

# Strategic Plan 2022-2025





## Executive Summary

Maliasili was founded a decade ago based on the belief that talented and committed local organizations are key agents of change in the design and implementation of community-based conservation approaches that drive local stewardship and benefits for land and natural resources. Our core purpose is to support high-potential local organizations to overcome their challenges and constraints so that they can become more effective in driving change in their landscapes, communities, and nations.

Since our founding, we have supported the growth and impact of over 30 leading African conservation organizations. We have created a comprehensive set of organizational support services and methods; developed a cohort-based leadership program; helped secure over \$15 million in funding for our partners; and watched many of those organizations grow, mature, and achieve greater impact as African leaders in the field. Our track record and unique role in combining technical expertise in community-based conservation with organizational and leadership development

services are generating greater interest in our work from both potential partners as well as funders. At the same time, there is unprecedented change occurring in the conservation field with a growing recognition of the centrality of local, community-driven conservation efforts for sustaining healthy ecosystems, with critical implications for both climate change and biodiversity.

This is a critical and urgent time for humanity and our planet, and this strategic plan builds on new external trends and opportunities as well as our growing internal capacity and scope of work, to chart an ambitious path forward for the next four years. By 2025, our overall vision is to see more outstanding local organizations with the resources, leadership, and capabilities that enable them to drive conservation solutions that work for people and nature on a growing scale—in Africa and beyond. We want to see more funding being directed to and invested in local organizations, in eastern and southern Africa and around the world, and to see our partners become increasingly influential at national, regional, and global scales.

Our 2025 goals are structured around three core pillars:



Strengthening Organizations



Outstanding Leadership



Amplifying Local Resources & Influence

**Strengthening Organizations:** We aim to triple our total portfolio from 30 to 90 high-potential organizations, while supporting more youthful and diverse African leadership across our portfolio.

**Outstanding Leadership:** We will expand our leadership program to train 200 conservation leaders and trial a new program to support emerging talent.

**Amplifying Local Resources & Influence:** We will significantly increase our investments in communications, convening, and mobilizing funding for our partners in order to enhance their influence, power, and funding on a regional and global scale. We will increase our grandmaking five-fold and mobilize a total of \$40 million in new funding for our portfolio partners, while influencing the wider conservation field towards making at least \$100 million in new funding commitments to support community-based conservation and local organizations.

By working with more partners and supporting them to become stronger, more effective, and better resourced, we aim to support community-based conservation outcomes across at least 75 million hectares of key conservation landscapes.

Our work will be focused around four focal geographies: East African savannah rangelands; the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area in southern Africa; marine environments of the Western Indian Ocean; and Madagascar. Our partners' work will result in safeguarding critical ecosystems that provide value for peoples' livelihoods, generate nature-based economic opportunities, protect numerous endangered species, and store vast amounts of carbon in forests and other natural systems.

Achieving these goals will require doubling the size of our team—by far our most important organizational resource—and making investments in new capacities, including communications, monitoring and evaluation, development and finance, and operations. To do all this, and to mobilize more grant funding for our partners, we aim to increase our total budget from just under \$5 million in 2021 to over \$15 million by 2025.

**We are excited about our trajectory and invite all of our partners and collaborators to join us in this journey.**



## Who We Are

Maliasili exists to help talented local conservation organizations overcome their challenges and constraints, so that they can become more effective agents of change in their landscapes, communities, and nations.

Over the last decade, we have created a comprehensive set of organizational support services; designed, implemented, and grown a cohort-based leadership program; secured more money for local organizations; and watched many of our partners mature and achieve impact on a greater scale. We are poised for continued growth so that we can support more organizations in Africa and potentially beyond.

This strategic plan charts the next phase of our development. It comes at a time of growing opportunity for us as an organization, which coincides with urgent demands from the world around us.

*"Maliasili is creating a movement that brings like-minded community conservation organizations together to work with each other rather than to compete... you've catalyzed this movement that community-based organizations better work together and collaborate and then you are getting donors in a room and making them believe that."*

*-Samantha du Toit, Program Manager, South Rift Association of Land Owners, Kenya*

## Our Terminology

In describing our work and our strategy, we rely on a handful of terms that lie at the heart of what Maliasili does, believes, and values. But we also recognize that words often carry multiple meanings and interpretations and are shaped by different cultural histories, biases, and perspectives.

Consequently, we have internally discussed and debated these terms, exploring alternatives, and qualifying and explaining them. As such, we provide definitions to several key terms, as seen below.

### 'Conservation'

We continue to frame Maliasili's core work and purpose as 'conservation,' which encompasses a wide variety of efforts and approaches to sustain the diversity of the earth's living systems. At the same time, we are deeply versed in the cultural and historic conflicts around protected areas and nature conservation that have come to be associated with the term, particularly in terms of the way that conservation has frequently dispossessed local communities and indigenous peoples.

Our vision of conservation is just as much about people as it is about biodiversity, ecology, climate, and the environment. To us conservation seeks to empower communities to secure the lands and resources that their livelihoods depend on, providing them with greater ability to shape their own futures. We invest in organizations that put this vision into action.

We call these approaches to conservation 'community-based' and believe that when fully realized, these kinds of conservation practices can truly sustain and safeguard both human rights and natural systems in a synergistic and integrated way.

### 'Local Organizations'

Maliasili uses 'local organizations' as a shorthand for organizations that are rooted in their communities or in their countries' civil society. We believe that organizations that are connected to and rooted in the places they are trying to conserve and protect are best positioned to succeed.

### 'Organizational Development'

To describe Maliasili's core work of strengthening the effectiveness and resilience of our partner organizations, we use the term 'organizational development'(OD). We recognize that the terms 'capacity building' or 'capacity development' are often used to describe the kind of work that Maliasili does, but we prefer 'organizational development' as it puts the focus on the performance and capacity of the organization as the key agent of action and impact.

We also feel that the term 'capacity building' has come to be associated with what are often top-down, box-checking, short-term interventions, that often do not build organizational capacity, and are the opposite of the kind of work that Maliasili aspires to do.

## Value Proposition

1. We possess a unique combination of skills and knowledge in community-based conservation AND organizational development.
2. We establish long-term partnerships built on trust, walking the journey of organizational development together with our partners.
3. Our work relies on the strength of group facilitation to identify and address organizational challenges together.
4. We act as a bridge between worlds, able to understand both local and global contexts, and serve as a trusted partner between national and international conservation actors, including donors.

