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RE: Impact Journey - Tracker Academy.

Paragon +Impact had the pleasure of assisting the Tracker Academy, a division of the South African College for Tourism (SACT), with their impact and sustainability journey. The Tracker Academy is a registered not-for-profit organisation that focuses on the empowerment of previously disadvantaged youth through education and skills development.

Tracker Academy are truly unique in that they contribute to the preservation and popularisation of the ancient art of animal tracking, while their students gain niche practical experience in tracking, preparing them for a career in the conservation and ecotourism industries. Tracker Academy do not only upskill young, disenfranchised individuals vocationally, which significantly improves their likelihood of finding gainful employment in the ecotourism sector and escaping poverty, but they also increase the number of animal trackers in Southern Africa who are able to keep the age-old tradition alive.

Paragon +Impact engaged and worked with Tracker Academy to identify their priorities and to ascertain which of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were most material to the organisation. This process, known as a 'Double Materiality' assessment, helped identify potential areas of risk or impact (financial, social or environmental) that might arise due to Tracker Academy's operational activities and

their impact on the SDGs. Six SDGs were identified as most material to Tracker Academy's mission and operations, in terms of both risk and impact: SDG 1 (No Poverty); SDG 4 (Quality Education); SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth); SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities); SDG 15 (Life on Land); and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Following this process, the Paragon +Impact team conducted a comprehensive process of data collection, both formal and informal, for the purpose of conducting a Core impact assessment for Tracker Academy's 2023 reporting period. Through the Paragon +Impact team's utilisation of the Paragon +Grading Tool, Tracker Academy received an impressive net positive impact score of 'A' (61.03%), which is an incredible achievement given the small scale at which Tracker Academy operate. The following key findings are highlighted:

- The exclusive targeting of previously disenfranchised youth for their student cohort shows a commitment to creating equity both in terms of education and potential employment.
- Students receive the education at essentially no cost, given that the training programme and everything associated with it are provided to students for free, inclusive of accommodation and three balanced meals a day. Students only pay for transportation to and from the training camps at the beginning and end of each semester.
- Tracker Academy improve student's standards of living by providing services and amenities that are not typically available in the areas their students are recruited from (e.g., internet access, water, electricity, consistent refuse removal, etc.).
- Tracker Academy's curriculum includes a "Life Skills" programme, which enhances basic literacy and numeracy, as well as other industry specific skills. Moreover, their use of the "Eyebraingym" programme improves students' digital literacy.
- All employees were paid well above the South African minimum wage in 2023 and received progressive social protections and benefits, thereby building financial resilience in their staff complement.
- Tracker Academy cultivate a safe and inclusive working and learning environment for staff and students.

- Tracker Academy contribute authentically to environmental education, wildlife protection, and ecotourism, and empower their students with the skills and knowledge to become custodians of Africa's wildlife.
- Tracker Academy have an extraordinary impact on the protection of endangered species – particularly rhino and elephant.
- Tracker Academy have built significant partnerships with donors and other organisations to help realise their mission and achieve shared goals.

The Tracker Academy's impact may be regarded as incredibly noteworthy and serves as a reminder that one does not need to be a multinational corporate entity to be able to drive meaningful change.

Yours in sustainability,
Paragon Impact

Paragon +IMPACT

SA College for Tourism TRACKER ACADEMY

Tracker Academy

Paragon +Grading Report



About Paragon +Impact

Introduction

The Paragon +Impact Management and SDG Grading System is an innovative platform designed to revolutionise the way businesses measure and report on their sustainability performance, focusing on actual implementation and impact over policy and disclosure.

Our Mission

Paragon +Impact aims to contribute to the sustainability of our planet and its people by providing technology that enables transparency and accountability and empowers growth alongside positive impacts aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



Overview: Impact reporting against the SDGs

Integrating the SDGs into one impact measurement system

The **United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are the globally agreed action items, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Following on from the eight Millennium Development Goals, there are **17 SDGs** (Figure 1) that provide **"a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future".**



