

A photograph of three women running joyfully through the rain on a dirt path. The woman on the left is wearing a black hooded raincoat and is smiling broadly. The woman in the middle is wearing a dark purple shirt with a colorful floral pattern and a brown patterned skirt, also smiling. The woman on the right is wearing a green raincoat over a green uniform, a green bucket hat, and sunglasses, looking upwards with a smile. In the background, another person is visible standing near some equipment. The overall mood is one of happiness and resilience.

Together, we thrive.

2024

AKASHINGA
Annual Report

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[Cover Image] Akashinga Administrator Pamela Maisiri (Zimbabwe) and Law Enforcement Supervisor Valentina Ceciliano Feliz (Mozambique) share a moment of laughter with women in Kilo Village in Zimbabwe. Their visit reflects the spirit of cross-border collaboration that defines Akashinga's model where leadership, community, and conservation intersect through relationships built woman to woman, village to village. (Photo: Akashinga)

[Contents Spread] Akashinga Rangers Ana Cellidion (right) and Inês Simão Josefa (left) return from a community engagement visit in rural Mozambique. As part of our expanding seascape conservation work, these rangers are building trust and collaboration with local communities – an essential step in protecting both people and biodiversity. (Photo: Steven Dean)

A Future for All.



'Look and Learn' students on a game drive on our Songo reserve in Zimbabwe. Our educational 'Look and Learn' programme assists youth in developing an awareness and comprehension of wildlife conservation, as well as a positive attitude toward wildlife that will encourage them to take action and learn more about conservation. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Akashinga continues to scale one of **Africa’s largest community-driven conservation portfolios**, advancing nature-based economies through local leadership, social impact, and rural resilience.



A Cardinal Woodpecker (*Dendropicos fuscescens*) surveys its surroundings on our Songo reserve in Zimbabwe, a reminder of the rich biodiversity thriving in protected community-managed landscapes. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Conservation is not separate from society — it is shaped by it.

Biodiversity loss, climate instability, and the erosion of human wellbeing are deeply intertwined challenges. They cannot be solved in isolation. At Akashinga, we meet these challenges by addressing their root causes — social inequality, exclusion, and disconnection from nature — and building solutions that begin with community.

Our work is grounded in the belief that those most affected by environmental harm must be central to protecting

what remains. That’s why our model invests in women and communities often overlooked or excluded from conservation leadership.

Through locally led efforts, we protect millions of acres of rich biodiversity across Africa — and in doing so, we advance gender equality, economic opportunity, and long-term resilience. In a field where women are still outnumbered by men by as much as 100 to 1 on the frontlines, Akashinga is rewriting the narrative — not

just placing women in uniform, but building meaningful pathways for them to lead, train, and shape the future of conservation.

Nature-positive outcomes don’t come from top-down solutions. They come from partnerships rooted in trust, built alongside the people who live in and care for the landscapes we must all work to protect. In this moment of global urgency, community-led conservation isn’t just effective — it’s essential.

Mission: Akashinga delivers resilient nature conservation programmes of global significance through community-driven partnerships.

Vision: The natural world protected.

Aims: *Protect:* through scalable, innovative landscape protection and capacity building

Connect: through effective leadership, research, and advocacy

Restore: through community empowerment programmes



As dust rises beneath their hooves, a herd of wildebeest pauses in Botswana’s wilderness — a powerful presence in a landscape they’ve shaped for millennia. Through community-led conservation, Akashinga helps safeguard these vital migration routes and the ecosystems that depend on them. (Photo: Steven Dean)

The Akashinga Model.

Our mission is rooted in connection — between landscapes, species, and people.

Akashinga remains steadfast in our commitment to protecting the natural world and defending the planet’s biodiversity. We focus on securing migratory wildlife corridors and restoring connected habitats — critical lifelines in the fight against biodiversity loss, climate disruption, and the decline of human well-being.

By recognising the interdependence of ecosystems and communities, we work to build resilience across both. Our vision is one where nature thrives, wildlife moves freely, and rural communities flourish as stewards of the landscapes they call home.

Community-Driven Conservation, Scaled for Global Impact

At Akashinga, conservation begins with people. Our model invests in local leadership, strengthens rural economies, and builds community-rooted pathways to protect nature — then scales those solutions to deliver impact across some of Africa’s most biodiverse landscapes.

With your support, we continue to achieve measurable biodiversity outcomes by working in partnership with local and Indigenous communities, ensuring conservation efforts are community-first and women-led. By centering social impact, we’re not only safeguarding ecosystems, we’re creating systems of care, dignity, and opportunity.

Akashinga’s Three Pillars

People:

Conservation begins with community. Akashinga partners with the people who live closest to the landscapes we protect, creating jobs, training leaders, and offering long-term support. Rangers are recruited and deployed in the places they call home. With 98% of staff local and/or Indigenous to the countries where we work — and 95% living within 15 miles of their posts — our model ensures conservation is rooted in the communities it serves.

Planet:

We are protecting more than landscapes and seascapes: we are shaping a lasting conservation legacy. Akashinga defends wildlife and ecosystems across millions of acres through transparency, collaboration, and capacity-building. From anti-poaching patrols to marine protection, our efforts are designed to endure. The impact we make today strengthens ecological resilience and safeguards biodiversity for generations to come.

Future:

A sustainable future is built by those with the greatest stake in it. Akashinga supports communities to lead conservation on their own terms, investing in education, health, infrastructure, and economic opportunity. These investments create pathways for co-existence between people and wildlife. By centering local leadership, we are building systems of conservation that last and contribute to global progress in protecting the natural world.

Contributing to Global Conservation Goals

Through our on-the-ground work across Southern Africa’s landscapes and seascapes, Akashinga advances some of the world’s most ambitious conservation and development strategies. We contribute to:

- **15 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** — with particular impact in gender equality, sustainable communities, responsible consumption, climate action, and life on land and below water.
- **The Global 30x30 Challenge**, a worldwide movement to protect 30% of the planet’s land and ocean by 2030.
- **The Protecting Our Planet (POP) Challenge**, the largest-ever private funding commitment to biodiversity conservation, supporting initiatives aligned with the 30x30 target.
- **Agenda 2063**, the African Union’s blueprint for inclusive growth and sustainable development — especially **Goal 7**, which focuses on creating climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economies and communities.

Akashinga’s model demonstrates that local action, led by communities and scaled through partnership, is essential to achieving these global ambitions.



Message from Our CEO + Founder, Damien Mander.

“ No one part stands alone, and no one part is greater than the whole.”



Humanity stands at a critical crossroads. We can continue down this path of unsustainable growth at the expense of the environment and our own health, or we can transition to new models that respect our reciprocal relationship with nature. Ultimately, nature will endure, as it always has, humbling us in the process. Our actions will decide, not whether nature survives, but whether we are present to witness it. The responsibility rests with us. We cannot blame those who came before us, nor can we hand the decision to our children. Our collective time is now.

As a generation, a civilisation, we fight with those options. For Akashinga and our supporters, the focus is on Africa; ground zero in the battle to save maximum biodiversity and the largest-scale natural landscapes left on the planet. What happens here reaches across oceans and continents. Reversing the decimation of Africa’s wildlife and over-exploitation of its natural resources is a global responsibility.

Akashinga is a response to this environmental imbalance. It was born out of a deep desire for a justice that addresses the widespread destruction of our natural world. Justice for the wildlife that has no voice, justice for the forests, mountains and rivers that sustain us, and justice for the communities whose lands and lives are tied directly to the survival of these ecosystems. We did not arrive with the answers but chose to stand, listen, and act alongside communities who have already experienced what is at stake. For endless generations they have lived in harmony with nature as custodians of the land. Collectively, they hold the knowledge, resilience, and will to protect and nurture the places they call home. Our work is to support their vision by advocating for their rights, integrating their knowledge into conservation management

strategies, and providing resources to strengthen what they have already built. In doing so, we hope to inspire our collective desire as a global community to allow nature to flourish.

Though my story has drawn attention to Akashinga’s purpose, its growth has never been about me. Instead, I have become the student, eagerly learning by watching and listening to our teams and partners on the ground. Our organisational impact arises from the rangers who conduct each patrol, the staff who carry out day-to-day operations, the communities who choose protection over exploitation, and the donors and partners who put their trust in our work. Akashinga’s story is about the ‘Brave Ones’, who show us every day that conservation led from within communities is the only way forward.

Our ranger teams are the tip of the spear, operating at the leading edge where threats are real and the work is physically and emotionally demanding. Yet, their actions and strength are determined by scientific data, analysis, access to technology, specialised training, as well as financial, logistical and medical support. Importantly, this assistance and expertise is provided by Akashinga’s extended network. Our staff members, the communities we partner with, and our supporters around the world who believe in this collective effort. No one part stands alone, and no one part is greater than the whole.

This past year, we saw what is possible when everyone works together, respecting our complementary roles. In Namibia’s Kunene Highlands, Conserve Global works through its local entity Kunene Conservation to build robust institutions on the ground. In 2024, this collaboration enabled local conservancies to strengthen their governance, introduce

sustainable rangeland practices, and find workable solutions to human-wildlife conflict while improving food security and livelihoods. These are community-led decisions and strategies, and Akashinga was privileged to partner with Conserve Global in the provision of resources and infrastructure that ensures their viability and longevity.

In neighbouring Botswana, our partnering organisation Kalahari Research and Conservation (KRC), worked to expand community-led conservation across additional protected areas of the Kgalagadi. With community welfare as its guiding principle, this inclusive approach included training for community scouts, financial and infrastructure support for local schools, providing access to youth sports teams, and enabling women to embark on new roles in tourism. KRC’s research focus ensured that science played its critical part in the conservation management of these vast landscapes, but the lead decision-making role came from the communities who live there and know the land. Their mutual relationship with the natural world inspires and reinforces our mission.

In Zimbabwe, Akashinga’s flagship country, the roots continue to deepen. By prioritising relationships and projects that create community cohesion, everyone from the local chief to the youngest child can see that the benefits of education, health care, employment and social welfare are collectively intertwined with conservation outcomes. Our role is to create the space and resources for this connection to flourish in ways that recognise communities, not just as beneficiaries of conservation, but the driving force determining how it is imagined and enacted.

In 2024, this included the expansion of



Akashinga Ranger and Senior Instructor Mercy Mateke demonstrates medical techniques during Ranger Life Saver training at Zutshwa in Botswana’s Kgalagadi. The Zimbabwean Instructors have become female champions, changing perceptions of what women can do through their expertise and professionalism. (Photo: Steven Dean)

clinic services to cater to a higher number of community members and to our own staff, further investment in reforestation projects that involves local villagers as participants and beneficiaries, field ranger selection courses drawn from surrounding communities that will result in a new cohort of trained recruits, and the implementation of a Ranger Benefits Policy and Code of Conduct that formalises maternity support. We consider this a critical component in an expanding female ranger force.

In Mozambique’s Sofala province, coastal communities in the Save Seascape are laying the groundwork for long-term marine conservation. Trained by Akashinga Country Scientist, Dr Jessica Williams, former and current fishers created the *Guardas de Tartarugas* (Turtle Guard), taking ownership of local patrols to monitor nesting sea turtles and interrupt illegal fishing activities. Although Akashinga provides conservation technology, such as EarthRanger, networks, and ongoing training to support their efforts, this effective solution to marine protection is born from their own resolve, experience, and livelihoods.

Across all of this, women at Akashinga continued to step up and into leadership, taking on more senior ranks and positions within the organisation, increasing their capabilities as instructors, mentoring new recruits, and representing us on a global stage. I have witnessed the qualities that make our staff effective conservation leaders: an instinct to

listen first, an inclination to reduce conflict rather than escalate it, and a desire to build trust where it has been broken. Far from replacing men, their leadership has added depth, balance, and a continuously evolving way of thinking which benefits everyone and expands the potential to revolutionise our industry.

This work is not easy. It entails constant conflict and negotiation as poverty and inequality dictate competing needs. But its impacts are both practical and concrete. At Akashinga, it is an honour to collaborate with people determining their own futures, to walk beside them, to back them, to help amplify their voices.

Akashinga is proof of what is possible when we accept the challenge to shift our ideology and approach. Our vision stands against age-old narratives of the West ‘saving’ Africa and replaces them with the stories held in these pages of local communities shaping their own future. The work ahead may be vast and our time short. But together, we can protect nature at scale and leave behind a world successive generations will be proud to inherit.

As a father of three, I think about this often. I want my kids to know that their papa stood for what was right. I want to be a hero in my own home, not by virtue of my personal achievements, but because I set the right example. I believe that if each of us showed our children, partners, and friends what it looks like to act with courage and determination, the world

would already be a better place. In the end, it will be our children and those closest to us who are our toughest judges. What greater incentive do we need to listen with empathy, to speak with humility, and to act with conviction?

To our staff, administrators, cleaners, rangers, instructors, country managers and local leaders, to our cooks and mechanics, scientists, medics and community liaisons, thank you. Every member of our amazing team is the reason our mission continues. You are Akashinga.