## Our Values

### Our goal is our partners' success.

We focus on strengthening local organizations to optimize their conservation impact. Our role is to catalyze their talent, commitment, and innovation to help them do more, do it better and by doing so, change the conservation field. When that happens, we succeed.

**Make the complex simple.** In everything we do, we strive to create practical, tangible, action-oriented solutions. A key to that is keeping things simple and clear.

**Put people first.** Our work is relationship-driven and trust-based. When people are supported, when they feel valued and heard, they are able to reach their full potential. Maliasili's success depends on outstanding individuals, dedicated to each other's success, working as an effective team.

**Strength in diversity.** Inclusion of different backgrounds and perspectives is essential to our success and the broader changes necessary for effective, sustainable conservation. Strengthening local voices and capacity is core to everything we do, internally and externally.

**Walk the Talk.** One of Maliasili's great strengths is that most of our advice to our partners is based on our own experience working in local organizations as well as in growing our own organization with an ambitious vision. We understand the realities of building and managing an entrepreneurial organization and we strive for our own organization to be a model of effective management and teamwork for our partners.

**Laugh. Learn. Adapt.** The challenges we face are great, so we must be resilient. To maintain perspective, we must also have fun and not take ourselves too seriously. We embrace learning from failure and success, and work to constantly iterate, improve our practices, and adapt to the changing world around us. We are driven by a commitment to learning as a key to continuous improvement personally and professionally.



## Guiding Principles

Across our work and decisions, Maliasili is guided by three principles.

### Conservation is ultimately about people.

While we are dedicated to conservation impact, Maliasili's vision of conservation is focused on people as the agents of change and on solutions grounded in strengthening community livelihoods and benefits, local culture, knowledge and stewardship of resources, as well as biodiversity and climate benefits.

### Conservation is inherently local.

We believe that for lasting impact, conservation solutions must be locally tailored, owned, and delivered.

### Diversity, inclusion, and empowerment are critical to conservation success.

The conservation field suffers from historic and present-day inequities in access to decision-making and funding. We strive to create a more diverse and inclusive field by supporting local leaders and local organizations to be at the forefront of action and solutions.

*“What distinguishes Maliasili from other organizations is how they really walk the journey with you as an organization—well beyond any individual project or activity.”*

*—Dickson Kaelo, CEO, Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association*

## Our Context

# Global Momentum for Community Conservation and Local Leadership

We live in a time of increasing urgency in the conservation and environmental field, with the stakes rapidly rising for the future of the planet and humanity. There is also a growing consensus around the central importance that healthy, well-managed ecosystems play for both climate change and biodiversity conservation, and the critical role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in safeguarding the landscapes that they live in. These trends are driving greater investment towards community-based conservation and the local organizations that are leading those approaches around the world.<sup>1</sup>

Key trends include:

**Convergence of climate and biodiversity agendas.** Over the past several years, there has been a marked convergence of the efforts to address climate change and biodiversity loss based on the reality that about 25% of carbon emissions come from deforestation and land degradation.

**Increased investment in climate & biodiversity issues.** Given the growing sense of urgency surrounding the climate and biodiversity crises, new large-scale, often collaborative funding initiatives are being designed and launched on an unprecedented scale and frequency.

**Growing mainstream support for indigenous and community-based conservation solutions.** Building on decades of effort, there is now a wide acceptance of the centrality of locally-driven conservation approaches, including conservation approaches based on local rights, justice, and leadership.

**Making conservation more just, and more local.** The growing movements around racial justice, diversity, and equity in the United States and around the world is bringing attention to long-standing concerns around racial diversity, leadership, and power dynamics in conservation, including those between African organizations and international organizations and funders.

**Growing interest and investment in organizational capacity and leadership.** Alongside the growing support for community-based conservation is a more emergent increase of interest in organizational capacity and leadership—Maliasili's core areas of work.

*"If we believe in the work that CSOs [civil society organizations] are doing - and we should - then we must help usher in a new era of capacity-building investment, for institutions, and the individuals who comprise them."*

—Darren Walker, President, Ford Foundation

<sup>1</sup> Nelson, F. 'Convergence, community and justice: Key emerging conservation trends of the pandemic era.' Mongabay, August 24, 2021. [Read here.](#)



**"If the role played by [local] organizations during the pandemic tells us anything, it's that building robust, strong, supported, and effective local organizations is essential."**

—Disparities in Funding African NGOs, Bridgespan Group and African Philanthropy Forum, 2021



## The foundation for our growth is our track record over the past decade.

### Partner Growth and Impact.

Our most critical achievement is the growth and increased conservation impact of our portfolio of partners. We have helped organizations develop their strategies, grow their teams, and spread their reach and impact through multi-year, intensive periods of organizational support. Ninety percent of our partners have reported that Maliasili's support has made them a stronger organization. Ninety percent have also increased or kept steady their social and environmental impacts while working with us.

*"The combination of a new strategic plan and the leadership training provided by Maliasili has been a game-changer for SORALO. We have grown our leadership skills and perspectives within our landscape, started to appreciate that we had to scale our work, and through our strategy, we knew how to do this."*

*-John Kamanga, Executive Director, South Rift Association of Land Owners, Kenya*

### Geographic Expansion.

Our portfolio has grown to over 30 leading local and national conservation and natural resource-focused organizations. Originally focused on Kenya and Tanzania, we are expanding to service new partners in Namibia, Zambia, Madagascar, Angola and Uganda.

### Organizational Development Tools and Expertise.

We have developed and refined our set of tools and methods, including work planning, budgeting, board governance, fundraising, and communications, among other topics, customizing them for the context of local organizations and integrating our understanding of community-based conservation with our support to their strategies. The breadth and depth of our organizational support services is unique within our field.

### Leadership Development.

Working in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy and Blue Ventures, Maliasili's leadership programs have trained 81 leaders from 39 organizations and nine countries.

### Securing Funding for Local Organizations.

Our annual sub-grants to our partners increased from about \$380,000 in 2018 to \$1.8 million in 2020, and we helped our partners secure at least an additional \$10 million through our support to their fundraising during the past four years. We launched the collaborative Maasai Landscape Conservation Fund, a \$3 million, 3-year initiative to catalyze new models for channeling pooled philanthropic funding to local organizations.