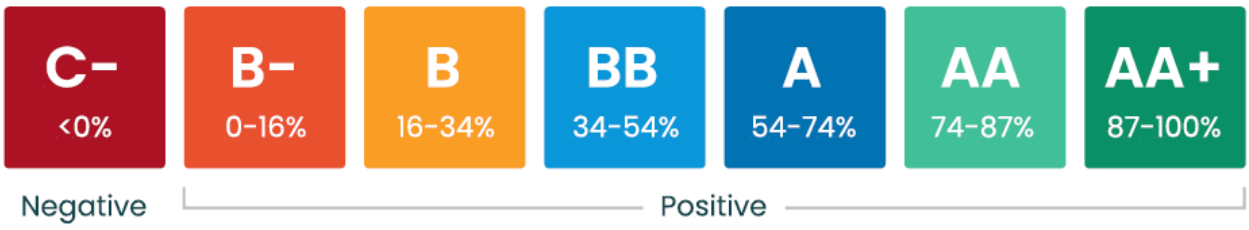
Figure 1: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

Tracker Academy: Paragon +Grading

This report presents a summary[1] of the results of the Paragon +Grading analysis of the Tracker Academy, indicating the non-profit organisation's net impacts on the six United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified as 'Core' to the operations and aspirations of the Academy. The analysis is based on a quantitative assessment of available data provided by Tracker Academy, using an Environmental and Social Impact Analysis (ESIA), and a qualitative analysis guided by the methodology of the Impact Management Platform (IMP). The analysis further provides a grading indicating the organisation's performance in their Core SDGs (1, 4, 8, 10, 15 and 17), as identified through a comprehensive double materiality assessment .

The Paragon +Grading result is presented in the form of a percentage and thereafter assigned a Paragon +Grade. Positive impact results have six categories ranging from B- to AA+, whereas all negative results are given a C-.

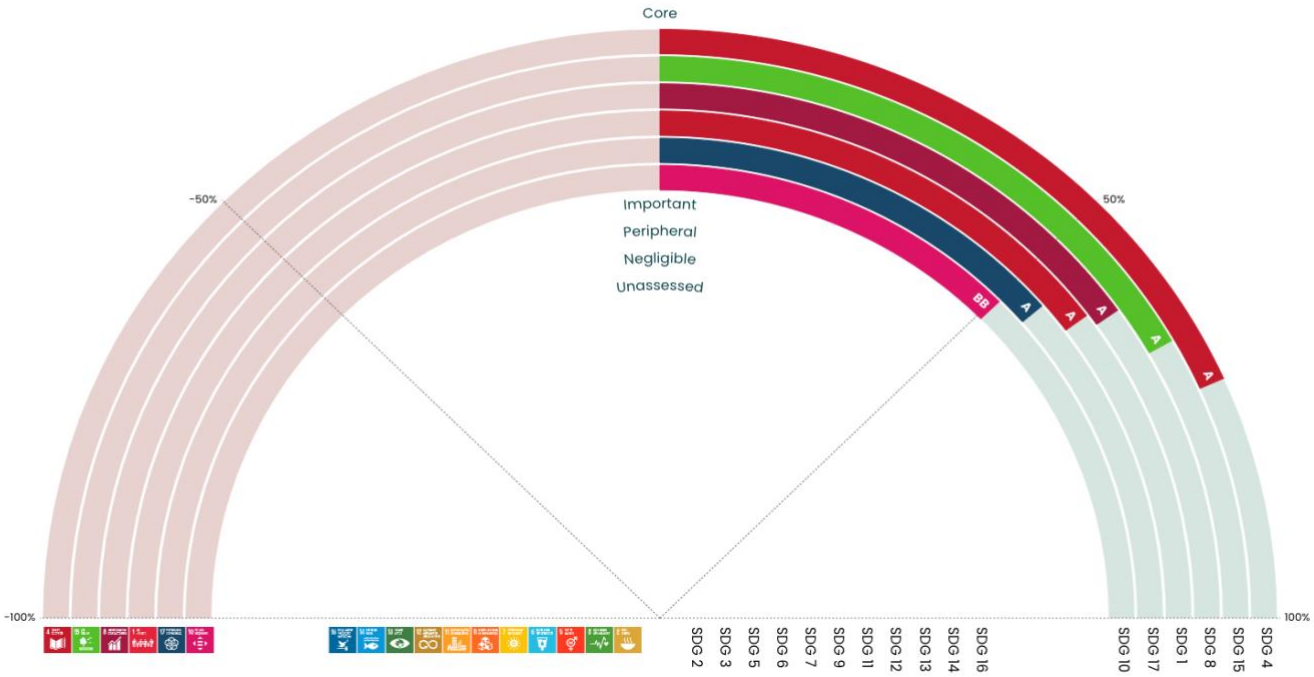


[1] For detailed results refer to the online digital Paragon +Grading dashboard for the Tracker Academy assessment.