To our donors and partners, you are not distant patrons. You are the heart of a network that allows the local communities and our teams alongside them to forge ahead. When a ranger heads out on patrol, she carries your belief in her. When a community builds a classroom, plants a tree nursery, or agrees to safeguard a wildlife corridor, your commitment affirms their actions. Thank you.

Ultimately, we should not forget that while the most elusive thing in life is genuine purpose, it can often be found in unlikely places. Akashinga’s calling – to drive landscape-scale conservation forward across the continent – came by fostering connection through relationships and community action. And as our true purpose, it can never be taken away.

Together, we thrive.

Message from the Akashinga Rangers.

Written by Sergeant Margaret Lynatte Darawanda, Deputy Head of Operations, Akashinga East Zimbabwe



During training, Akashinga Rangers stand united. As Africa's first plant-based, all-women anti-poaching unit, they are redefining conservation — protecting wildlife, restoring ecosystems, and strengthening their communities from the ground up. (Photo: Brent Stirton)

My name is Margaret Lynatte Darawanda. I was born and raised in Nyamakate, a rural village in the Hurungwe District of Zimbabwe. Growing up, I never imagined I would become a conservationist. In our culture, the idea of a woman working as a wildlife ranger was unheard of. But when the opportunity came, I seized it — and discovered a deep passion for protecting wildlife.

I joined Akashinga in 2017 as a ranger and have proudly served for eight years. As one of the first women in the programme, I've journeyed from the frontlines of patrols to my current role as Deputy Head of Operations for Akashinga East. It's been a path of growth, resilience, and purpose.

Conservation Impact

2024 has been both challenging and inspiring. As Akashinga Rangers, we've stood shoulder to shoulder, patrolling vast landscapes, tracking poachers, and conducting arrests that have significantly reduced illegal activity in our area. We've introduced new strategies to protect wildlife while promoting peaceful coexistence between communities and the animals that share the land.

I'm especially proud of how we've led with integrity — prioritising not just results, but sustainability. Within our team, we've embraced climate-conscious practices and responsible resource use. This year, I was deeply honoured to receive the Young Ranger of the Year Award from the International Ranger Federation, a recognition that reflects the collective strength and dedication of our unit.

Growth and Expansion

This year marked a powerful expansion of Akashinga's mission. We trained and deployed more female rangers than ever before, securing greater stretches of habitat and deepening our impact across the region. As our numbers grow, so does the biodiversity we protect and the illegal activity we deter.

Personally, I've grown too. I've led through difficult decisions and celebrated hard-won victories. Together, our team has stayed united in our purpose: to defend nature and uplift women.

Leadership and Inspiration

Akashinga remains a beacon for female-led

conservation, rewriting the narrative of who belongs in this field. Our rangers are now mentors and community leaders. I've watched with pride as more women have stepped confidently into leadership roles, guiding junior rangers and showing what's possible when women are given the chance to lead.

As Deputy Head of Operations, my role is to support and guide our all-female anti-poaching unit. I help ensure the mission runs smoothly and that every ranger has the backing she needs to succeed. In this, our leadership is not symbolic; it's strategic, grounded, and impactful. We are proving every day that women not only belong in conservation, but that they excel.

Global Engagement

This year, I had the privilege of representing Akashinga on the global stage in Mexico at Opportunity Collaboration, sharing our story with the world. From humble beginnings in Zimbabwe to an international platform, our journey touched hearts and inspired hope. I saw firsthand how storytelling can build bridges and how the rise of women in conservation uplifts entire communities.

Looking Ahead

From where I stand, 2024 has been a year of transformation — for Akashinga, for our rangers, and for me as a leader. We've created safer habitats, strengthened our sisterhood, and continued to break barriers. Every patrol we take is more than a mission — it's a declaration that women can and should lead in spaces where we were once excluded.



Akashinga Rangers are not only protecting wildlife — they're building green economies, generating income for their communities, and shaping a legacy of resilience for future generations. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin)

Akashinga is not just a conservation unit. It is a force. A sisterhood. A living example of what happens when women are trusted to lead. I carry this journey with pride and look ahead with hope.

As I often say: *Every footprint we leave on patrol is a step toward a better world — where women lead, nature thrives, and hope grows wild.*

Thank you to all who stand with us, believe in our mission, and walk beside us as we protect what matters most.



Sergeant Margaret Lynatte Darawanda
Deputy Head of Operations, Akashinga East Zimbabwe

Our Impact: Expanding the Scale and Depth of Conservation.

In 2024, Akashinga reached **critical new milestones** in our mission to protect biodiversity, advance community-led conservation, and build sustainable futures across Africa’s most threatened ecosystems.

Our approach is redefining conservation. Rather than enforcing protection through exclusion, we place **local women at the heart of the solution** – creating a model that is socially inclusive, **community-rooted**, and globally impactful. This year affirmed a truth we’ve long known: the future of conservation depends on those who live closest to the land.

Through strategic partnerships and a growing conservation mandate, Akashinga now supports the protection, oversight, and management of **13.1 million acres (5.2 million hectares)** across Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, and Namibia. That includes **4.43 million new acres added in 2024 alone** – expanding our reach to **187 times** the size of our original footprint.

By focusing on communal areas that connect national parks and reserves, we’re helping to secure critical wildlife corridors, enabling species to move freely across intact ecosystems. This work ensures the survival of biodiversity and the long-term viability of conservation models led by the communities who depend on these landscapes for their lives and livelihoods.



Stopping Wildlife Crime, Strengthening Law Enforcement

Our integrated model continues to deliver results. By building trust and capacity at the community level and collaborating with national law enforcement, Akashinga is reducing wildlife crime while protecting key species.

- Since our inception:
- **2,018 arrests** have been made across more than **900 joint operations**
 - We’ve recovered **705 elephant tusks** and **20 rhino horns**
 - **132 pangolins** were recovered – **96 rehabilitated and released**
 - Over **1,200 wire snares** and **91 illegal firearms** were removed
 - Our teams patrolled more than **20,000 kilometers** of critical ecosystems

But our work extends beyond enforcement. Akashinga Rangers are trained in ecological monitoring, wildlife rescue, and conflict mitigation, ensuring that protection translates into lasting ecological integrity and human-wildlife coexistence.

Women Leading the Way

With more than **900 team members globally, 63% of whom are women**, Akashinga is setting a new benchmark for female leadership in conservation.

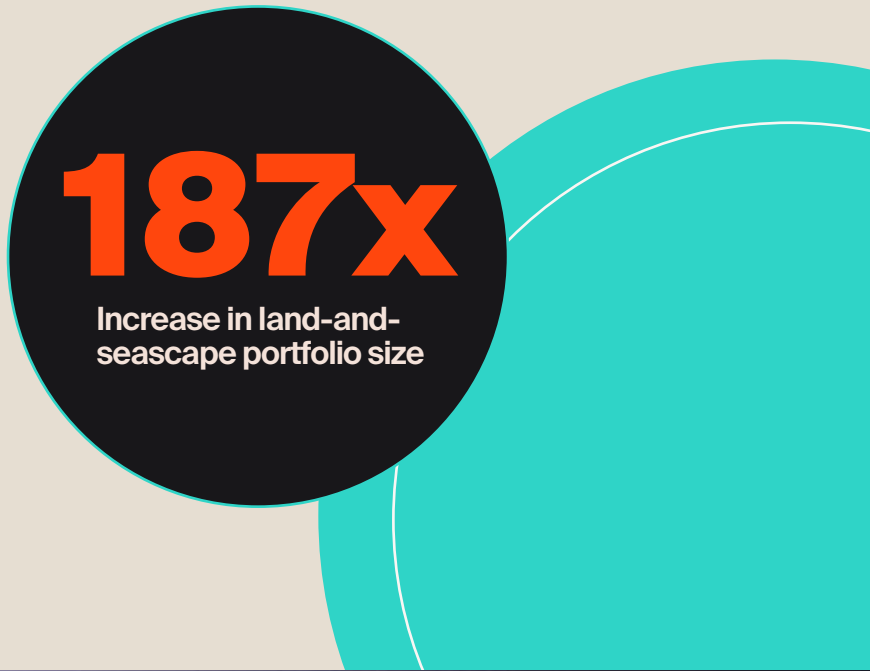
Women in our ranks are advancing into leadership across every part of the programme – from operational command to data-driven conservation science. With continued investment in training and professional development, we are growing a generation of conservation leaders who are building not just protection, but purpose, within their communities.

A Shared Mission, A Shared Success

Akashinga’s progress is only possible through the support of our partners – from governments and nonprofits to corporate allies, donors, and grassroots community networks. Together, we are protecting critical ecosystems, driving gender equity, and building resilient futures.

In 2025, Akashinga is focusing on deepening and consolidating the progress we’ve made. The leaseholds and partnerships that now protect 13.1 million acres – nearly six times the size of Yellowstone National Park – were years in the making. Now, the work ahead is about strengthening what we’ve built.

In a world urgently seeking solutions to environmental crises, Akashinga stands as proof: **inclusive conservation works**. By putting people at the centre, we’re building models that not only preserve nature but ensure it thrives.



Lightning strikes over our Phundundu camp in Zimbabwe: a dramatic moment in a year marked by climate disruption. In 2024, Zimbabwe experienced one of its harshest droughts in recent memory. At Akashinga, we’re responding by strengthening ecosystem resilience, supporting local communities, and protecting biodiversity that’s increasingly under threat. Conservation in the face of climate change means adapting, collaborating, and leading with both science and care. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Projects	Details	Outcomes
Long-term Biodiversity Protection & Trend Monitoring	2,018 arrests for illegal wildlife crimes and over 900 joint operations with law enforcement agencies	Recovery of 705 elephant ivory tusks; 132 pangolins; 91 illegal weapons; 16 rhino horns; 68 animal skins; and more than 1,200 snares removed.
Community Livelihoods, Health, & Wellbeing	900+ staff and contractors with the majority of the law enforcement staff being women	Significant reduction in elephant poaching and a notable increase in wildlife populations.
Bridging Gender Equity & Environmentalism for Lasting Change	The Akashinga Area Management Model presents a unique approach that addresses systemic and structural inequalities and propels the conservation movement forward.	In addition to providing financial stability to families, many of the rangers take on a mentorship role – both for fellow rangers in the programme and community members in learning how to live in ways that promote sustainable well-being for people and the environment in which they live.

Overall Impact. Since 2017

13.1 Million
Acres of critical wilderness land-and-seascapes protected – equivalent to one-third of the natural forests lost globally each year

20,000+
Increased access to clean water, medical care, sustainable livelihoods

5,000+
Patients treated each month at clinics supported by Akashinga

200+
Primary and secondary education scholarships provided (70% to girls)

900+
Local and global staff and contractors

400%
Increase in wildlife encounters in the reserves we manage

90%
Decrease in elephant poaching in the reserves we manage

2024 Impact Overview.

In 2024, Akashinga’s community-driven model continued to grow, extending conservation impact across Southern Africa. From deploying two new cohorts of rangers in Zimbabwe to delivering ranger training across multiple countries, our work on the ground is shaping the future of conservation. Together, we have safeguarded wilderness landscapes, strengthened anti-poaching efforts, and supported biodiversity recovery. Beyond conservation, we deepened investment in communities by providing education, health care, sustainable livelihoods, and leadership opportunities for women. Here are some of the notable ways we’ve created impact together this past year:

Wildlife Population Protection and Monitoring

This year, Akashinga’s integrated conservation model strengthened enforcement and ecological monitoring across four countries in Southern Africa. Through joint patrols and community-driven protection, we curbed illegal wildlife crime, supported biodiversity recovery, and safeguarded ecosystems at scale.

- **48 new Akashinga Rangers** trained and deployed in Zimbabwe and Mozambique through rigorous selection courses. In addition, Akashinga Academy instructors trained **20 conservation scouts in Botswana** in safety and bush survival.
- Rangers conducted **1,840 patrols** in Zimbabwe, covering **19,961km (~12,403mi)** on foot, resulting in **371 arrests** and **4,241 wildlife sightings** – a **150%** increase on 2023.
- In Mozambique, rangers carried out **601 patrols** and **48 joint operations** with law enforcement, disrupting illegal hunting networks and recovering **954 snares, 399 steel traps**, and multiple firearms.
- Wildlife monitoring recorded **921 sightings** in Mozambique (a **144%** increase since 2023), strengthening conservation strategies in the region.
- Marine protection advanced through the launch of the **Turtle Guard (Guardas de Tartarugas)** along the C5 coast, intercepting illegal mangrove logging and collaborating with coastal police to combat marine poaching.
- Across Akashinga’s operational footprint, rangers and staff continued to **mitigate human-wildlife conflict**, support wildlife rescues, and secure biodiversity across **13.1 million acres**.

Community Livelihoods

Akashinga’s model ensures that conservation and community development progress together. In 2024, our investments in education, health care, infrastructure, and youth engagement strengthened local resilience and provided alternatives to unsustainable resource use.

