

Siyabonga Myeza



Application as Future Leader.

My name is Siyabonga Myeza, I am a 24 year old African male. I am applying as a South African Leader.

My Vision

My vision is to grow in the environmental sector and make significant contributions through working for NGOs that work close with communities. I believe that working together with communities of people who live in the landscape and rely on natural resources is the best way to advance the struggle for environmental justice. In this way knowledge will be invested in communities and passed down to generations, thus an **environmentally responsible society** will be born.

My Background

In order to give you a better idea of where I am from and what I have achieved so far, I would like to share some of my background. I am originally from KwaMbonambi, a rural area just outside Richards Bay on the North East coast of KwaZulu Natal. I grew up in KwaMbonambi and did my primary and high school learning there. After matriculating in 2006 I had a gap year which I spent working as a bush mechanic in the small town Mtubatuba.

During this time I applied to study at different Universities in KZN, and was fortunate enough to be accepted by all three institutions. Then I chose to enroll a **National Diploma in Nature Conservation** at Mangosuthu University of Technology. I completed my diploma in three years (2008-2010). Because I did not have a job then I volunteered to work at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, based in the Drakensburg region.

Following a period of volunteering from August 2011 to September 2012 then I got my first formal contract and was appointed as a Priority Species Monitor with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, but now based at iSimangaliso Wetland Park World Heritage Site. Here I was responsible for monitoring elephant, tsetsebe, black and white rhino populations. I had to study/monitor the factors affecting movements, behaviour and population growth of these species. I served on this job from October 2012 to August 2013.

When this contract ended I asked to volunteer at Mkhuze Game Reserve doing the same job which I did for three months. December 2013 I was appointed by Wildlife Act Team as a Priority Species Monitor based at Mkhuze Game Reserve where the focus was now more on wild dogs and lions of the Zululand region.

Four months later I got an offer from the Environmental Monitoring Group to work as a **Conservation Officer** based in Nieuwoudtville, Northern Cape. I happily accepted the offer and relocated to Northern Cape to pursuit of my dream.

My Passion

I am motivated by **nature**; the processes and relationships, the ability to rehabilitate itself and maintain equilibrium.

Furthermore I am inspired by a working environment that treasures the importance of nature and sustainable use of natural resources. A close working relationship with colleagues and having a similar vision and aspiration makes it exciting and allows continuous growth.

Discovering new facts in new environments, being mentored by experienced individuals and being exposed to a wide variety environmental aspects inspire me to grow my knowledge as a young person and contribute in the environmental sector so that all South Africans may enjoy their **constitutional right to a secure and healthy environment**.

My Achievements

Despite the disadvantaged basic schooling, I strived and worked hard to get higher education. I did my high school in a 100 % Zulu functioning school and as a result my English was very poor when I matriculated, but I worked extra hard when I got varsity to improve my communication skills. During my time at varsity I was selected to lead/coordinate class projects and functions, and subsequently I was selected to coordinate departmental projects. Starting when I was still in varsity I strove to share as much knowledge as possible with the youth of communities I worked close to. Amongst other things I let them know about the opportunities available for young people to further their studies, especially in the environmental related professions.

Since graduating I have continued to do so, because **I believe that youth education and leadership is the key to a better future for all of our people.**

If we have environmentally educated/cautious individuals in our communities, we will be able to live in harmony with nature and have a louder voice calling for sustainable use of our natural resources. Starting when I was still in varsity I strove to share as much knowledge as possible with the youth of communities I worked close to. Amongst other things I let them know about the opportunities available for young people to further their studies, especially in the environmental related professions.

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Motivation for Conference

I am currently a Conservation Officer at EMG which is a very exciting place to be, it covers a wide range of environmental aspects; **climate change, soil and water conservation, sustainable agricultural practices, human development, land security, etc.**

The conference will offer me an opportunity to gain insight into the thinking of the wider community, and to learn more about what other professionals do in their work places and how they deal with similar situations.

It will expose me to a wide range environmental issues, debates, case studies and solutions. It will be an **opportunity to meet likeminded people** and make relationships that will be meaning full for my career and current work. I expect to grow as an individual in leadership skills, application of scientific approaches, interpersonal skills and to also be able to contribute where I can.

Nature is resilient and has this incredible ability to try by all means to neutralise disturbances and keep balance despite the tremendous stress mankind puts on it. However, at the rate at which human population is growing it is becoming virtually impossible for nature to restore itself. As the human population grows it demands more resources from nature; escalating resource harvesting and increasing land use (agriculture, infrastructure, and development) all lead to fauna and flora displacement and ultimately to extinction of species. The environment can withstand and provide so much but if we keep on taking out without giving back to nature we will end up with nothing, which could lead to our won extinction as a species.

Most of these issues are hard to comprehend on a localised point of view, while one gets a more comprehensive picture when looking from a global point of view.

However, it is not easy to address them at a global level, but **if likeminded people from around the globe meet to share ideas and solutions, then going back to address these issues locally there is a chance of fighting a winning battle.**

I am a young individual who is passionate about the environment and would like to bring about change in the local, national and international community as far as environmental issues are concerned. Meeting young people like me who share the same passion and sitting together with more experienced individuals to exchange knowledge will motivate me to do more to contribute in environmental awareness, not only locally but worldwide.

In the next 10 years I see myself playing an ever-increasing role in inspiring others to utilise our resources sustainably and equitably, so that we may all enjoy the benefits of this amazing planet.

If I have the opportunity to participating in international conferences such as this one I see myself being able to gain insights into how I can make a difference in the wider world through networking and linking up with inspiring people from other parts of the country and the world, and even affecting policy making to ensure that we will be better able to protect our nature. I also believe that this opportunity will contribute to my being even more actively involved in **seeing sound policies implemented on the ground.**