Tracker Academy's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Performance

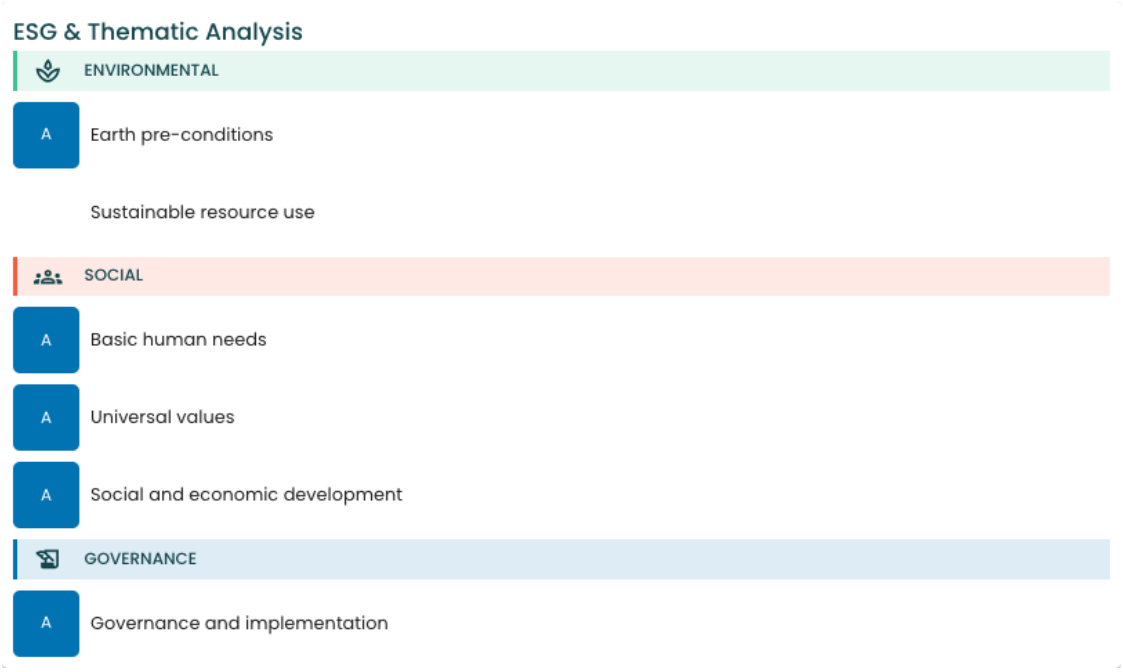
Core SDGs

+ Impact Structure

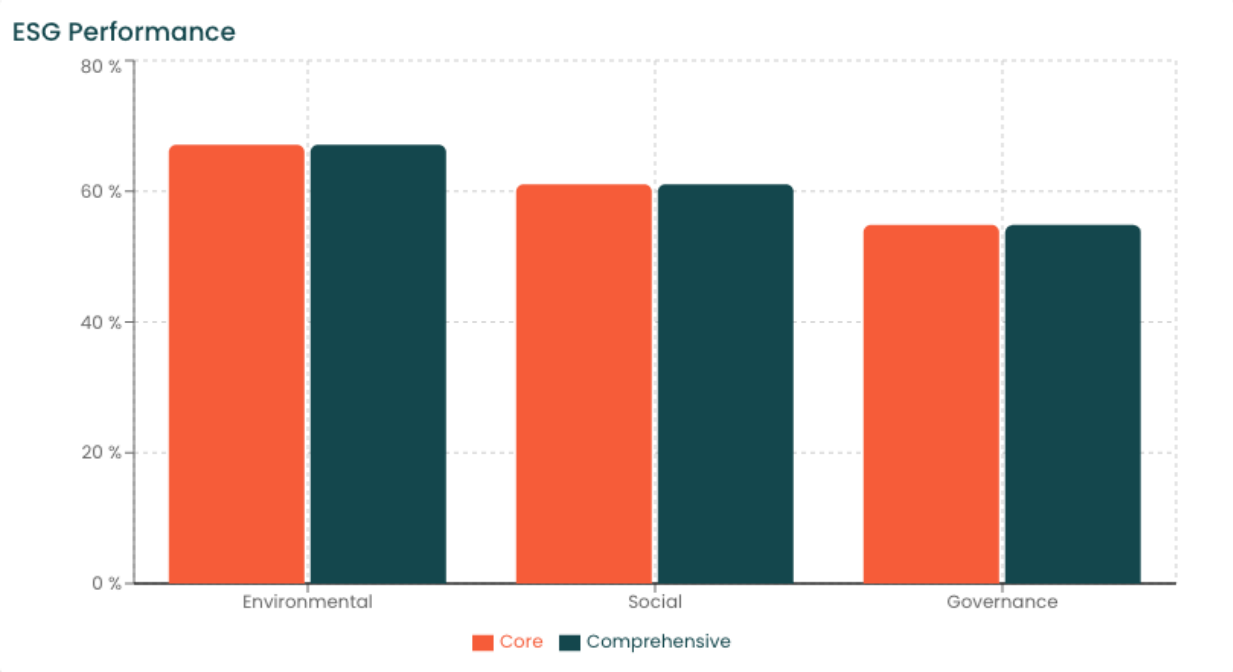


The above graph illustrates the Tracker Academy's SDG impact performance across their Core SDGs. As mentioned above, these include SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The performance is measured on a scale from -100% to 100%, indicating the net positive and net negative impacts across the prioritised SDGs.

The graph reveals that Tracker Academy have significant positive impacts across all six of their Core SDGs, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), which may be considered the most crucial to their operations. It is clear, however, that Tracker Academy are generating meaningful positive impacts across all six of their prioritised SDGs.



The thematic analysis above shows that Tracker Academy achieved an 'A' Grading and generated positive impacts in their five areas of influence, which encompass their six Core SDGs. Thus, Tracker Academy performed strongly across all three elements of ESG – Environmental, Social and Governance.



The above graph depicts Tracker Academy's strong impact performance across the three aspects of ESG, with their most significant positive impacts relating to environmental considerations.

Core SDG Grading Analysis

Core SDG Grading



C-	B-	B	BB	A 61.03%	AA	AA+

Tracker Academy are deeply committed to conservation as well as their social enterprise, aligning their operations and objectives with their six key SDGs encompassing aspects of all three pillars of sustainability: environment, society and governance. These SDGs are not just aspirational targets but form the foundation of Tracker Academy's impactful work.

In the completion of the Paragon +Impact grading assessment, the Tracker Academy achieved a Core impact score of 61.03% and an overall 'A' grading. While performing positively in all six of their Core SDGs, SDG 10 was identified as the weakest performing SDG in the current assessment. Through these targeted SDGs, Tracker Academy demonstrate a holistic approach to running a deeply impactful and inclusive social enterprise, where sustainable development thrives alongside conservation efforts, ultimately leading to a more equitable society. This commitment to the SDGs underscores Tracker Academy's role as a responsible and forward-thinking institution in the conservation and ecotourism industry.