- **Bi-weekly mobile health outreaches** launched from the Songo clinic in Zimbabwe, expanding access to medical care for surrounding communities and fishing villages.
- More than **5,000 patients** treated monthly across Akashinga-supported clinics, with health services expanded to include a **new staff sickbay** at Phundundu Reserve in Zimbabwe.
- Propagation of **20,000 indigenous tree seedlings** at Phundundu, with seeds sourced from local communities, to be planted following a vegetation survey.
- **206 primary and secondary school scholarships** awarded, with salaries for teachers supported across **14 schools in Zimbabwe**. Four students completed teaching qualifications under Akashinga scholarships, with eight more still in training.
- Community engagement initiatives included sponsoring **Nyamakate United Football Club** in Zimbabwe, offering young men a positive outlet that reduces the likelihood of poaching.
- **Social development projects in Botswana** supported local education, electrified a day-care centre, and expanded children’s participation in national sports tournaments.

Addressing Gender Equity In Conservation

With women now representing 63% of Akashinga’s workforce of over 900 staff globally, the programme continues to redefine women’s leadership in conservation and law enforcement.

- **Female rangers and staff advanced** into operational command, biodiversity supervision, and training roles across Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Botswana.
- **Sergeant Margaret Darawanda**, Head of Operations in East Zimbabwe, received the **International Ranger Federation (IRF) Young Ranger Award** for her leadership and dedication to conservation.
- Women continued to expand their influence in frontline enforcement, marine protection, and eco-tourism, including an **all-female tourism team launched in Botswana’s KD15**.

Creating Career Pathways

Akashinga actively invests in education, training, and capacity-building to ensure lasting career progression for women in conservation.

- Rangers integrated **EarthRanger and Skylight AI** into Mozambique and Zimbabwe operations, enhancing monitoring of illegal maritime activity and producing research reports with strategic recommendations.
- Two of our instructors, **Tendai Kadohwata and Asiyatu Phiri**, also participated RPTI and RSDI (Ranger Self-Defence Instructor Course) training in Kenya, strengthening cross-border knowledgeexchange and capacity building. Among 8 trainees, the Akashinga Rangers ranked 3rd and 4th in competency.
- **Conservation training programmes** included advanced tracking courses and safety instruction in Botswana, strengthening local expertise and leadership.
- **Rangers in Mozambique and Zimbabwe** progressed into mentorship, teaching, and supervisory roles, creating pathways for women to lead across the conservation sector.
- Through the **Conservation Landscape Alliance (CLA)**, Akashinga and partners committed to securing long-term agreements with local and Indigenous communities, aiming to protect a land area larger than Texas within the next decade.

Thanks to your generous support, Akashinga has made significant and lasting strides, leaving an enduring mark on both wildlife conservation and community well-being. These achievements reflect more than statistics; they represent lives transformed, ecosystems safeguarded, and a collective vision of conservation that is rooted in equity and resilience. From the Turtle Guard patrolling Mozambique’s coastline, to communities in Zimbabwe gaining access to clean water and classrooms, to women stepping into leadership roles once thought unattainable, the story of Akashinga is one of courage, collaboration, and hope. None of this would be possible without the shared commitment of our partners, supporters, and communities, whose belief in our mission continues to drive lasting change. Together, we are not only protecting nature at scale, but also building a future where people and wildlife can thrive side by side.

Beneath the surface of Mozambique’s Save Seascape, every wave carries the promise of protection. The Akashinga supported *Guardas de Tartarugas* provide a model for community-led marine patrols that safeguard nesting turtles and sustain biodiversity, ensuring these waters remain a lifeline for generations to come. (Photo: Dr Jess Williams)

Ranger Spotlight: Sergeant Tracy Basarokwe.



Sergeant Tracy Basarokwe and her dog Katana, a six-year-old Belgian Malinois trained in tracking human scent, are pictured during an evening patrol at Phundundu in Hurungwe District, Zimbabwe. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Akashinga Ranger **Sergeant Tracy Basarokwe** grew up in Nyamhunga, a township on the shores of Lake Kariba, where her childhood was filled with encounters with the natural world. She remembers the cheeky baboons that would raid the town, the elephants and hippos grazing along the floodplains, and her own two dogs, Bingo and Buster, who were her companions at home. Surrounded by such diversity, Tracy developed an early sensitivity to animals' behaviour and needs. Watching, listening, and learning from these daily interactions, she began to form the intuitive understanding of wildlife that would later shape her work as a ranger.

In 2017, when Akashinga began recruiting its first intake of female rangers, Tracy's life took a new turn. By then she had completed school and moved with her family to Nyamakate, about 100km from the lake, where they had begun farming. News spread quickly through the village that Akashinga was offering women an unprecedented opportunity: the chance to train as rangers and protect the wilderness that surrounded their homes. For Tracy, the idea was both daunting and inspiring. It was her

father who gave her the encouragement she needed, telling her: "I know you are strong, and I believe in you." Those words stayed with her through the gruelling physical and emotional challenges of the selection process. "I didn't want to let him down," she remembers. She not only passed the course but became one of Akashinga's original 16 rangers, exceeding her own expectations and making her family very proud.

Two years later when a stray dog wandered into camp, Tracy felt drawn to the animal. She approached gently, offering comfort and play. Her natural ease with animals was immediately recognised by leadership at camp, and she was selected to attend a canine handler course in Pretoria, South Africa. The course began with a moment she will never forget: the release of ten working dogs, bounding towards the trainees in a rush of energy and noise. Nerves quickly gave way to joy when Tracy was paired with Katana, a one-year-old Belgian Malinois who would become her partner. Over the following twelve weeks, she and Katana were inseparable — eating, sleeping, and training side by side, forging a bond built on trust and devotion.

Today, Tracy serves as a Sergeant in Akashinga's canine unit at Phundundu. Together, she and Katana track poachers across difficult terrain, playing a frontline role in the protection of Zimbabwe's wildlife. For Tracy, the opportunity has been more than a career; it has been a chance to deepen her knowledge of animals, to honour her father's belief in her, and to create a future where her daughter Miguel can grow up surrounded by wildlife, just as she did.

Her journey also reflects the broader transformation Akashinga has championed. "You know, in our villages they didn't even believe that women can do this job, but we proved them wrong," she says. When she first began patrolling, she would walk for hours without seeing an animal. Now, she explains with pride, "you cannot walk 500 metres before you see elephants, buffalo, and other wildlife." Tracy's work has contributed directly to this recovery. She believes passionately that women should never be confined by others' expectations. In her words: "Nothing is impossible if you love what you are doing." And above all, Tracy loves being a ranger.



Akashinga Ranger Supervisor Wadzanai 'Wadza' Munemo stands tall among the miombo woodlands of Phundundu. From leading anti-poaching patrols to mentoring the next generation of rangers, Wadza exemplifies the strength and resilience of women driving conservation forward in Zimbabwe. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Ranger Spotlight: Sergeant Major Wadzanani Munemo.

When Akashinga Ranger Supervisor Wadzanai 'Wadza' Munemo's mother died in her last year of primary school, she was sent to live with her aunt. Although she was able to continue her education into high school, by the age of sixteen, she had little choice but to accept a marriage that had been arranged for her. The marriage failed, but its impact on her life was long-lasting, and like many Akashinga Rangers, left her with children to single-handedly support.

Wadza's life could have continued in hardship, but as she says, "Sometimes you have a plan, but God has a different one for you."

Wadza's brother, Jealous Matesanwa, was a local councillor in 2017 when he heard about the applications for the first Akashinga training programme at Nyamakate in Zimbabwe. "I applied because I trusted him," says Wadza. Jealous saw something in Wadza that she didn't even know she possessed yet, and he encouraged her when she was tempted to give up during the extensive selection and training. Wadza not only passed but flourished

in her new job, eventually being promoted to a Sergeant, Sergeant Major, and then Ranger Supervisor in the last two years. Wadza says, "I am proud of myself for all those positions because it shows even my boss, the top management, they know that I'm doing a good job, and it gives me strength and confidence."

Today, she is working hard to ensure her children have a better life than she did and is delighted to have built them their own home where they can grow up protected by her support. The position has come with sacrifice and risk, but her children understand the rewards that come from her long deployments, and they respect her work. Her son, Letmore, recognizes that protecting animals will not only benefit him but also his own children, and her daughter, Alice, hopes the job will take Wadza far and wide to teach others about wildlife.

Wadza instills this kind of long-term thinking and ambition not only in her biological children, but in the rangers under her care. As Phundundu's Ranger Supervisor, her role is

to oversee everyone at the camp, providing training and coaching while maintaining a positive work environment. For Wadza, it is a calling she does with gentleness and empathy, living up to her name which means 'to unite,' 'live in harmony,' and 'fellowship' in the Shona language.

"I am father and mother," she says, and the younger girls and women now look up to her as a strong leader who can impart knowledge about patrolling, investigating, and the tactics needed to be a successful ranger. She encourages her sisters, her 'little rangers,' to follow in her lead: "Listen to instructions, act in the way you have been taught, work hard, and use your earnings to invest in your future so that you, too, can have the advancements I have had."

Wadza is currently completing her second house build and has plans to acquire a truck license to give her broader responsibilities at work. "Akashinga raises us up," she says, and she leads by example to ensure this ethos is seen and felt by every ranger she supervises.

Our Landscape Portfolio.

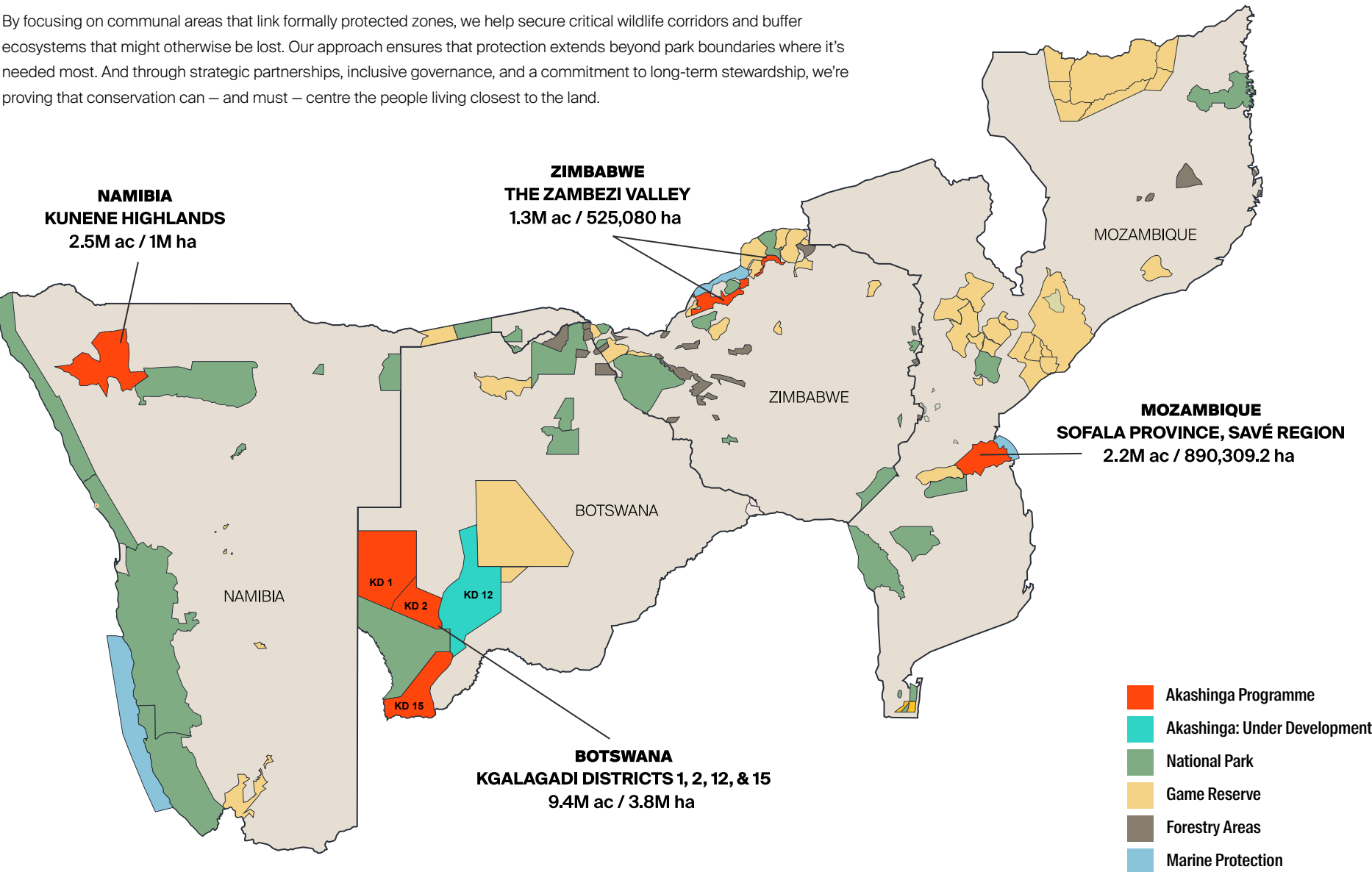
13.1 MILLION ACRES OF PROTECTED WILDERNESS

Two-thirds of Africa's protected areas exist outside national parks — and it is these communal lands that face the greatest threat of degradation and loss. Severely under-resourced yet ecologically vital, these landscapes hold the key to sustaining biodiversity, building climate resilience, and strengthening community development. To protect them, we must reframe the conservation narrative — not as the preservation of isolated sanctuaries, but as the restoration and long-term stewardship of vast, interconnected ecosystems led by the people who call them home.