## Strategic Challenges

As part of our strategy development process, we consulted a cross section of our stakeholders, which confirmed the strength and value of our organizational development (OD) support to partners and leadership programs, as well as the benefits of our facilitation style and approach. However, we also received honest feedback about important challenges to address:

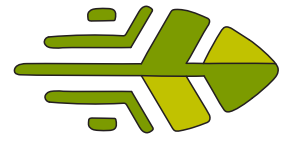
### Sustaining culture and values alongside growth.

Organizational growth brings challenges, and Maliasili needs to continue to live its values, 'walking the talk' of our own advice and focusing on people, quality, and diversity, as we grow.

**Don't forget the fundamentals.** We must continue to find and support the best local organizations, providing high quality, tailored OD support that meets our partners' needs, even as we grow to work with a larger number of organizations across a wider geography.

**Leverage Maliasili's community for peer learning and expertise.** Both our OD support and leadership work should strive to increase peer learning and exchanges, optimizing the experience, wisdom, and expertise within our network – and ensuring we don't excessively rely on Western management and leadership concepts.

**Clarify our role as a funding intermediary & catalyst.** We must continue to support our partners to be their own best advocates and fundraisers, while also creating and communicating a clear role as a funding intermediary committed to channeling more funds to local organizations through a range of different mechanisms.



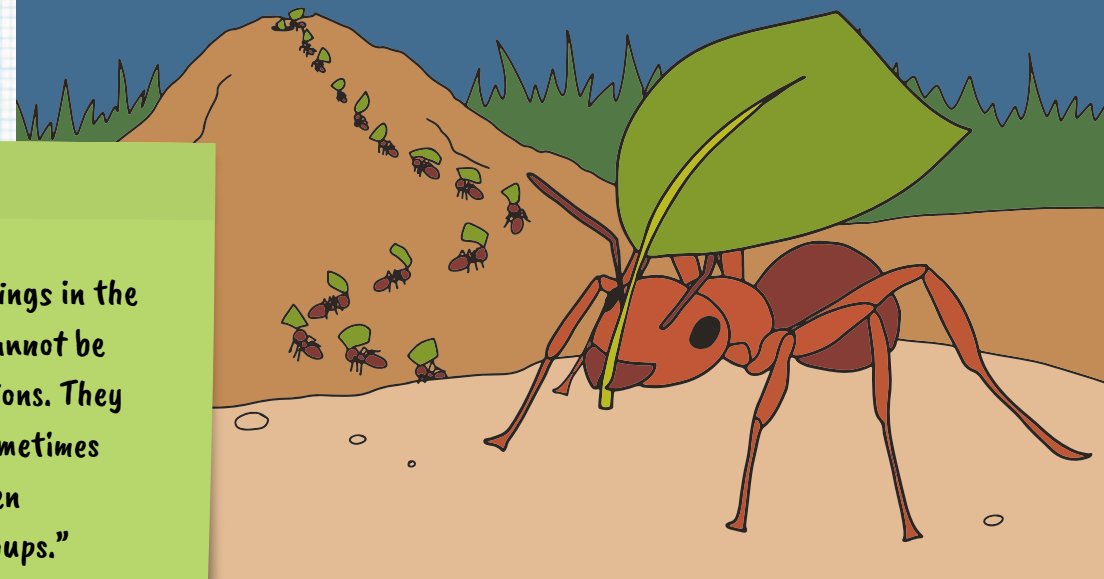
## Our Mission

To accelerate community-based conservation through local organizations.



"The most important things in the world that need doing cannot be done by large organizations. They will be done by many, sometimes hundreds, sometimes even thousands of smaller groups."

-Andrew Steer, CEO, Bezos Earth Fund, September 2021



**Our portfolio growth and support will be anchored around landscapes of critical conservation value and opportunity, focusing on four geographic areas and adding additional ones as our reach and capacity expands.**

This growth in our current areas of operation will be complemented by a greater focus on scoping opportunities in new regions through key collaborations. We will pilot support to organizations in at least two new regions, potentially adding support to up to ten organizations in new geographic areas by 2025.



**East African Rangelands**

The savannah rangelands that stretch from northern Kenya to Northern Tanzania and from Lake Victoria to the Indian Ocean host the largest remaining populations of terrestrial wildlife left on earth, as well as diverse indigenous pastoralist communities and cultures. We aim to double our East Africa portfolio from 20 to 40 partners and further accelerate the impact of leading community-based conservation models such as Kenya’s conservancies.

**KAZA**

The Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area is Africa’s most ambitious effort at large-scale conservation, covering roughly 250,000 km<sup>2</sup> over five countries and holding roughly half of the world’s remaining wild elephants. Our southern Africa growth will be anchored in this extraordinary area, with the aim of ultimately supporting 25 partners across Zambia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Botswana.

**Madagascar**

In 2019, in our first major geographic expansion, we started working in what is considered the world’s most important single country for biodiversity. Our aim is to grow our portfolio there from two to 10+ organizations by 2025, supporting a rising cohort of leading Malagasy civil society organizations.

**Western Indian Ocean**

The coral reefs, mangroves, and fisheries of East Africa are a hotspot of marine biodiversity and key source of food and resources for millions of people living in coastal communities. We aim to expand our portfolio of marine conservation organizations, adding at least five new partners in this region.

**Portfolio Development Strategy**

We invest heavily in cultivating our portfolio pipeline and in carrying out due diligence to evaluate our investment in prospective partner organizations.