SDG +Grading Summaries

Core SDGs

Tracker Academy's main focus is to promote education and training that will preserve cultural heritage and promote diversity, resulting in increased opportunities for employment, reduced inequality in their areas of operation, conservation and biodiversity protection, and the fostering of partnerships for sustainable development. Their adoption and promotion of these key goals align with long-term sustainable success. Tracker Academy's contribution to each of their Core SDGs is summarised below.

Basic Human Needs

SDG 1: No Poverty





Decent wages, improved standard of living, and inclusive access to resources:

- Tracker Academy recruit students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds in rural South Africa, focusing on young men of colour, primarily Black/African or Coloured. These students receive training and learn skills applicable to the safari and ecotourism workforce, enhancing their employability, earning potential, and thus their socio-economic mobility.
- Students benefit from free accommodation with electricity and water, three meals a day, Wi-Fi, digital devices, and consistent refuse removal. In rural and marginalised South African communities, there is a significant lack of access to

these resources and services. Thus, Tracker Academy greatly improve their students' standard of living during their tenure at the Academy.

- In 2023, Tracker Academy paid all employees above the minimum wage, with the majority of these individuals earning above the South African ***living*** wage as described by MyWage and the Global Living Wage Coalition. Those earning slightly below the living wage included part-time employees and interns due to differences in hours worked, skills, responsibility, and job function.
- Overall, Tracker Academy are having a substantial and long-term impact on poverty reduction, benefiting students, employees, and their families through quality education and skills development.