After 15 years of leading and supporting site-specific initiatives, Akashinga has evolved into a force for landscape-scale protection. Today, we co-manage and protect 13.1 million acres (5.2 million hectares) across Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, and Namibia, with a model rooted in community programs, women's leadership, and ecological integrity. This marks a 187-fold increase from our original footprint — and reflects our growing role in the shared oversight of Africa's most threatened yet promising ecological strongholds.

In 2024 alone, Akashinga expanded our operational reach by an additional 4.43 million acres (1.7 million hectares). This includes a 2.5 million-acre (1 million-hectare) addition in Namibia through our partnership with [Conserve Global](#), strengthening inclusive conservation efforts in the Kunene Highlands and deepening women's leadership across the region. Meanwhile, in Botswana, our partnership with [Kalahari Research and Conservation](#) brought a further 4.4 million acres (1.7 million hectares) into Akashinga's landscape portfolio — uniting critical areas like KD12 and KD15 with adjacent blocks already under mandate, and ensuring uninterrupted wildlife movement and community development across this essential terrain.

By focusing on communal areas that link formally protected zones, we help secure critical wildlife corridors and buffer ecosystems that might otherwise be lost. Our approach ensures that protection extends beyond park boundaries where it's needed most. And through strategic partnerships, inclusive governance, and a commitment to long-term stewardship, we're proving that conservation can — and must — centre the people living closest to the land.



“ For Akashinga, conservation is never just about animals. It’s about education, health care, livelihoods, and dignity for the people who live closest to these landscapes. Our rangers are not outsiders brought in; they come from the very communities that live alongside the wildlife. Their knowledge, their history, and their families are bound to the land. That’s what makes protection here sustainable. And we’ve proved something important: where once you could walk for hours without seeing wildlife, now elephants, buffalo, and predators are returning. That recovery is a direct result of local people leading conservation with Akashinga. ”

— [Dr Joshua Tsamba](#)
Junior Country Scientist, Zimbabwe



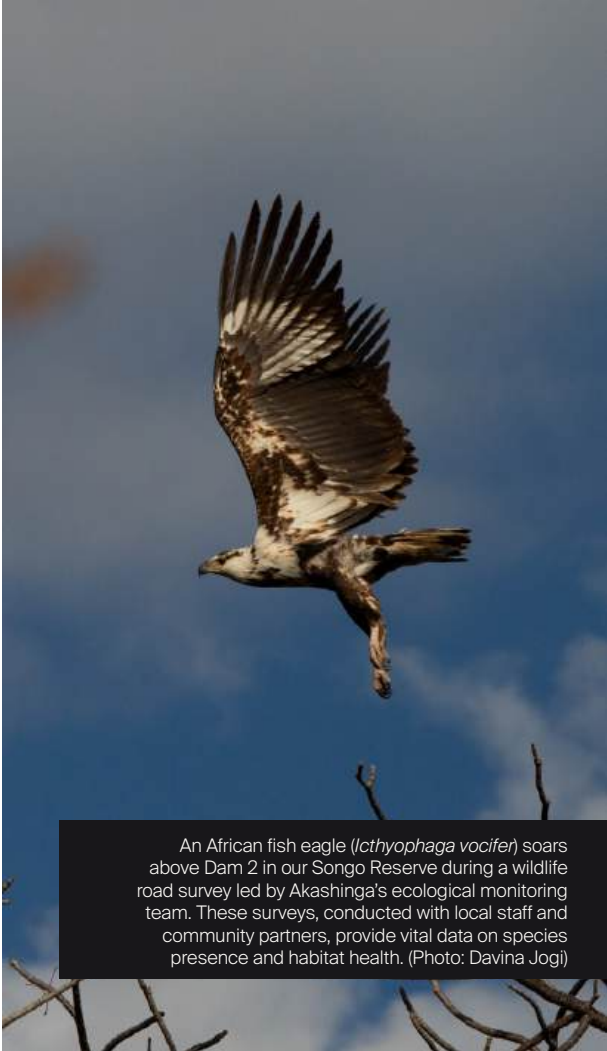
A young vervet monkey peers out from the branches in Zimbabwe's Zambezi Valley. Akashinga Rangers help protect habitats like these woodlands, ensuring that primates and countless other species can thrive in safe, interconnected ecosystems. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin)



Akashinga Junior Country Scientist in Zimbabwe, Dr Joshua Tsamba, patrols through the bush with his team in a remote section of our Songo conservancy while conducting a baseline wildlife survey. In 2024, Akashinga's science department in Zimbabwe initiated a programme of annual surveys during both the wet and dry seasons to gather comprehensive data on wildlife distribution and abundance as a means to protect it. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Zimbabwe.

Established in Zimbabwe in 2009, today Akashinga operates from two conservancies in the mid-Zambezi Valley: Songo and Phundundu.



An African fish eagle (*Ichthyophaga vocifer*) soars above Dam 2 in our Songo Reserve during a wildlife road survey led by Akashinga's ecological monitoring team. These surveys, conducted with local staff and community partners, provide vital data on species presence and habitat health. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Where Women Lead, Nature Endures

In 2024, Akashinga completed its seventh year redefining conservation in Zimbabwe's ecologically diverse Zambezi Valley, by placing women at the forefront of wildlife protection while strengthening community resilience.

Our two reserves in Zimbabwe, Phundundu and Songo, connect several of the country's prime conservation areas surrounding Lake Kariba, a region globally recognised as a biodiversity hotspot and home to three national parks and eight safari areas.

Akashinga's work in Zimbabwe is centred on rehabilitating and managing over 140,000 hectares of former trophy hunting land in way which returns and retains the dignity of both people and wildlife. Through our holistic approach that integrates law enforcement, biodiversity monitoring, and social development, this year we amplified our impact, safeguarding critical ecosystems

and enhancing livelihoods in and around the reserves we manage.

Life is challenging across Hurungwe and Binga, the two districts in which we operate. The Zambezi Valley is a designated wilderness area whose indigenous inhabitants have faced a complicated history of forced removals and re-settlement as well as persistent poverty. The region is characterised by high temperatures, poor agricultural potential, low rainfall and limited infrastructural development. A legacy of natural resource mismanagement coupled with the illegal wildlife trade and increasing human encroachment into safari areas has led to large-scale biodiversity loss and intensified human-wildlife conflict as people and animals compete for resources.

According to a recent [Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority \(ZPWMA\) Plan](#), increased temperatures and more erratic rainfall brought on by climate change, and other human impacts

such as extensive tree cover removal and erosion, are threatening the health of the region's ecosystem and its ability to sustain wildlife species or support the livelihoods of inhabitants.

Dr Ranga Huruba, Reserve Manager, Akashinga East (Songo), views the situation from another perspective, **“[Experts] say marginalised communities are going to suffer more in terms of climate change, but we forget that the marginalisation has created resilience... so how do we build on that resilience?”**

Akashinga's ongoing task in Zimbabwe is to ensure these areas of the Zambezi Valley remain wild – not by removing people, but by recognizing the value of indigenous knowledge, leveraging the adaptability of local communities and positioning women as environmental caretakers and leaders at the heart of conservation where they have always belonged.



Nyamakate United FC are pictured with team manager Farai Kaitano as they show off their new kit received with support from Akashinga in January 2024. (Photo: Steven Dean)

2024 Impact in Zimbabwe.

People

Blessing Neya, Community Supervisor at Akashinga East, remembers the challenges she faced setting up the community department in 2021. At the time, Akashinga had become synonymous with law enforcement and people from the surrounding villages, struggling with increased human-wildlife conflict, did not feel that their grievances were being addressed. She took a team of rangers, local police, Rural District Council and ZimParks representatives, and they went out to meet with the 78 communities in Hurungwe District's Ward 7, where the reserve is based. "All along, what they wanted was a listening ear," she says.

Opening discussions was the start of relationships that continue today, driving conservation outcomes through community development projects in education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and social welfare. Key to maintaining these relationships is ensuring that Akashinga Rangers and staff remain part of the communities they come from and are actively involved in the implementation of such projects.

Such community cohesion is no more apparent than at sports events supported by Akashinga. In 2024, Akashinga maintained its sponsorship of Nyamakate United FC, 'The Flames', in the local second division league, and continued to support a competitive netball social league which encourages skills development and teamwork. At the end of the year, Akashinga held its annual football and netball

tournament in Nyamakate. The 13 netball teams and 34 soccer teams comprised rangers and community members of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities. Social sport is not only good for physical and mental health, building confidence and connecting people, it also provides a platform for raising awareness about conserving biodiversity and allows young people to channel their energy in a positive direction.

"When we have a football team around, we are reducing poaching, because most of the time the kids are here. They are busy, they are training, and when they come back, they are actually tired. They don't have time to go into the bush and do poaching," says Farai Kaitano, Nyamakate FC team manager.

Ensuring that young people can make the most of their talent and opportunities despite coming from a rural area with limited resources is why Akashinga similarly supported Form 3 student Soneli Mbewe from Nyamakate High School to acquire a passport and sports gear. Soneli was scouted by Pioneer Netball Club because of her talent and needed the document to travel to tournaments in neighbouring countries. It may seem like a far cry from conservation work, but by investing in the future of local communities, Akashinga ensures its message and work are supported on the ground where it matters most.

This includes investing in infrastructural development that improves access to services and quality of life within communities. In 2024, this approach was reflected in our ongoing commitment to improving water access for local villages

across the areas of Hurungwe and Binga Districts near our reserves. Refitting and refurbishing existing boreholes with solar-powered pumps, as well as drilling new access points at sites specifically selected to have the biggest impact on wildlife and the community, has been ongoing since 2023.

Towards the end of 2024, we surveyed points for drilling at Songo and selected six potential sites that will be developed in 2025. In two villages near Phundundu (Kilo and Village 24), we completed the set-up of two solar-powered boreholes with 5,000-litre tanks, which were well received by the community. Due to drought conditions and a lack of surface water, the Habitat team also dug a well at the Rukomichi/Ruvuzi River junction to provide water for animals (particularly elephants) within the reserve, reducing their need to venture into and cause conflict in communities. Noting the success of the five current water points, the team identified further potential sites to develop additional waterholes.

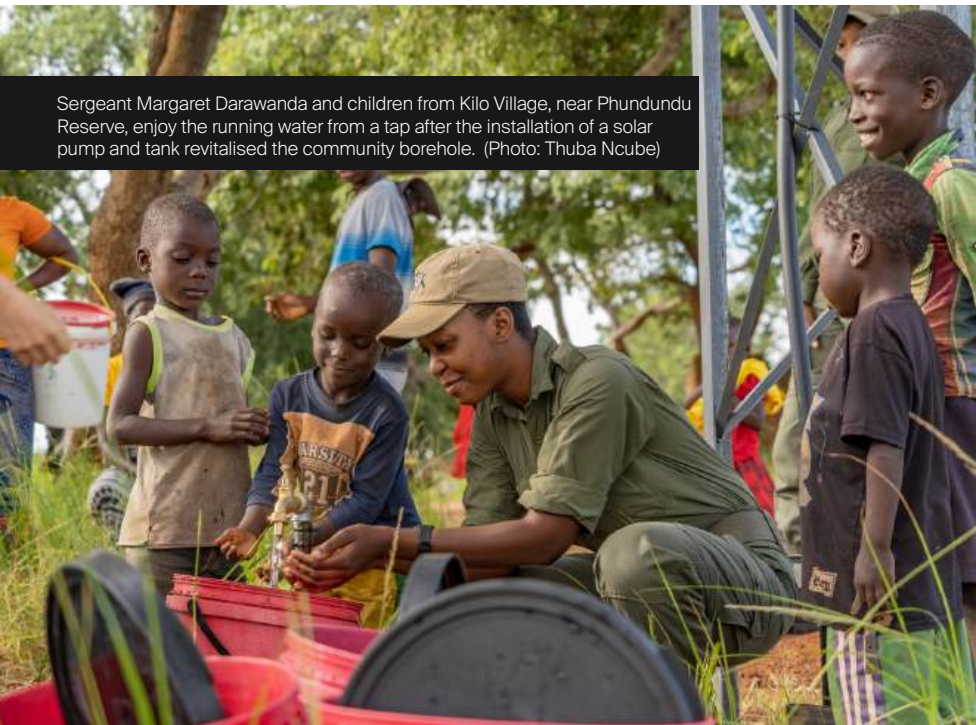
Aside from minimising the risk of illness by ensuring clean water access, Akashinga also supports healthcare initiatives and campaigns through its clinics. The clinic at Songo Reserve on the shores of Lake Kariba is a lifeline for the surrounding communities, but in such a large and remote district, the distances and lack of transportation limit the number of patients who can attend. To address the problem, this September Nurse Tarisai Munkuli and her team began taking the clinic to the communities, running bi-weekly mobile healthcare outreaches in the nearby fishing villages. These clinics offer health education and treatment, with sessions



Akashinga Nurse Tarisai Munkuli records a patient's blood pressure as she assists staff from Sinamusanga Clinic to carry out a mobile clinic at Luungu community. (Photo: Davina Jogi)



Nurse Portia Dhlamini hands over medication to Ranger Rumbidzai Chadamoyo as she examines her in the sick bay at Akashinga's Phundundu camp. (Photo: Davina Jogi)



Sergeant Margaret Darawanda and children from Kilo Village, near Phundundu Reserve, enjoy the running water from a tap after the installation of a solar pump and tank revitalised the community borehole. (Photo: Thuba Ncube)

“ Growing up in the local communities, I can see the problems that can emanate when there's no communication between the organization and what the community does. There's a better chance for conservation if the community is 100% in. ”

— **Blessing Neya**
Community Supervisor,
Akashinga East Zimbabwe

covering hygiene for breastfeeding mothers, HIV prevention, and immunisations. As a consequence, the number of patients seen and treated has risen steeply – including these mobile outreaches, Akashinga-supported clinics provided critical services to over 2,784 patients over the course of the year.