The key criteria we assess revolve around:

1. An organization’s **potential for impact** in developing and spreading community-based conservation in key geographies
2. The composition and potential of its **leadership**
3. Its **commitment** to internal organizational improvement

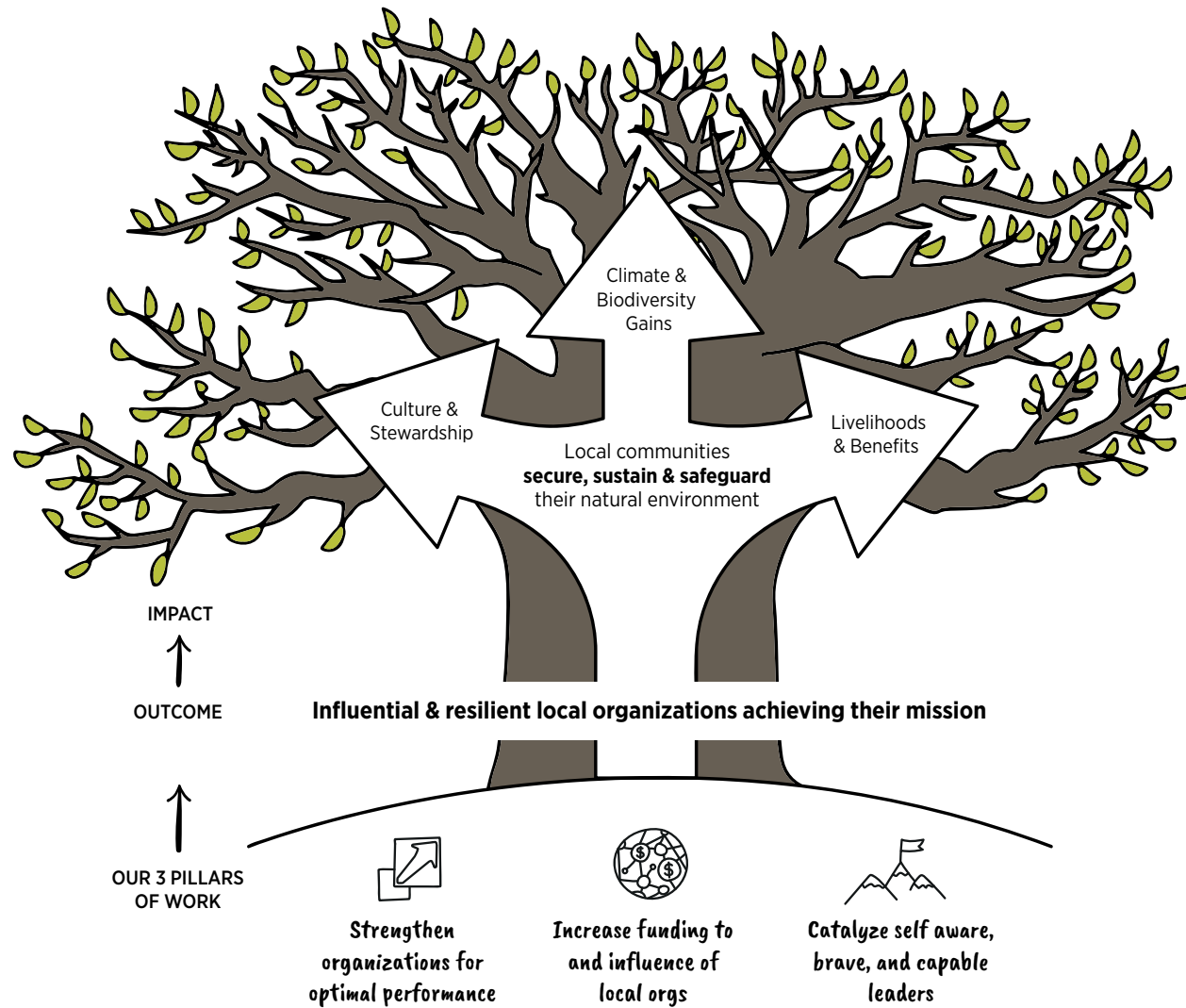
We will incorporate the following considerations as refinements to our existing criteria:

**We will prioritize diversity in the leadership** of prospective partners, actively working to increase the proportion of our portfolio with black African leaders and also considering youth, gender, and indigenous identity as important factors in building a portfolio that contributes to the diversity we seek to foster in the conservation field.

**We will consider prospective partners’ impacts** in relation to climate change, mainly by prioritizing organizations working in high-carbon ecosystems such as forests, mangroves, and coastal areas.



# Theory of Change



Maliasili’s work is ultimately designed to address the damage and degradation of natural ecosystems—and their value for biodiversity, wildlife, and climate—that is accelerating around the world. Our purpose is to expand, strengthen, and sustain community-based approaches to conservation and natural resource management.

We believe that talented, motivated, and committed local organizations are key agents of change in the design, facilitation, and support of community-based conservation approaches that drive community stewardship and benefits from land and resources. We believe that through strengthening these organizations, they will be able to increase their individual and collective voice and influence, achieving more sustainable conservation outcomes.

**Our hope is that over time this will shift greater power and resources to local organizations and ultimately accelerate community-based conservation success and impact.**

We believe that improved conservation practices through community action and stewardship will scale and spread through more capable, influential, and resilient local organizations. Our partners’ work will result in safeguarding critical ecosystems that provide value for peoples’ livelihoods, generate nature-based economic opportunities, protect numerous endangered species, and store vast amounts of carbon in forests and other natural systems.

Our Theory of Change has three core desired outcomes—stronger local organizations, outstanding leadership, and greater resources and influence at the local level—which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. We believe that empowered and effective local organizations will drive greater change and that an organization’s empowerment stems from a combination of clear purpose, skilled team members, confidence in their impact, compassionate and capable leadership, sufficient resources, and connections to decision-makers.

## ‘Empowered Organizations’

Empowerment cannot be given, but organizations can cultivate it through a combination of clear purpose, skills, confidence in their impact, compassionate and capable leadership, sufficient resources, and agency to influence decision-makers.

Power to drive change relies on all of these things working together. However, even empowered organizations cannot optimize their impact without respect, trust, and responsibility being given and shared by all stakeholders, including donors and policy-makers.

## The Outcomes We Seek

**Stronger Local Organizations.** We believe that if we invest in the organizational development of local organizations through holistic, multi-year partnerships that enhance their strategy, people, implementation, and funding, then these organizations will become more capable and resilient. We believe that investments in organizational development create a positive feedback loop between organizations seeing results towards their mission and feeling empowered to do more.

**Outstanding Leadership.** We believe that all organizations need outstanding leadership to meet their full potential. Our programs seek to cultivate and support such leadership, which requires not just the skills to guide an organization’s work, but also the self-awareness and empathy to support themselves and their team members, as well as their ability to foster partnerships necessary to grow their work.