Improved resilience and inclusive social protection:

- Tracker Academy have access to boreholes and solar-powered pumps to mitigate drought exposure and ensure water access.
- Students assist with firebreak and road maintenance to ensure they are prepared for natural disasters such as fires and floods, contributing to overall resilience.
- Employees receive Medical Aid and Pension Fund options, while all staff, including interns, are part of the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). Employees also receive paternal and maternal leave benefits.
- Financial literacy training is provided biannually through a partnership with Old Mutual, benefiting students, staff, and local community members.

Universal Values

SDG 4: Quality Education





Improving the availability, accessibility, affordability, and quality of higher education:

- Tracker Academy operate as a division of the SA College for Tourism, offering educational programmes accredited by the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA) and granting NQF Level 2-4 qualifications.
- Students do not incur any costs related to their education and training at the Academy. All courses, accommodation, meals, uniforms, learning materials, internet access, etc. are provided free of charge. The only cost to students is their transport to and from the training facilities at the beginning and end of each semester.
- Accreditation ensures adherence to high educational standards, and all trainers are highly qualified and skilled in the art of tracking. Voluntary annual peer reviews by experts in the industry further ensure that Tracker Academy operate at the highest standard possible.

Improving equitable and inclusive access to education and training:

- Tracker Academy target and train previously disadvantaged youth of colour without prior employment or higher education. These individuals are typically recruited from rural, marginalised communities and face barriers to higher education opportunities.
- Lessons are conducted in Shangaan and English, with trainers able to speak some Nguni languages and thus are able to translate for students should need be, improving the accessibility and inclusivity of their educational offerings.

Empowering learners with knowledge and vocational skills for future employability:

- Tracker Academy empower young adults with knowledge and vocational skills relevant to the conservation and ecotourism industries, increasing students' employability and earning potential. The Academy's post-graduate employment rate of 96.51% serves as strong evidence of the quality of training they provide and the significant impact they are having.
- Students' digital literacy is enhanced using the "Eyebraingym" online programme, and the Academy's unaccredited 'Life Skills' programme serves to strengthen students' basic literacy and numeracy skills and promote work readiness.
- Tracker Academy's educational offerings and their culture promote sustainable lifestyles and development with a conservation focus. Furthermore, students attend talks from external professionals on topics such as conservation ethics, diversity, leadership, and personal development.
- Students are educated on the importance of cultural diversity to address tribalism issues and promote coexistence and acceptance among different cultural backgrounds.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities





Building inclusive economic and income share for the bottom 40 percent of the population, and enhancing financial stability and socio-economic convergence:

- Tracker Academy take on students from the poorest 40% of the population, promoting social and economic inclusion and empowerment through education and capacity building programmes.
- Of the Academy's 258 graduates (2010-2023), 249 are currently employed, with graduates earning between R78,000 and R300,000 per annum, indicating substantial income improvements.

- All permanent staff are paid at least the minimum wage and receive optional medical aid and pension fund benefits. As previously mentioned, some part-time employees and interns earned slightly below the ***living*** wage due to differences in hours worked, skills, responsibility, and job function.
- Employment income benefits families and households, improving access to education, healthcare, and essential services. Thus, Tracker Academy are having a positive ripple effect on local communities.

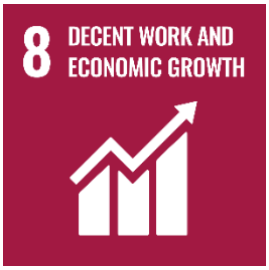
Ensuring equal opportunities and preventing discrimination:

- Tracker Academy are governed by the overarching South African College for Tourism (SACT)'s Equity Policy, focusing on capacity building and equality for marginalised individuals from rural communities.
- The majority of students to date have been males; however, Tracker Academy are working to increase female student intake; for example, through collaboration with the all-female anti-poaching unit, the Black Mambas.
- Due to strenuous training, Tracker Academy do not accept individuals with certain physical disabilities. Students with children are also not accepted due to income security concerns.
- It is recommended that Tracker Academy implement targeted efforts to shift the cultural and societal paternal and male-dominated viewpoints of tracking and emphasise the role that women can have in preserving the art of tracking.

Social and Economic Development

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth





Ensuring inclusive employment opportunities and delivering fair remuneration and benefits:

- The high level of unemployment in South Africa is an ongoing concern, with a national unemployment rate of 32.1% at the end of 2023. The latest statistics indicate high levels of unemployment in Mpumalanga (34.9%) and Limpopo (30.3%) Provinces, where Tracker Academy's operations are located.
- In 2023, Tracker Academy supported four full-time employees, seven shared resources, five freelance consultants, and three interns, with wages above the national minimum wage.
- Two shared resources earned below the ***living*** wage, though a consideration for part-time work was noted in one case.
- All employees receive UIF contributions, maternal and paternal leave benefits, optional medical aid and pension (50% subsidised), accommodation, food, mental health counselling.