In September, Akashinga provided building materials to support the construction of Blair toilets at Nyamakate clinic, improving community infrastructure. Additionally, plans that were laid in 2023 resulted in the opening of a sickbay at Akashinga's Phundundu Reserve in January 2024, where Nurse Portia Dhlamini now cares for the physical and mental well-being of the entire Akashinga staff and their families. With 15 years of experience, Portia moved from Harare and embraced the challenge of living and working in this rural area, driven by her passion to make a difference. Portia goes beyond routine care – offering life-changing counselling, addressing trauma, and treating illnesses for our staff at our Phundundu camp. Her own experiences fuel her empathy, helping her connect deeply with her patients.

Finally, Akashinga enhanced its commitment to the well-being of schoolchildren through ongoing construction, refurbishment, and upgrade projects at local schools in both Binga and Hurungwe Districts. The construction of a new classroom block at Sinamusanga Primary School, near Songo Reserve, was continued in 2024 with additional funds contributed from a sponsored walk carried out by rangers. Meanwhile, in the communities surrounding Phundundu, all Early Childhood Development (ECD) building projects were completed at Village 31, Hotel Village, and Camp 10 villages by the end of the year. Additionally, the Ministry of Education, with support from Hurungwe Rural District Council, elevated the rebuilt ECD at Dins to include Grade 1 and 2, with Akashinga committing to upgrading the sanitation facilities to serve the new students.

Across our operational areas in Zimbabwe's Zambezi Valley, this past year marked significant progress in our mission to build a future where wildlife and humanity thrive side by side – from enhanced data systems and anti-poaching strategies to improved ecosystem monitoring.

Phundundu

Our flagship camp in Hurungwe District, Phundundu, continued to serve as a hub for pioneering sustainability and conservation science within Akashinga. Key achievements included:

Establishing Reforestation and Sustainable Agriculture Projects: A pilot tree nursery project was established by the Biodiversity team, supporting reforestation efforts within the reserve and surrounding communities. Akashinga's indigenous tree nursery now nurtures 20,000 seedlings, all grown from seeds purchased from the community. This initiative is not only restoring the land but will ultimately create jobs and economic opportunities in landscaping, reforestation, and agroforestry. The Habitat team also expanded Phundundu's vegetable garden and drilled a new borehole to improve sustainable food production. A 30-metre greenhouse, equipped with drip irrigation, is under construction and is expected to be completed in early 2025, ensuring efficient water use and year-round crop yield. This is especially relevant in light of the fact that Phundundu experienced the lowest rainfall in decades, which severely impacted water and food security across the region.

Strengthening Scientific Capacity: The Science Department procured essential field equipment to support their day-to-day work in the field. As a result, annual wildlife surveys using spoor transect counts were successfully conducted in both wet and dry seasons, involving 16 team members over three days. Sixty trail cameras were placed in key locations within the reserve as part of another ongoing survey, which has effectively captured an array of species including a collared leopard. Five GPS-enabled lion collars were also purchased to enhance lion movement tracking as a way to mitigate human-wildlife conflict. Permits to use the collars are currently pending.

Upgrading Operational Capacity: The Ops Room at Miombo camp received a comprehensive renovation to enhance anti-poaching efficiency. The structural, design and technological upgrades were aimed at improving intelligence gathering and analysis, facilitating real-time communication for faster response, enabling better data management for strategic planning, and integrating advanced surveillance technologies for increased patrol effectiveness. Additionally, 20 km of new roads were

constructed within the reserve to improve access and mobility.

Supporting Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) Mitigation: To address crop-raiding incidents, Akashinga supported innovative community defense measures by distributing vuvuzelas, firecrackers, and chili strings and bricks. The community team conducted awareness and education meetings to provide training for effective use.

Songo

In the Sengwa region around Akashinga's Songo Reserve, efforts were focused on planning and research to inform conservation management and community well-being and to potentially expand protection to a new area. Operational security and access at Songo was also bolstered to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of our ranger teams.

Enhanced Operational Security: Songo's boundary marking was officially completed, with the visible markings ensuring clarity in land use and conservation zones and reducing the likelihood of disputes with the Rural District Council or surrounding communities. Additionally, a 20-foot patrol boat was successfully deployed on Lake Kariba and covering at least 150 nautical miles per month has already been effective in enhancing surveillance and anti-poaching efforts in the region. Although staffing constraints did hinder the establishment of wider-ranging base camps, rangers were stationed at the newly constructed camp at Sikele, which has increased our presence and operational capacity on the ground.

Technology-Driven Monitoring: Sixty camera traps were purchased to provide comprehensive coverage of key wildlife corridors. These traps, paired with GPS data, will allow for detailed monitoring of species distribution, movement patterns, and potential poaching hotspots, shaping proactive conservation measures.

Infrastructure Management: The Biodiversity Department mapped Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) fences and community boreholes, improving oversight and response capabilities. Response and accessibility will also be improved by an ongoing project to repair and reconstruct all reserve roads not under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Roads or District Development Fund, totalling approximately 120 kilometres (of which approximately half was completed by year end).

Looking Ahead – Chete East: The Development Department began conducting a comprehensive feasibility study to assess the viability of operations in Chete East, which borders Songo. The study will be supported by a detailed plan outlining strategies for sustainable development, conservation initiatives, and community engagement within the area. The feasibility study will be completed next year.



Akashinga Rangers Rumbidzai Mundoza (left) and Agnes Kafanja use the EarthRanger app to record buffalo spoor during a patrol at Phundundu reserve. Every patrol tells a story and the data gathered informs conservation strategies, strengthens anti-poaching efforts and enhances scientific research. (Photo: Davina Jogi)



Akashinga Rangers in Songo participating in the 2024 Wildlife Ranger Challenge. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Country-Wide Impact in Zimbabwe

Although our two reserves in Zimbabwe run independently, **our operations are unified through integrated systems and collaborative action.** In 2024, this included country-wide implementation of data management technology as well as joint operations between our teams, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA), and other stakeholders.

At the start of the year, we **introduced iNaturalist** across our reserves and completed the **implementation of EarthRanger**, enhancing data capture and ecosystem monitoring. Additionally, advanced software platforms were acquired by the Science Department to further improve data management and risk analysis.

To improve security and combat illegal activities in protected areas, a **Joint Operations Coordination and Execution Plan** was implemented with ZPWMA and other stakeholders. Following the deployment of the Akashinga patrol boat, a 6-day joint patrol with ZPWMA rangers was carried out on Lake Kariba.

Operational Highlights

Awards: Sergeant Margaret Darawanda was awarded the International Ranger Federation Young Ranger Award, highlighting the calibre of our frontline leaders.

Arrests: A notable enforcement achievement was the arrest of a poaching gang responsible for the death of an elephant last December, which led to a significant reduction in illegal incursions into Phundundu this year.

Wildlife Ranger Challenge: Two teams participated in

the global Wildlife Ranger Challenge (Tusk & Game Ranger Association of Africa’s Half Marathon), demonstrating their own resilience and solidarity with the ranger community.

2024 Impact Narrative

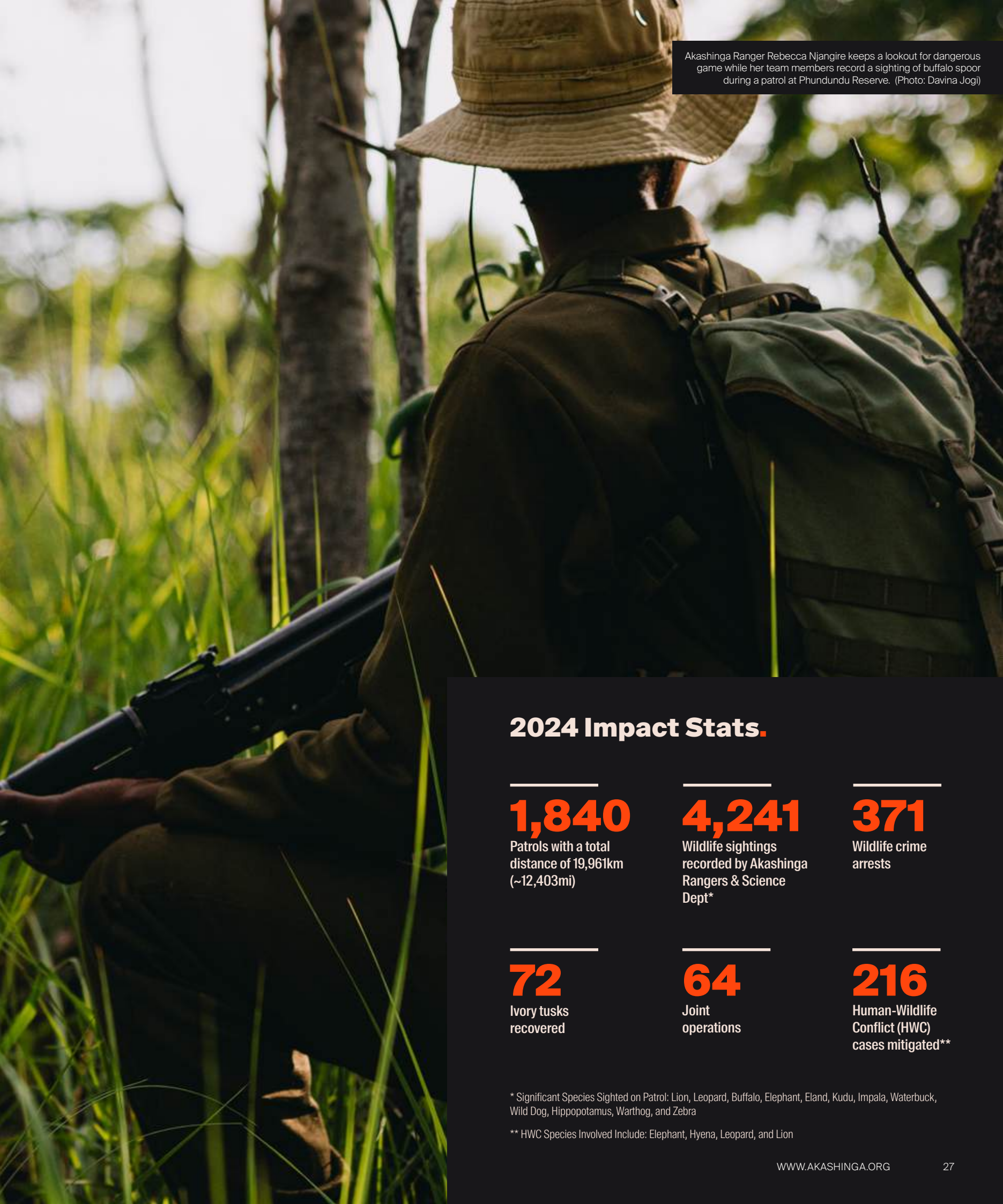
Rangers conducted 1,840 patrols covering an extensive 19,961km (~12,403mi) on foot, leading to 371 arrests (including 64 joint operations) and the confiscation of illegal wildlife products, firearms, and poaching equipment.

Key conservation outcomes included the collaring of three bull elephants in partnership with World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority (ZIMPARKS), and Binga Rural District Council (BRDC), and rescuing 29 pangolins from poachers, securing 23 of them alive for rehabilitation and release back into the wild.

Our programme in Zimbabwe also maintains an expanding biodiversity monitoring programme that recorded 4,241 wildlife sightings last year, which is a 150.65% increase since 2023.

To foster human-wildlife coexistence, Akashinga responded to 241 conflict cases, successfully mitigating 216 through non-lethal deterrents and community engagement.

Our planet-focused efforts in 2024 exemplify our unwavering commitment to integrated conservation – combining science, community partnerships, and tactical response. With each innovation, deployment, and patrol, we reinforce our vision: a thriving, biodiverse Zimbabwe where nature and people coexist in resilience and harmony.