**Greater Local Influence and Resources.** We believe that local organizations are key to driving conservation success, and are deserving of more recognition, trust, and funding on a systemic level. We work to amplify our partners’ voices, influence, and access to resources and ultimately to catalyze shifts in power, influence, and funding towards our partners and other local organizations.



## Our Goals

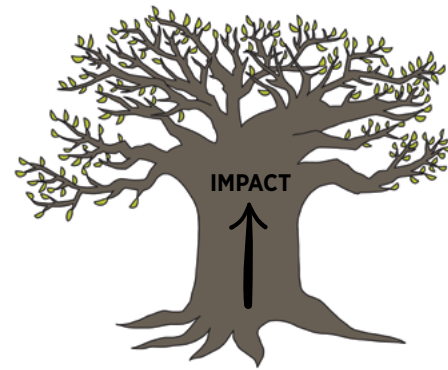
The core focus and ambition of Maliasili's work over the next five years will be to support a growing portfolio of local organizations, **enabling them to become more effective, resilient, and influential with outstanding leadership and greater access to the resources they need.**

The links between the interventions across our three pillars of work is essential to optimizing our impact: Effective organizations need outstanding leaders and flexible and durable funding; empowered leaders can advocate for their work and the resources they need to scale their impact.

All of our goals are mutually reinforcing.



## Stronger Organizations



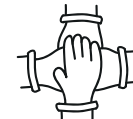
Strengthen organizations for optimal performance

### INTERVENTIONS



#### STRATEGY

Facilitate a strategic planning process to bring focus & purpose



#### PEOPLE

Build resilient teams: people in the right roles working together effectively



#### ACTION

Enhance planning, implementation, measurement, and communications



#### FUNDING

Help secure the right funding

Select high-potential local organizations for portfolio

## 2025 Goals

**Growth:** Triple the size and diversify the scope, reach, and impact of our partner portfolio, from a total of 30 to 90 partners, growing our portfolio in existing focal geographies and strategically exploring new expansions.

**Innovation:** Design and pilot new ways to support portfolio partners experiencing high rates of growth and expansion so that they can sustain that growth (termed 'Accelerating Growth').

## Our portfolio of partner organizations is the heart of Maliasili's work.

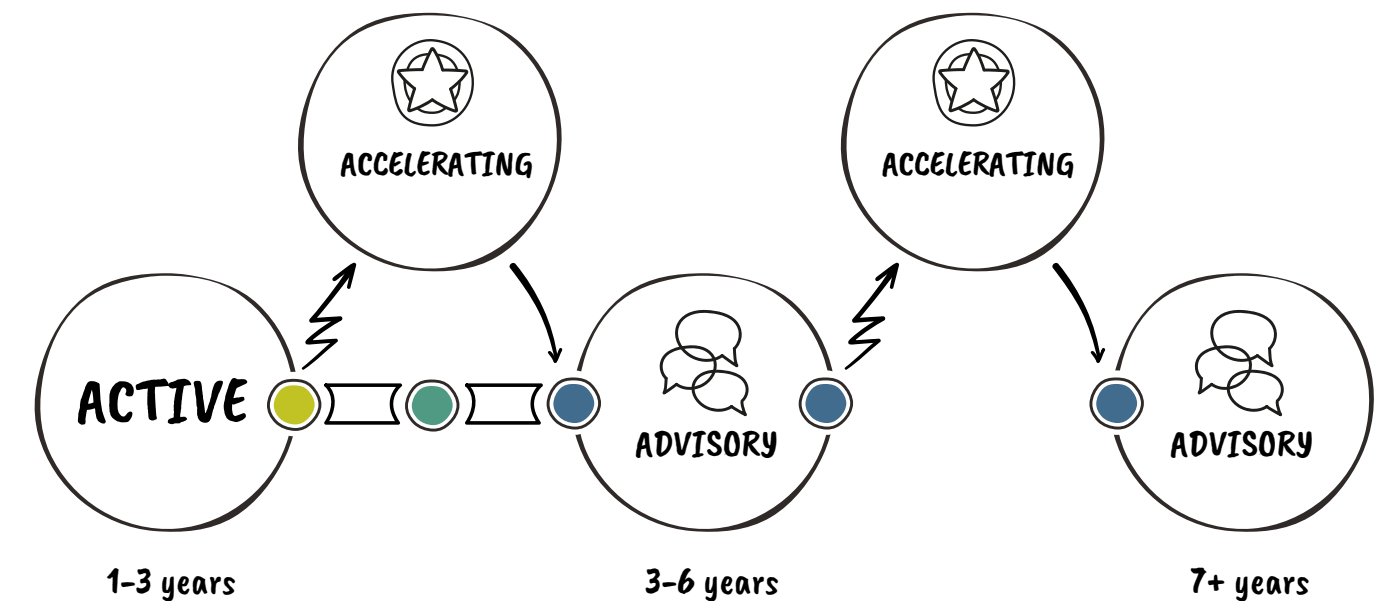
Our fundamental efforts as an organization are:

1. To find great local organizations with the potential to deliver impacts in community-based conservation.
2. To support them to become more effective as organizations.

As we grow, we will continue to develop and refine high-quality and effective organizational development support, tailored to each partner's needs, as structured through our strategy, people, and action framework and making additional investments in key support services, such as financial management and board governance.

In the next four years, we aim to triple our total portfolio from 30 to **90 partner organizations**.

**Our target of 90 partners is inclusive of our entire current portfolio at various stages and phases of support as seen below.**



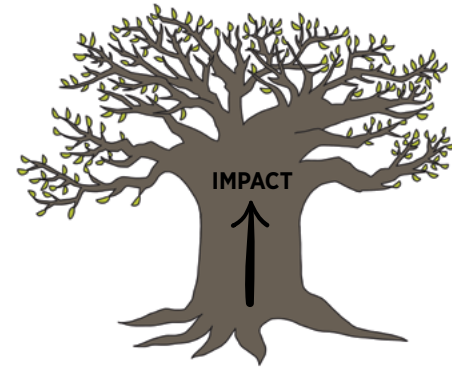
**Active:**  
Intensive initial ~3 year phase of organizational development support

**Accelerating:**  
A new initiative to support partners manage periods of rapid growth following an earlier phase of development

**Advisory:**  
Sustained and ongoing advisory support as needed

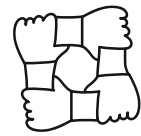


## Developing Outstanding Leaders



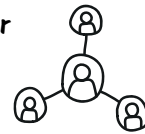
Catalyze self-aware, brave, and capable leaders

### INTERVENTIONS



Foster trusted relationships between conservation leaders

Increase peer learning & exchange



Enhance skillsets & mindsets

## 2025 Goals

**Growth:** Train and support a growing cadre of at least 200 self-aware, high-impact community-based conservation leaders across Africa and Madagascar.