Providing employment within a safe and inclusive workplace, and ensuring personal development, social integration, social protection, and equal opportunities:

- Tracker Academy have cultivated a safe and inclusive workplace. As mentioned above, all employees receive various benefits, and are covered against death and disability by the Academy's insurance policy.
- Tracker Academy foster a supportive environment and encourage continuous staff education and training, promoting personal development and social integration.

- Several policies are in place to ensure equal opportunities, while an open-door policy and feedback mechanisms address employee and student concerns.
- Graduates contribute positively as providers in their families and communities, enhancing the Academy's contribution to sustainable development and socio-economic integration.
- Some gaps and uncertainties exist regarding SACT's umbrella governance documents and their applicability to Tracker Academy.

Contributing to sustainable economies that add value to society and the local economy:

- Tracker Academy support local economies by enhancing employment opportunities and fostering skills development within the local workforce.
- In some cases, Tracker Academy have provided assistance and mentorship to graduates who have wanted to start their own businesses, thus promoting entrepreneurship and contributing to the growth of local micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises.
- These efforts contribute positively to sustainable economic development at the local level, enhancing community livelihoods and long-term economic prospects.
- Tracker Academy's high graduate employment rate of 96.51%, with 63% in the ecotourism industry, indicates long-term positive impacts on vulnerable youth and economic growth in target areas.

Earth Pre-Conditions

SDG 15: Life on Land





Ensuring the health and conservation of nature, ecosystems and biodiversity:

- Tracker Academy were founded under the Peace Parks Foundation (an international non-profit organisation that focuses on the establishment, development, and management of trans-frontier conservation areas (TFCAs), also known as peace parks), and thus uniquely contribute to SDG 15 by focusing on wildlife conservation and ecotourism.
- The Academy's mission includes preserving wildlife tracking skills and indigenous knowledge; thus, the value of nature, ecosystems and biodiversity form a core part of their operations.
- Tracker Academy train local students in wildlife conservation, empowering them as custodians of Africa's wildlife, thus directly contributing towards the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.
- Through collaborations and international support, they facilitate significant financial contributions towards nature conservation.

Restoring nature and its ecosystems:

- Students assist with alien species monitoring and removal.
- Tracker Academy assist with land management and maintenance practices at the Londolozi and Sandringham sites.

Protecting endangered species and eliminating poaching:

- Tracker Academy play a significant role in protecting endangered species, particularly rhinos and elephants.

- The Conservation Guardians Programme is unique and contributes directly to the protection of endangered species by training individuals in specialised tracking and anti-poaching skills so that they can become employed in anti-poaching units.
- Tracker Academy are a conduit for foreign investment and financial aid into conservation efforts.
- Tracker Academy advocate for improved conservation practices.

Governance and Implementation

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals





Financial literacy and inclusion:

- Tracker Academy contribute significantly to financial inclusion for sustainable development, supported by a robust international donor community.
- Despite their small size, Tracker Academy have an annual budget of R6.5 million and have invested R47.7 million since 2010 in tracker development and their ongoing efforts to promote economic inclusion and empowerment.
- Their focus on underserved individuals from rural Southern Africa promotes financial inclusion of marginalised individuals.
- In some cases, Tracker Academy have supported entrepreneurship and business opportunities for graduates. Furthermore, in partnership with Old Mutual, they provide financial literacy training to students, staff, and members of local communities, enhancing their financial resilience and stability.

Co-producing knowledge, innovative systems, and technologies for sustainable development:

- Tracker Academy invest in upgrading ancient and indigenous knowledge for modern conservation contexts, focusing on technologies like radio communication and GPS tracking, and training their students on how to use these technologies.
- In partnership with Hewlett-Packard, Tracker Academy have developed a highly advanced tracking app that makes use of artificial intelligence to identify animal tracks.

Building capacity and promoting systems thinking:

- Tracker Academy are dedicated to building capacity specifically for underserved individuals from underprivileged rural areas in Southern Africa.
- Their training and programmes integrate systems thinking and emphasise long-term sustainability and equity in capacity building.
- Graduates are empowered with knowledge on biodiversity, wildlife conservation, and indigenous wisdom, contributing to sustainable development.

