

Lesedi Rouget Hlatshwayo

Youth Leader, Conservation Champion & Social Innovator

At just 19, Lesedi Rouget Hlatshwayo stands at the forefront of a new generation of African leaders redefining what youth leadership and environmental stewardship mean on the global stage. As a Youth Leader at the Africa Rise Youth Indaba (ARYI), she tirelessly advocates for meaningful youth participation in leadership forums, ensuring young voices shape policies and decisions that impact their lives and their planet.

Youth Leadership and Advocacy

Bilingual in French and English, she is currently studying International Relations at the Université Paris-Est Créteil. Lesedi has built her leadership profile through hands-on event coordination, youth mobilisation, and high-impact advocacy. At ARYI, she has helped plan and run large-scale youth conferences, develop partnerships, and lead outreach to empower Africa's next generation of changemakers.

The Long Swim to Freedom Campaign

Lesedi is spearheading "The Long Swim to Freedom", a ground-breaking endurance swim in KwaZulu-Natal's waters, home to hippos, crocodiles, turtles, and sharks to raise funds and global awareness about two urgent crises:

- * Child drownings in rural areas where children must cross rivers to attend school. Lesedi's goal is to open community swim schools that teach lifesaving skills to prevent these tragedies.
- * Rhino conservation and human-wildlife conflict, honouring KwaZulu-Natal's historic role in rhino protection and addressing today's conservation challenges head-on.

Filming a Global Documentary

Lesedi is hoping to shoot this December 2025, a feature-length documentary with anticipated platforms such as Netflix, Showmax, and Amazon Prime.

It will document her epic swim, her youth-led movement, and the transformation of conservation into a community-driven legacy. She is actively raising funds to film and distribute the project to inspire millions of young Africans and global allies to act for conservation and child safety.

A Vision Beyond the Swim

Lesedi is building a continent-wide movement to protect endangered species, restore ecosystems, and empower young people as "guardians of the future." Her activism will include children's books, impactful campaigns, and public speaking, all rooted in the belief that youth action can disrupt cycles of poverty, poaching, and neglect while igniting a culture of responsibility and hope.