**Innovation:** Develop 80 talented early career and mid-level leaders that can support and succeed senior leaders, through new 'emerging leaders' and internship programs.

**Learning & Collaboration:** Catalyze collective peer support, learning, and collaboration across the Maliasili leadership alumni community to enhance conservation outcomes.

Since we first piloted our cohort-based leadership development program as a new initiative in 2016, this body of work has become a pillar of Maliasili's overall work and support to our portfolio.

By 2025, we aim to have developed a growing community of outstanding leaders that have greater self-awareness and a leader's mindset, and are better able to run high-impact organizations. We will enhance the program with additional coaching support, a more structured program of alumni engagement, ongoing education and peer learning, as well as intentional efforts to reinforce the lessons and linkages between our OD and leadership work.

A new 'emerging leaders' program will expand the breadth of leadership capacity by developing a pipeline of talented mid-level leaders that can support and succeed senior leaders. We recognize the importance of genuine relationships in sparking peer learning and collaboration, and we will continue to prioritize creating space for those relationships to develop.



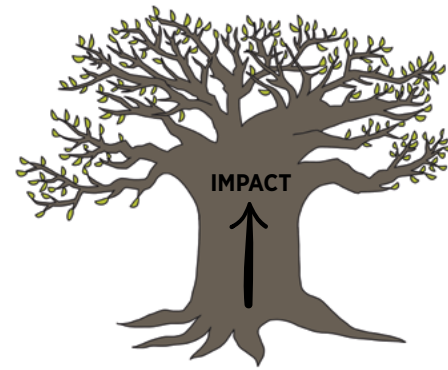
*"Given the complexities of conservation, the uncertainties typically found around conservation issues, and the rapid pace of change, the sector needs leaders who are self-aware, systems thinkers, adaptive learners, conveners, network builders, collaboration brokers, effective communicators and innovators."*

*-Bruyere et al, Conservation Leadership Capacity Building: A Landscape Study, July 2020*





## Amplifying Local Influence & Resources



Increased funding to and influence of local orgs

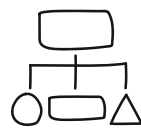
INTERVENTIONS



Strengthen our partners' access, influence, and voice



Mobilize resources for local orgs



Improve funding models and practices

## 2025 Goals

**Agency:** Through strategic networking and communications support, strengthen our partners' position in the conservation field, increasing their access to donors and decision-makers and amplifying their voice and influence.

**Influence:** Utilize communications, outreach and engagement to make the case for community-based conservation and influence the conservation field to make at least \$100 million in new funding commitments for community-based conservation organizations.

**Grantmaking:** Design new funding mechanisms within Maliasili and through collaborations with other organizations that direct at least \$40 million in new, enabling funding to our portfolio partners.

Local organizations often struggle to obtain the resources, attention, and support that they need in order to be successful. We work to mobilize resources for our partners and to raise awareness about the value of investing in local, community-driven conservation solutions, promote our partners as the key innovators and changemakers that they are, and help them secure funding for their work.

We work with funders who want to support the best and brightest in African community conservation to connect with our partners and to other like-minded funders, reduce the risks to their investments in local organizations, and provide grant management services that assist both our partners and funders.

By 2025, our overall aim is to see substantially more funding directed to outstanding local conservation organizations in eastern and southern Africa and around the world and to see our partners' voice, agency, and influence become more prominent at national, regional, and global scales. The three goals in this area are mutually reinforcing, but each discrete target is vital to our overall success.

We hope that our efforts to raise the profile and position of our partners will stimulate new funding commitments to community-based conservation broadly, and we aim to draw on those commitments to increase our grantmaking to partners.

This area of work will be an area of increased investment for Maliasili, building on the opportunities being created by the surge of global interest in indigenous-led and community-based conservation and in the role of local organizations. New and enhanced collaborations will be critical across this entire stream of work and draw on our diverse networks. In order to deliver, we will significantly increase our investment in the communications, and networking functions that enable us to promote our partners' work as well as to connect them with funders.

We will pursue three key strategies to deliver on our resource mobilization goals:

**Facilitate new collaborations** to advocate for greater and better funding of local organizations on a global scale, so that we extend our influence well beyond the scope of funding that we control directly to the wider conservation field.

**Improving our grantmaking** infrastructure to provide fiscal sponsorship and other administrative support for our partners' fundraising and to effectively manage a growing volume and diversity of outgoing grants.

**Develop new pooled funding mechanisms** that mobilize resources for a larger number of our partners, aligned with the focal geographies and landscapes of our portfolio and drawing on lessons with the piloting of the Maasai Landscape Conservation Fund.

### Improving Conservation Funding Practices

There is a promising surge of interest by funders to invest more in locally-led conservation approaches as a key element of accelerating global conservation actions. Conservation needs not only more funding but better funding if local organizations are to become better able to deliver on their missions. Much of the funding in the field consists of short-term, project-based funding, while what high-potential organizations need is more unrestricted, long-term, flexible funding that can support their growth and creativity.

Maliasili will focus on improving not only the amount of funding accessible for local organizations, but also the quality of that funding as we work with a range of networks and allies to improve conservation funding models and practices.

## Implementation & Resourcing

Delivering on our goals and ambitions over the next four years will require significant growth in our funding, team capacity, and internal systems. The most important element of our growth lies in the expansion and development of our team, but also augmenting our operational capacity and fundraising abilities to support and sustain that growth. All of our work is supported by integrated communications and monitoring, evaluation and learning functions that support our work in critical ways.

## Communications & Engagement

Communications supports and enhances all of our programmatic work. It is also a key strategy to help us and our partners gain influence in the conservation field. We will invest in our convening, communications, and engagement capability as a cross-cutting function to support and enhance our three pillars of work—portfolio, leadership, and amplifying local conservation.