Akashinga Ranger Rebecca Njangire keeps a lookout for dangerous game while her team members record a sighting of buffalo spoor during a patrol at Phundundu Reserve. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

2024 Impact Stats.

1,840

Patrols with a total distance of 19,961km (~12,403mi)

4,241

Wildlife sightings recorded by Akashinga Rangers & Science Dept*

371

Wildlife crime arrests

72

Ivory tusks recovered

64

Joint operations

216

Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) cases mitigated**

* Significant Species Sighted on Patrol: Lion, Leopard, Buffalo, Elephant, Eland, Kudu, Impala, Waterbuck, Wild Dog, Hippopotamus, Warthog, and Zebra

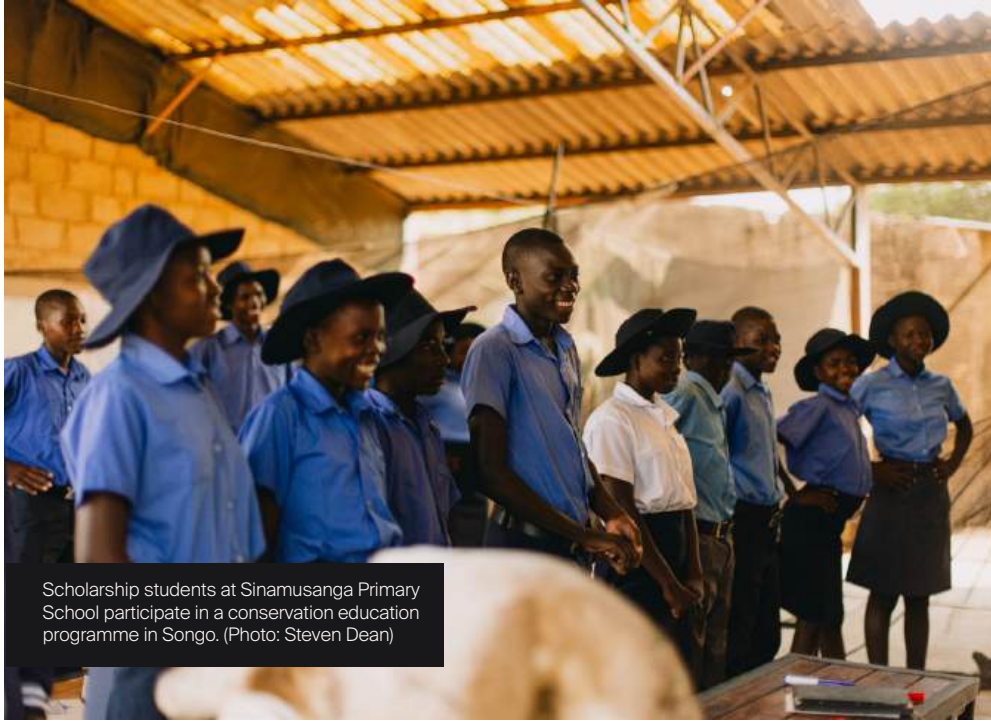
** HWC Species Involved Include: Elephant, Hyena, Leopard, and Lion



Akashinga Rangers train alongside their K9 partners. These units enhance anti-poaching operations by tracking incursions, detecting illegal activity, and strengthening ranger safety in the field. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin)



An Akashinga Ranger during field training. Rigorous selection courses and advanced instruction equip rangers with the skills, discipline, and resilience needed to protect wildlife and serve their communities on the conservation front line. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin)



Scholarship students at Sinamusanga Primary School participate in a conservation education programme in Songo. (Photo: Steven Dean)



A student takes part in Akashinga's "Look and Learn" camp at Songo, using binoculars to observe wildlife. These camps inspire the next generation of conservation leaders by giving young people first-hand experiences in nature. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Future

In Zimbabwe, Akashinga is playing a vital role in securing the future of our planet by investing in the development of skilled conservation leaders. Through rigorous ranger training and leadership programmes, Akashinga equips its teams with the expertise needed to protect biodiversity and combat wildlife crime effectively. Beyond field operations, the organisation champions conservation education, inspiring a new generation of environmental stewards among local communities. By promoting sustainable employment practices – particularly through the inclusion and advancement of women – Akashinga is strengthening social and economic resilience, creating a model of conservation that is both inclusive and enduring.

Ranger Training

Our ranger training programme continued to grow in scope and impact throughout the year, focused on enhancing instructional capacity, field readiness, operational safety, and wildlife protection capabilities.

In the first quarter of 2024, the Training Academy delivered Life Saver Training for 24 rangers and a refresher course for an additional 72, ensuring all personnel maintained core field competencies.

The following quarter, our instructors carried out two Field Ranger Selection Courses concurrently at Phundundu and Songo, testing the physical fitness, mental aptitude, communication skills, discipline, interest, and

trainability of 60 candidates. The selection resulted in 20 new Akashinga recruits who were then trained alongside two Hurungwe Rural District Council (HRDC) female rangers over a three-month period starting at the end of April. During this Advanced Field Ranger Selection Training, recruits were equipped with essential skills in wildlife conservation, anti-poaching measures, and community engagement. The final cohort of 22 rangers are now deployed at Phundundu. A selection will be seconded under ZPWMA supervision to Mana Pools National Park in 2025 (in line with our Memorandum of Understanding).

In the same period, swimming lessons were given to any remaining rangers at Songo who had not already been trained to ensure each team member possesses this critical skill, improving their safety and preparedness to conduct anti-poaching operations on and around Lake Kariba.

Throughout the year, the Training Academy continued its mandate of enhancing instructional capacity and promoting leadership within the ranger ranks. A Ranger Physical Instructor Course (RPTI) was carried out for 10 participants over 19 days at the Academy. Two of our instructors, Tendai Kadohwata and Asiyatu Phiri, also participated RPTI and RSDI (Ranger Self-Defence Instructor Course) training in Kenya, strengthening cross-border knowledge exchange and capacity building. Among 8 trainees, the Akashinga Rangers ranked 3rd and 4th in competency. Graduates of the course are now equipped to lead structured physical training across ranger units,

promoting fitness and operational effectiveness.

The year ended with the first phase of refresher training in Songo, during which four instructors tested the practical competency of 24 rangers. Instructors reported strong performance in assessment tests but noted that an ongoing focus on practical lessons would benefit rangers. The remainder of Songo's rangers will be assessed in January 2025.

Conservation Education

Our conservation education initiatives remained a cornerstone of our community engagement strategy. In Binga District, the Akashinga Scholarship Programme continued to support over 200 students through the payment of examination and school fees, affirming our commitment to education as a long-term conservation tool.

In 2024, Akashinga sponsored an additional seven tertiary education bursaries to address a severe shortage of teachers in the area, introduced a Wildlife Education Programme in community schools and expanded the "Look and Learn" conservation camps. Hosting groups of up to 16 children for educational stays at Songo, the camps allow children to participate in wildlife lectures, game drives, and lake cruises. Similarly, in Hurungwe District, Akashinga sponsored students from three primary schools to attend RIFA Camp from 24th – 29th November. The wilderness education camps feature hands on learning about habitats, nature conservation and anti-poaching

efforts. Despite living in rural areas, for many children, this is their first up-close encounter with wildlife, an important first step to gaining an appreciation for the intrinsic value of conserving their natural habitat.

HR and Policy Development

The organisation placed strong emphasis on professional support, development, and policy formulation in 2024. This included training 21 members of the Workers' Committee in the Labour Act and relevant Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) legislation to ensure fair labour practices and compliance with national employment laws. Additionally, a structured training programme was delivered to supervisors to support effective team management and performance evaluation.

Akashinga also implemented a comprehensive Ranger Benefits Policy and Code of Conduct after a long process of

internal discussion, planning, and drafting. The policy, effective from September 2024, strengthens ethical standards, improves employee welfare, and formalises maternity support with minimal budgetary impact. To support the maternity policy, which allows for six months of leave followed by an additional three months of light duties at camp accompanied by the new baby, four staff houses were constructed at Songo to provide postnatal accommodation.

Overall, the past year reflects our commitment to continuous improvement, from advanced ranger training and conservation education to progressive human resource policies that centre well-being and equity. These integrated efforts not only strengthen our operational capacity in Zimbabwe but also reinforce our belief that conservation and community prosperity are inseparable.



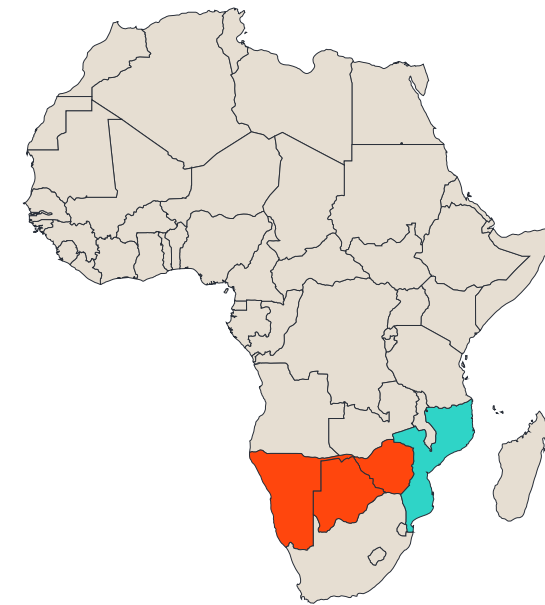
Akashinga Instructor Asiyatu Phiri practices hand-to-hand combat during Ranger Self-Defense training which formed part of a Ranger Physical Training Instructors' Course (RPTI) held by LEAD Conservation in Kenya. Asiyatu was noted for her fighting spirit during sparring sessions. (Photo: LEAD Conservation)

“ C5 is home to thousands of species – many still unknown. Our job is to protect what we know and discover what we don’t, before it’s too late.”

— Camilo Antonio
BIODIVERSITY OFFICER IN MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique.

Launched in 2022, our Mozambique programme safeguards Coutada 5 (C5) – the nation’s largest former trophy hunting concession – through an integrated approach that unites land and marine conservation.



Akashinga Rangers gather for their early morning briefing in Mozambique, preparing for another day of patrols to protect wildlife and strengthen community-led conservation. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Guardians of Coast and Corridor

Coutada 5 (C5) anchors Akashinga’s Mozambique programme as both the country’s largest *coutada* and a keystone ecological corridor linking the Indian Ocean with Limpopo National Park, Gonarezhou in Zimbabwe, and Kruger in South Africa. Spanning 2.2 million acres (890,309 hectares) and bordered by national parks, community lands, and 40 miles (64 kilometres) of coastline, C5 embodies a model where terrestrial and marine protection converge.

Offshore, the Save and connected Greater Bazaruto Seascapes shelter extraordinary biodiversity. The area is home to five of the world’s seven

sea turtle species – all classified as vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered – alongside what may be the last viable dugong population in the Western Indian Ocean. An aerial survey recorded **65 dugongs** moving as a herd, the largest sighting since the 1960s and a landmark moment for global marine conservation.

Onshore and along the coastline, C5 contains some of Mozambique’s most productive mangrove systems. These forests, representing around **10% of the nation’s mangrove coverage**, act as nurseries for fish, protect communities from tidal surges and erosion, and are powerful

carbon sinks vital in mitigating climate change. Yet these ecosystems face escalating threats: rising cyclone frequency, illegal logging, overfishing, and poaching.

Akashinga’s approach combines ranger deployment, community-led initiatives, and scientific monitoring to reverse decades of ecological loss. Progress is already visible: from the slow return of large terrestrial species inland to renewed signs of resilience across the seascape. Together with local partners, Akashinga is working to secure this corridor as one of the most significant integrated conservation landscapes in Southern Africa.

Akashinga’s conservation efforts extend below the waves, preserving vibrant marine life like this striking sea star, crucial to the health of our ocean ecosystems. (Photo: Dr Jess Williams)

2024 Impact in Mozambique.

People

At the heart of Akashinga’s work in Mozambique is a belief that conservation must serve people as much as it safeguards biodiversity. In 2024, this vision took shape through a broad range of community initiatives across Machanga and Machaze districts.

Six Community-Based Natural Resource Management Committees (CBNRMCs) were formed or revitalised this year in Zimuala, Matongua, Javane, Beia-peia, Divinhe, and Gunda-Mutane. These committees provide communities with formal mechanisms to participate in decision-making about Coutada 5’s future. They are central to the model of embedding conservation in governance, ensuring that local and Indigenous peoples have agency in how landscapes, seascapes, wildlife, and natural resources are managed.

Education and awareness have been powerful drivers of change. School outreach programmes reached thousands of students with lessons on biodiversity, climate change, and marine protection. On Chiloane and Inharingue islands, turtle conservation education was delivered to local fishers and families, strengthening understanding of the need to protect endangered nesting species, especially across mangrove networks along Coutada 5’s coastline. Community days and celebrations also created space for dialogue. During the June 1st Children’s Day, more than 600 people gathered to mark the occasion with conservation-themed activities. On World Ranger Day, the spotlight turned to Akashinga Rangers themselves, showcasing their courage to local communities and inspiring pride in their work.