Promoting and supporting trade in locally appropriate and sustainable products and services:

Through their specialised programmes, Tracker Academy train and deploy highly skilled personnel into much-needed jobs in the conservation and wildlife industries, which may be considered critical and locally appropriate sustainable services.

Promoting policy coherence on sustainable development:

- Tracker Academy have strong internal policies and governance measures in place aimed at promoting policy coherence on sustainable development.
- The Academy have a basic Sustainability Policy in place, which they will continue to improve on going forward.
- Tracker Academy's strong commitment to achieving Sustainable Development extends to all partner organisations and funders, indicating a broader impact beyond their immediate operations.

Forming partnerships to encourage widespread adoption of the SDGs:

- Tracker Academy have established multi-faceted partnerships that advance sustainable development in areas such as biodiversity protection, nature conservation, restoration of indigenous skills, cultural heritage preservation, education enhancement, critical skills upliftment, and poverty alleviation.
- The Academy are funded by a robust and continuously expanding international donor network, which is crucial for their success and their ability to contribute to sustainable development.
- Tracker Academy have foundational ties to Peace Parks Foundation, are accredited by CATHSSETA, and endorsed by FGASA, enhancing their local to regional significance.
- Their partnership with Londolozi Game Reserve attracts international support and funding through guest exposure during safari experiences.

Quality data collection, monitoring and evaluation of their sustainable development performance:

- Tracker Academy collect data on various aspects of their sustainable development performance, including their inputs, actions, and outcomes, which allows for valuable analysis and evaluation of their performance.
- Over the past decade, they have prioritised accountability, using data to report to funders and drive continuous improvement.
- There is potential to enhance SDG monitoring to facilitate more impactful knowledge co-production and generate further positive impacts.
- Tracker Academy should explore the opportunities and risks identified in their SDG Impact Assessment, particularly those creating positive ripple effects across interconnected SDGs.

Concluding Remarks

Tracker Academy's core values are heavily aligned to sustainable development and the creation of a brighter future for local marginalised communities. Through their many educational and conservation initiatives summarised below, Tracker Academy demonstrate a strong commitment to generating meaningful and lasting social and environmental impacts.

- **SDG 1: No Poverty** – Tracker Academy showcase their dedication to eliminating poverty by providing opportunities for gainful employment within the conservation, ecotourism, and wilderness sectors in Southern Africa, thereby fostering economic growth and self-sufficiency among their employees and the local communities. The tourism and wilderness sectors are of the most important industries in South Africa for sustainable job creation (direct link to SDG 8).

- **SDG 4: Quality Education** – As a training institution, Tracker Academy are deeply committed to providing quality education. They offer comprehensive training programmes in conservation, wildlife, and ecotourism, ensuring that students are well-equipped for future success in these industries.

- **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth** – Tracker Academy contribute to economic growth by focusing on job creation in the conservation, wilderness, and ecotourism industries. This not only provides decent work for individuals, but also stimulates economic development in the regions in which they operate.

- **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities** – Tracker Academy actively work towards reducing inequalities in South Africa, the most unequal country globally. They offer opportunities to marginalised communities, ensure inclusive access to their educational programmes, and promote diverse employment prospects.

- **SDG 15: Life on Land** – Tracker Academy strongly recognise the importance of life on land and the economy of wildlife and conservation in the context of South Africa. The Tracker Academy are therefore extremely focused on promoting biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development that respects cultural differences and traditions.

- **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals** – Tracker Academy were born from partnerships and understand that achieving significant impact requires collaboration. They

continue to foster partnerships at various levels, which are instrumental in amplifying their efforts towards conservation and community upliftment.

The detailed SDG analysis and recommendations provided highlight measures and strategies that Tracker Academy can implement to enhance their positive impacts. By understanding their impact in areas that have previously received less attention, Tracker Academy can begin to implement small changes throughout their organisation that will improve their already impressive SDG Grading score and generate additional positive impacts across the board.

Paragon +Impact Technology

The Paragon +Impact Platform

The Paragon +Grading System outputs are auditable through the Paragon +Impact Management Platform. This is a physical report where all information is accessible through the Paragon +Impact management platform.

FOR AN ONLINE DEMO OF YOUR REPORT CONTACT YOUR PARAGON +IMPACT VERIFICATION PARTNER.



THANK YOU

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