Specifically, we will place an emphasis on our communications and convening work in support of our Amplifying Local Influence & Resources goal as these efforts will help us make the case that local organizations are critical for global conservation success, and they need more support, decision-making power, and funding.

At an organizational level, Maliasili wants to strengthen our brand and raise our profile in order to secure and mobilize resources and to build relationships with other important actors in the conservation, social, and environmental arena.

## Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

Our monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) efforts to date have largely focused on tracking the growth and impact of our partners, and this will continue to be an important proxy for our impact. As we grow and mature as an organization we recognize the need to more systematically evaluate and learn from our own interventions and their effectiveness at moving our partners forward in their organizational development journeys. Our theory of change is ultimately about behavior change—change in individual leaders, change in how organizations conduct their work, and change in how conservation stakeholders interact and collaborate.

We will be designing a new MEL framework in line with this theory of change and strategic plan to identify the specific individual and organizational behavior changes, the desired outcomes that we expect to see from our programming, and the best indicators of those changes to evaluate our effectiveness and learn about opportunities for improvement.

We recognize that this is a key area for additional investment of resources to track, evaluate, and learn from progress (or lack thereof) and will be building out a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning team to work with all areas of the organization. We are aiming to launch a new MEL Framework to complement this strategy by the end of 2022.



## Building Our Team: Human Resources

The most important factor in Maliasili's overall growth and ability to facilitate organizational change with a growing suite of partners will be the continued growth and development of our team. As a service provider, the quality and scope of our work depends largely on the capacity of our team. During the past several years we have made significant progress attracting new talent and developing our team's capacity, which has been critical to our growth and the quality of support we have been able to provide our partners, including during the difficult conditions of the COVID pandemic. We have expanded our senior management team; devolved greater authority and responsibility to our directors who oversee portfolio, leadership, and administrative teams; and are putting greater prioritization on the diversity of our team.

To achieve the goals of this strategy we anticipate doubling our team to over 40 full-time members by 2023 and building capacity in key functions. This growth is anchored in the growth of our portfolio staff to provide OD support to partners.

To support our increased focus on 'amplifying' the influence and funding for our partners, we will bring in senior expertise to support this stream of work. These efforts will also require us to continue to invest in our communications team, building capacity in research, media engagement, and event design and implementation. New positions in Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning will help us better understand, improve and communicate our impacts. We will also expand our capacity through investments in new roles to support fundraising, human resources, IT, and grants management functions.

This growth will be phased (and contingent on resource availability), but particularly with the growth of the portfolio team. We are aiming to hire cohorts of new team members to facilitate joint training and onboarding. Training and professional development will continue to be a priority for us, with emphasis on our team's understanding of community-based conservation practices, as well as the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate organizational development.



### Our Commitment to Diversity and Equity

Maliasili’s vision and purpose are founded on our core beliefs about how conservation should change in Africa and globally, supporting conservation practices, models, and narratives that are based on shifting power and authority to local communities. We believe that our work is playing an important role in enhancing the agency of local, African-led organizations, who are in turn agents of social justice, community empowerment, and legal reforms. Maliasili’s core purpose is a key part of wider efforts to build a more equitable, just, and diverse conservation field in Africa and globally as we grow and expand our work. Going forward, we will ensure our work contributes even more to greater racial equity and diversity within the conservation field and adapt a similar set of values to other geographies as we expand.

We also recognize that we must do better to build our own organization in ways that reflect these values. We are a multicultural organization and must reflect a diversity of cultures, backgrounds, skill sets, and worldviews in order to do our core work well.

We have five key priorities that encompass our commitment to diversity and equity internally:

- Our top priority is to build a diverse team,** including at the leadership level. We will prioritize the recruitment and development of national/indigenous staff and invest in those staff to take on greater leadership positions as Maliasili grows, ensuring we achieve greater racial, ethnic, cultural, and national diversity.
- We will strengthen the diversity of our board,** particularly to include African voices and representation.
- We will continue to practice equity in compensation:** determining compensation across team members based on position and performance, not nationality.
- We will ensure transparency in our operations,** so all team members are able to engage in the development and implementation of the administration of our work.
- We will devolve decision-making** as deeply as possible in our team to share power and build leadership capacity as we diversify and strengthen our team.

## Financing Our Work

Over the last several years, we have grown our budget by 25-30% annually, and we believe that we can sustain that level of growth, if not exceed it given the favorable external context and growing demand for our work and role. The adoption of our new strategic plan will require an average of about 35% annual growth in our budget, ideally with a greater surge of investment in our team development in the earlier years of this strategy (i.e. 2022 and 2023).

Our overall budget growth target is to expand our annual operating expenses to around \$5M in 2025 in order to build our own capacity and grow our team to prepare for expansion of our portfolio support and other programs. While we have experienced significant growth in our grantmaking, and since our goal is more funding to our partners irrespective of whether or not it is dispersed by Maliasili, it makes projections for our grantmaking slightly more difficult.

We aim to reach a grantmaking target of \$10M in annual outgoing funding to our partners by 2025—a provisional goal that we will review as our grantmaking and resource mobilization for partners expands.

Expenses	2022	2023	2024	2025
Personnel	2,815,101	3,368,795	3,535,235	3,709,996
Operations	1,045,419	1,004,519	1,029,254	1,057,732
Operating Reserve	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
<b>Subtotal Operations and Programs</b>	<b>4,110,520</b>	<b>4,623,313</b>	<b>4,814,489</b>	<b>5,017,728</b>
Grants to Partners	3,000,000	6,000,000	8,000,000	10,000,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>7,110,520</b>	<b>10,623,313</b>	<b>12,814,489</b>	<b>15,017,728</b>
Growth	60%	49%	21%	17%
Grants to Partners Growth	68%	100%	33%	25%

We also aim to continue to set aside a portion of our unrestricted revenue to our relatively new operating reserve. Our goal is to have set aside sufficient funds to cover six months of operations, which by 2025 will equal a little more than \$2 million. By the end of 2025, we hope to have a total of \$1.5 million in the reserve.