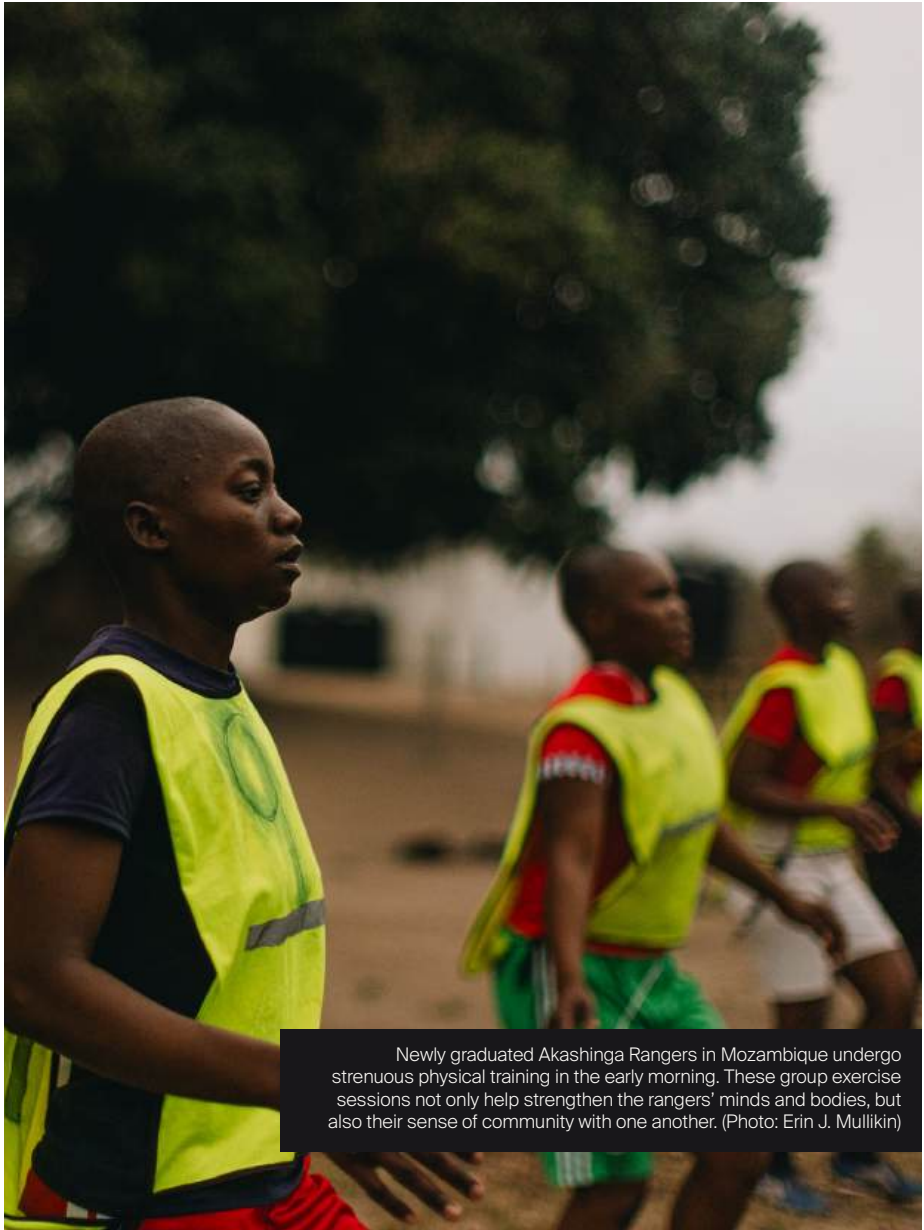
Ranger capacity also grew substantially in 2024. A new cohort of 28 women rangers graduated in July, bolstering the force in Coutada 5 and reinforcing Akashinga’s commitment to women’s leadership in frontline conservation. Across Zimbabwe and Mozambique, 48 new Akashinga Rangers were trained and deployed through rigorous

selection and training courses led by LEAD Ranger instructors. Two new ranger posts were established along the Save River and Baobab area, supported by more than 40 km of new patrol roads, expanding coverage in areas previously vulnerable to illegal activity.

Community welfare was another anchor of 2024. Severe drought and recurring crop losses left many families vulnerable, so Akashinga supported food aid distributions across eight locations. Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) also brought serious challenges, as elephants and hippos raided fields and threatened livelihoods. Akashinga Rangers responded to over 60 HWC

incidents, providing immediate relief, guiding mitigation strategies, and offering long-term solutions such as crop protection measures.

Infrastructure development provided tangible benefits. After Zimuala Village School was destroyed by wildfire, Akashinga began contributing to its reconstruction, ensuring children could return to class. At Dois Mil Village, a solar-powered borehole was installed, supplying reliable access to clean water in a region where wells often run dry. These interventions underline Akashinga’s commitment to building trust and resilience: conservation succeeds when communities see and feel its benefits.



Newly graduated Akashinga Rangers in Mozambique undergo strenuous physical training in the early morning. These group exercise sessions not only help strengthen the rangers’ minds and bodies, but also their sense of community with one another. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin)



In Mozambique, Law Enforcement Supervisor Valentina Ceciliano Feliz engages with community members, reflecting Akashinga’s commitment to building trust, dialogue, and shared responsibility for protecting people and wildlife. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Building on these foundations, Akashinga also strengthened direct community participation in conservation. Families voluntarily pledged to their reduce reliance on illegal hunting, and in some cases, surrendered snares as symbolic acts of change. Such actions reflect a shift in local attitudes: conservation is no longer perceived as external enforcement but as a community-led path to security and prosperity.

Livelihood opportunities reinforced that shift. Turtle guardians, drawn from coastal communities, patrolled nesting beaches

to protect hatchlings, creating jobs that link income directly to marine protection. Community gardens and sustainable agriculture initiatives were expanded, addressing food insecurity while reducing reliance on unsustainable resource use.

Health support also became a vital bridge between conservation and human well-being. Akashinga-sponsored clinics and mobile outreaches brought essential services into remote villages where access is otherwise limited, reinforcing the principle that protecting ecosystems goes hand in hand with caring for the people who call

them home. Finally, 2024 was a year of recognition. Mozambique’s conservation leaders – rangers, community representatives, and scientists – were included in regional and global platforms such as the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA). Their voices carried beyond Coutada 5, demonstrating how local leadership and lived experience can shape conservation strategies not just nationally, but globally.



Along Mozambique's coastline, Akashinga works to protect vital mangrove networks — ecosystems that shield communities from storms, store carbon, and provide nurseries for marine life. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Planet

In 2024, Akashinga's work in Mozambique focused on protecting the extraordinary biodiversity of Coutada 5's terrestrial and marine ecosystems through enhanced enforcement, scientific monitoring, and safeguarding critical habitats.

Biodiversity Monitoring

Regular field surveys documented healthy populations of kudu, nyala, suni, impala, vervet monkeys, and baboons, with data feeding into long-term trend analysis for Coutada 5. These observations confirmed a stabilisation of key species, thanks to consistent patrol presence and the removal of threats such as traps and snares. Across the year, Akashinga Rangers conducted 601 patrols and 48 joint operations, resulting in 25 arrests and the confiscation of 954 snares, 399 steel traps, and multiple firearms and bows. More than 800 traps, arrows, and other hunting implements were either confiscated or voluntarily surrendered by community members, easing direct pressure on wildlife. Biodiversity monitoring recorded 921 wildlife sightings — a 144% increase from 2023 — highlighting the tangible impact of these efforts.

Human–Wildlife Coexistence

Akashinga Rangers successfully managing 60 incidents involving elephants, hippos, and other species. Additionally,, four local leaders were trained in human-wildflct conflict resolution, embedding knowledge within communities to respond more effectively to future challenges.

Marine and Turtle Conservation

On Chiloane and Inharingue islands, the *Guardas de Tartarugas*

(Turtle Guards) led protection of nesting beaches throughout the season. Their work included daily patrols, monitoring by-catch, and collaborating with coastal police to deter poaching of marine species. In 2024, ten local fishers were trained to join turtle protection efforts. Scientific partners deployed 21 satellite and 31 acoustic tags on green, hawksbill, and loggerhead turtles, providing the first detailed migratory maps for this region. Large-scale coastal clean-up campaigns in September mobilised entire villages, restoring fragile habitats and reinforcing the link between healthy ecosystems and resilient livelihoods.

Mangrove Protection

Coutada 5's mangrove forests account for nearly 10% of Mozambique's national coverage, anchoring both biodiversity and climate resilience. In 2024, Akashinga piloted restoration projects while working with coastal families to reduce unsustainable harvesting. These mangroves protect shorelines from storms, sustain fisheries, and store carbon, making them one of the most critical ecosystems for the future of coastal communities.

Technology in Conservation

Advanced tools such as EarthRanger and Skylight AI were rolled out across operations, transforming data collection and enforcement in Coutada 5. These systems provided real-time tracking of turtle patrols, poaching incidents, and even community meetings, improving coordination between rangers and law enforcement while ensuring transparency and accountability. By combining indigenous knowledge with cutting-edge tools, Akashinga is building a stronger, data-driven foundation for conservation management in Mozambique.



In Mozambique, Akashinga Rangers confiscated 954 wire snares, 399 steel traps, firearms, and bows and arrows — such as those pictured here — dismantling the tools of poaching to protect wildlife and restore balance to the ecosystem. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin)

2024 Impact Stats.

601

Patrols + joint patrols with law enforcement agencies

921

Wildlife sightings recorded by Akashinga Rangers*

25

Wildlife crime arrests

54

Akashinga Rangers actively employed in Mozambique

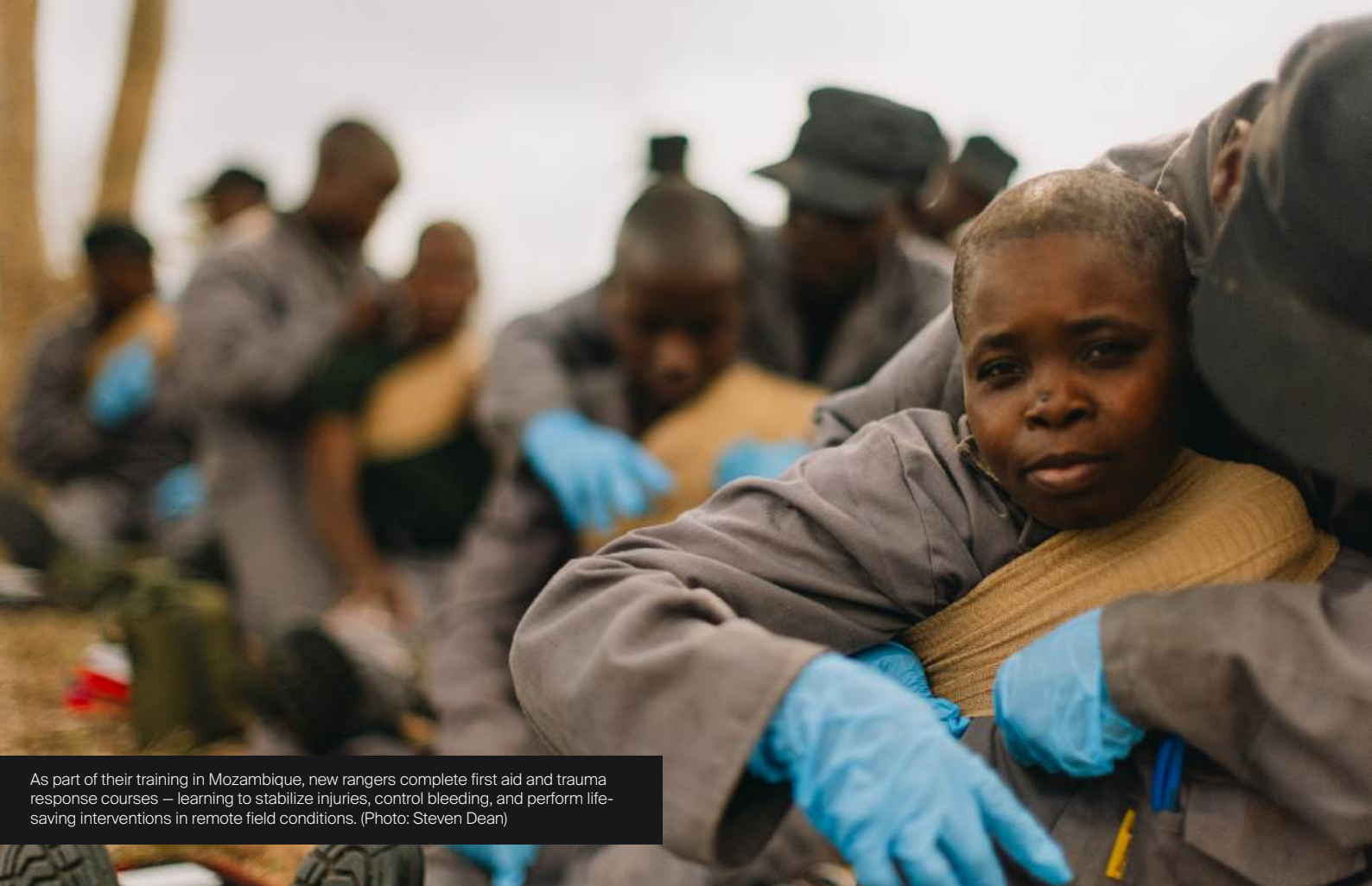
954

Wire snares recovered

60

Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) cases mitigated

* Species Sighted While on Patrol: Guineafowl, Tortoise, Baboon, Hare, Grey Duiker, Bushpig, Nyala, Suni, Impala, Python, Vervet Monkeys, Baboons, Kudu, Porcupine, Hippopotamus, Ant Bear, and Cane Rat



