Program](#) to increase access to biodiversity data and knowledge in sub-Saharan Africa.

This competition evolves out of almost a decade of partnership between JRS and SANBI. Two previous JRS-funded SANBI projects focused on increasing access to biodiversity knowledge across Africa and built the foundation for this project. The first project was awarded in 2012 and allowed SANBI to build partnerships and networks for data sharing success. The second grant was awarded in 2017 and funded the first African Biodiversity Challenge, in which country teams competed to publish the most policy-relevant biodiversity data for a cash prize. These teams succeeded in providing an impressive supply of data and about 47,000 new biodiversity data records were published. However, these projects also revealed a supply and demand problem. Although the biodiversity data was available, it wasn't necessarily factored into decisions impacting conservation and sustainable development. A demand for the information in hand, as well as an understanding of the products, institutions, and people that move biodiversity data from scientists to decision-makers, was lacking. This competition aims to unlock these decision-data "pathways" and facilitate data mobilization into the hands of people making sustainable development decisions.

Matthew Child, the Biodiversity Informatics Project Coordinator at SANBI, led this first African Biodiversity Challenge and is also the Project Director for this competition. "The African community of practice for biodiversity informatics is steadily being built. Now is the time to demonstrate the value of biodiversity data with biodiversity information products that help to solve immediate decision-making problems, thereby creating a virtuous cycle between information supply and demand within an ecosystem of institutions."

In this challenge, unlike its predecessor, the decisions that require biodiversity data will be identified first and then the products that fit the purpose will be designed. Products may be assessments, maps, indicators, monitoring frameworks, analyses, or any other packaging of raw data, from which decision-

makers can more easily interpret to make policy decisions. This approach should create a demand for biodiversity data and empower stakeholders to maintain connections between scientists and decision-makers. The top three teams from the first African Biodiversity Challenge, Ghana, Malawi, and Rwanda, will compete and be judged on how well their products lead to action, how relevant and user-friendly their products are, and the sustainability of their products and partnerships. Prizes of US\$30,000 for first, US\$20,000 for second, and US\$10,000 for third place will be awarded based on potential impact. SANBI and JRS expect this approach will inform how to connect biodiversity management decisions to data, ultimately leading to improved conservation on the ground.

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About the “African Biodiversity Challenge: Unlocking Decision-Data Pathways for Sustainable Development” – See <https://jrsbiodiversity.org/grants/sanbi-2019/>.

About the JRS Biodiversity Foundation – The mission of the JRS Biodiversity Foundation is to increase access to and use of information that will lead to greater biodiversity conservation and more sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Founded in 2004, the JRS Biodiversity Foundation supports the capacity of institutions and people who collect, manage, and share biodiversity data for Sub-Saharan Africa. JRS’ grantees connect scientific knowledge to stakeholders who make and influence decisions that are crucial to conserving biodiversity. The foundation has awarded \$US 20.3 million in grants since 2007. Please visit us online at <http://jrsbiodiversity.org>.

About the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) – SANBI contributes to South Africa’s sustainable development by facilitating access to biodiversity data, generating information and knowledge, building capacity, providing policy advice, and showcasing and conserving biodiversity in its national botanical and zoological gardens. Please visit SANBI online at <http://www.sanbi.org>.

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