### Revenue Strategy

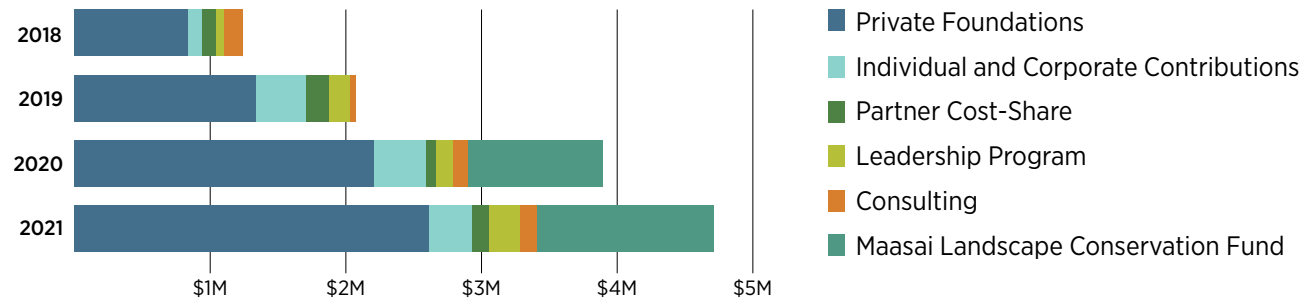
Maliasili’s revenue has more than tripled since 2018, primarily due to the following:

**Diversifying our funding** base by securing new core funding partners. These funders provide significant general operating resources that enable significant flexibility in our overall operations and growth management.

**Increasing our grantmaking** to partners by more than five-fold, including launching the Maasai Landscape Conservation Fund (MLCF) as a significant component of that increase.

In order to support our budget growth, Maliasili will continue to deploy a diversified revenue strategy based on a combination of key core funding partnerships and long-term collaborations; growing co-funding from our portfolio partners; and expanding our sources of funding in the countries that we are operating in. A key part of our revenue strategy will be capitalizing on the current trends around increasing funding, including in particular large and multi-year commitments from private philanthropies, to conservation and specifically targeting community-based conservation approaches.

### Budgeted Revenue Trends by Category



To mobilize the resources required to meet our budget growth we will pursue the following strategies:

**Sustain and increase core funding partnerships as the foundation for our core funding—our key growth capital.** We will leverage our strong relationships and shared vision with our closest funding partners, while expanding our networks and access to new and different funder audiences. We will capitalize on the growing convergence of climate and biodiversity funding around healthy ecosystems and ‘nature-based solutions’, and the growing interest in community-based conservation, to develop new funding relationships, particularly with funders that recognize these links between climate, ecological restoration and conservation, and community stewardship.

**Significantly increase our grandmaking by mobilizing funding around our portfolio** in key target geographies and landscapes, capitalizing on the surge of interest in directing more funding to community-based conservation in Africa and beyond. We believe we have significant opportunities to mobilize funding from a range of private, NGO, and even potentially public funding sources into funding mechanisms designed to support local community-based organizations in the areas we work.

**Target larger funders, large foundations and public aid agencies,** based on specific priority geographies or specific areas of interest (e.g. leadership development). This can potentially open up greater opportunities for multi-year funding and larger grants than Maliasili has typically pursued in the past.

**Increase collaboration with aligned international conservation organizations,** building on the model of our institutional collaborations with The Nature Conservancy and Blue Ventures, and capitalizing on growing interest of other international conservation groups to increase or improve their investment in local partner organizations and organizational development or leadership.

**Increase partner co-funding through improved marketing of our track record** and clearer guidelines around co-funding expectations, as well as improved fundraising capacity and experience of our in-country portfolio management teams.

**Continue to take on select and strategically aligned consultancy assignments** that advance our mission on a full cost recovery or slightly profitable basis.



## Acknowledgements

The development of this strategic plan occurred during a time when our team was growing but also while we were unable to physically gather together due to the COVID pandemic. This was both exciting and challenging. Our team has never been stronger, and each member contributed to the development of this strategic plan, from reflecting on our accomplishments to exploring new and exciting ways to do our work better. A big thank you to every member of the growing Maliasili team.

Thank you also to Holly Dublin and Emily Wilson for leading an ambitious and thorough situational analysis, grounded in one-on-one interviews with 35 different partners and colleagues; and thank you to the individuals who gave their time and perspectives to those interviews. The open and honest feedback from this amazing group pushed us to challenge ourselves.

We are also grateful for the time and insights from the strategic planning advisory group that we assembled for this process. Thank you to Dickson Kaelo, John Kamanga, Patricia Mupeta-Muyamwa, Alasdair Harris, Kristin Gilliss Moyer, Nick Lapham, Peter Veit, and Kipp Baratoff for their contributions.

Whether through fireside conversations, financial support, or all-hours phone calls, we are thankful to everyone who has contributed to Maliasili’s journey over the past decade, and who we are thrilled to be able to continue working with in our journey ahead.

**We are as strong as our community—thank you for the support.**

Photo Credits: front cover to page 5: Roshni Lodhia; page 6: Honeyguide/Monica Dalmasso, page 10: Roshni Lodhia; page 11: Roshni Lodhia, Adobe Stock, Roshni Lodhia; page 12: Roshni Lodhia, Adobe Stock; page 13: Adobe Stock; page 16: Roshni Lodhia, Marcus Westberg, Jo Anne McArthur, Migwa Nthiga; page 21: Rachel Ambrose; page 25: Jeff Waweru; page 26: Roshni Lodhia; page 29: Adobe Stock; back cover: Roshni Lodhia. Illustrations by Kayee Au.





## JOIN THIS **JOURNEY** WITH US.


**When you invest in Maliasili, you invest in our entire conservation portfolio.**

Contact: [info@maliasili.org](mailto:info@maliasili.org) | [maliasili.org](http://maliasili.org)

Maliasili, 4 Carmichael St, Suite 111-193, Essex Junction, VT 05452

**Learn more about our impact, visit: [maliasili.org/impact](http://maliasili.org/impact)**

Sign up to our newsletter: [maliasili.org/sign-up](http://maliasili.org/sign-up)

 [@maliasili.org](https://www.facebook.com/maliasili.org)  [@maliasili\\_org](https://twitter.com/maliasili_org)  [maliasili](https://www.linkedin.com/company/maliasili)

  
**Maliasili**  
INVESTING IN PEOPLE FOR NATURE