As part of their training in Mozambique, new rangers complete first aid and trauma response courses — learning to stabilize injuries, control bleeding, and perform life-saving interventions in remote field conditions. (Photo: Steven Dean)



Akashinga Rangers Ana Celidion (left) and Inês Simão Josefa (right) connect with community members who live within C5. Their collaboration is key to safeguarding both people and nature. (Photo: Steven Dean)



Akashinga's marine programme works to safeguard coastal ecosystems, protecting biodiversity while supporting the communities who depend on these waters. (Photo: Dr Jess Williams)



Beneath Mozambique's waters, seagrass meadows are vital ecosystems that store carbon, shelter marine life, and protect coastlines. (Photo: Dr Jess Williams)



Students and their teacher celebrate outside Zimuala Primary School in Mozambique, standing proudly in front of their nearly rebuilt classrooms — a new space for learning and opportunity. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin)

Future

Looking ahead, Akashinga's Mozambique programme is positioning itself for long-term resilience by deepening partnerships, building institutional foundations, and embedding conservation within government planning frameworks. In 2024, the approval of the Coutada 5 Zonation Plan by ANAC and its presentation to district authorities established a clear vision for land management, while preparations for the Machanga District Land Use Plan signalled the beginning of a broader alignment between conservation and local development priorities.

Infrastructure expansion is also setting the stage for greater operational capacity in the years ahead. The near completion of the new Operations Centre in Coutada 5 marks a major milestone, providing a permanent hub for ranger coordination, biodiversity monitoring, and law enforcement collaboration. This facility anchors Akashinga's vision of conservation as a professional, enduring presence in central

Mozambique.

At the same time, Akashinga is building systems that strengthen accountability and adaptive management. Digital platforms like EarthRanger and Skylight AI are now integrated into day-to-day operations, ensuring that patrols, turtle nesting data, poaching incidents, and even community meetings are tracked and archived. These innovations will allow the programme to expand its footprint while maintaining transparency and efficiency.

Community leadership remains essential to the future of Coutada 5. The registration of Community-Based Natural Resource Management Committees (CBNRMCs) is underway, giving local voices a legal and lasting role in shaping land and resource governance. In the year ahead, Akashinga will continue to invest in training and equipping these committees, supported by technical consultants and district partners.

Marine protection will also play an increasingly central role. The *Guardas de Tartarugas* initiative has proven that fishers

and coastal families can lead the defence of endangered species and ecosystems. Building on this success, Akashinga and its partners are developing frameworks for community-managed marine protected areas, where coastal communities will oversee turtle nesting beaches, mangroves, and nearshore fisheries. As part of this vision, Akashinga is looking to grow the Turtle Guard team, expanding patrol coverage and ensuring that more local livelihoods are tied directly to conservation outcomes.

In 2025, Akashinga will build on this momentum by completing priority projects such as the Zimuala School reconstruction and additional boreholes in communities, advancing land-use planning, and scaling mangrove restoration pilots into community-wide initiatives. Together, these investments — in infrastructure, governance, technology, marine protection, and local leadership — are securing a future in which people and wildlife can thrive side by side. By embedding conservation into the political, economic, and cultural fabric of the region, Akashinga is ensuring that the gains of today become the enduring legacy of tomorrow.



Akashinga's Turtle Guard surveys the mangrove ecosystems of Mozambique, ensuring these vital coastal forests remain protected. Mangroves play a key role in carbon storage, biodiversity, and coastal resilience. (Photo: Dr Jess Williams)

Ana Celidion, Akashinga Ranger in Mozambique, photographed in August 2024. From the difficult selection process where she first stood out for her determination, to now serving on the frontlines of conservation in Coutada 5, Ana's journey reflects just how far she has come – embodying courage, leadership, and resilience. (Photo: Steven Dean)



Candidates during the first ranger selection in Mozambique take a short meal break amidst the grueling process. Ana Celidion, far right in the pink shirt, would go on to graduate as part of Akashinga's inaugural class of all female rangers in the country. (Photo: Albertus Louw)



Ranger Spotlight: Ana Celidion Leads with Courage in Coutada 5.

When Ana Celidion joined Akashinga in 2023, she carried not only her own aspirations but also the doubts and fears of those closest to her. As one of the first Akashinga Rangers to graduate in Mozambique, her journey has been one of courage, conviction, and the quiet power of leadership.

At first, her community in Coutada 5 was hesitant. Some feared that Akashinga's presence would threaten their livelihoods, while her parents worried about the dangers their daughter would face on patrol. "They were afraid that one day I would go into the field and not return home," Ana recalls.

But Ana's determination was unshaken. She saw in Akashinga not just a job, but a chance to live her dream of protecting the environment and building a better future for her community. Over time, as Akashinga deepened its focus on community participation

and development, perceptions began to change. The same rangers who were once met with suspicion are now recognised, greeted, and respected by local residents.

Today, Ana's leadership extends far beyond her daily patrols. She has become a role model in her community, showing that protecting wildlife and supporting human prosperity can go hand in hand. Her bravery embodies the meaning of Akashinga – "the Brave Ones" – and inspires others to embrace courage, even in the face of fear.

Ana's story reflects the heart of Akashinga's mission: developing skilled leaders who stand at the frontlines of conservation and community transformation. Through her strength, she reminds us that leadership is not just about guiding others, it is about daring to live one's values, no matter the obstacles.

Botswana.

Since 2021, Akashinga has partnered with **Kalahari Research and Conservation (KRC)** to protect 9.4 million acres (3.8 million hectares) across the Greater Kgalagadi ecosystem. This collaboration strengthens one of Southern Africa’s most important wildlife corridors, linking people, predators, and prey across vast desert and savannah. Our joint efforts focus on developing sustainable social and economic opportunities alongside conservation, ensuring that communities benefit directly from healthy ecosystems. From training new conservation scouts to supporting innovative approaches in wildlife monitoring and community engagement, the partnership demonstrates how large-scale conservation can be both locally rooted and globally significant.



An Immensity of Life

Akashinga’s conservation efforts in Botswana have continued to strengthen through its growing partnership with Kalahari Research and Conservation (KRC). In 2024, we teamed up with Modisa Wildlife Project to expand our conservation footprint into KD15, bringing an additional 1.93 million acres under protection.

Our operations in Botswana evolve within a landscape that is both rich in natural resources and complex in its governance and social dynamics.

Botswana is internationally recognized for its strong conservation ethos and vast protected areas and Akashinga’s focus on community-led conservation aligns with the country’s Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) model. However, realities on the ground can complicate effective delivery.

KRC operates in Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) KD1, KD2, and KD15, encompassing communities from Bakgalagadi and Basarwa (also known as San Bushmen) ethnic groups.

These communities have experienced a dramatic cultural shift over recent decades—from nomadic hunting and gathering to sedentary village life governed through formal Trust structures. They are now key stakeholders in the management of natural resources, including wildlife protection and land stewardship. The communities involved in these WMAs include:

- **KD1:** Ukhwi (669 residents), Ngwatle (461), and Ncaang (360)
- **KD2:** Zutshwa (613 residents)
- **KD15:** Khawa (1,299 residents)

These regions represent not only ecologically vital landscapes but also socially complex and politically sensitive environments. The communities face challenges linked to geographic isolation, climate change, limited infrastructure, poverty, and educational gaps, which in turn impact their capacity to fully participate in and benefit from conservation efforts. This is exacerbated by the decision-

making structures within many Community Trusts, which remain vulnerable to abuse and corruption. Governance is often hampered by inconsistent priorities among trust members, or inactivity by some elected members which means decisions are often made by only a few individuals.

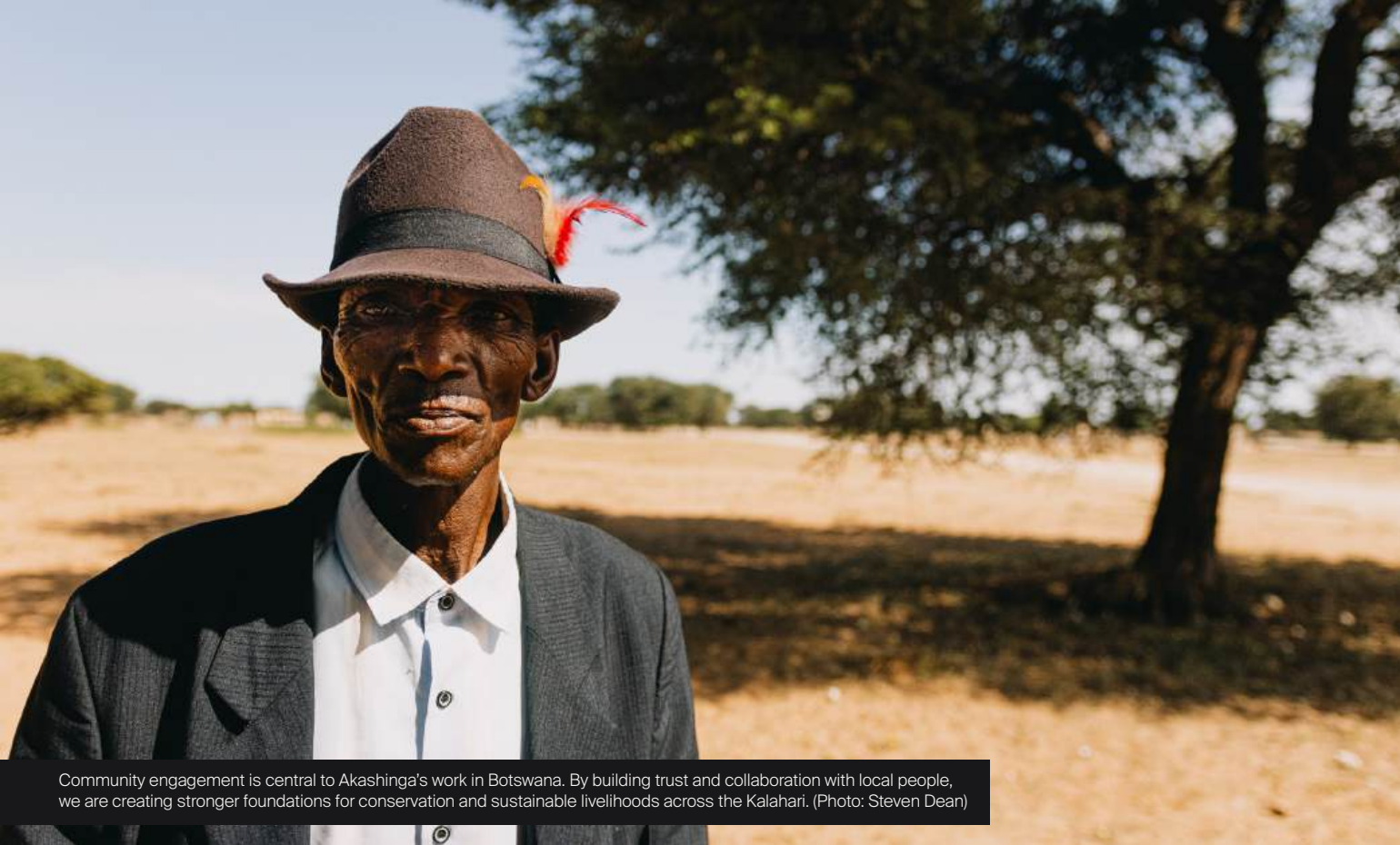
Against this backdrop, the partnership between Akashinga and KRC is increasingly important. By offering sustainable social and financial opportunities, this initiative aims to create long-term ecological and economic impact, shifting from exclusionary and towards enabling conservation practices. Our work supports not only environmental protection but also the inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly women, in shaping the future of their landscapes. Strengthening governance structures, improving literacy and participation, and fostering new partnerships will be vital in unlocking the full potential of community-based conservation in the areas we manage, but also across Botswana as a whole.

“ By expanding our protection to KD15, we are ensuring that more wildlife can thrive in connected, expansive ecosystems. The bigger the area we conserve, the more robust and resilient the wildlife population becomes. Without these critical connections, we risk the disappearance of numerous species. ”

— **Dr Glyn Maude**
KRC FOUNDER & CEO



A yellow mongoose (*Cynictis penicillata*) pauses in the fading light of the Kalahari. These small, agile carnivores are an important part of the ecosystem, thriving in Botswana’s grasslands, savannas, and semi-desert habitats where they play a role in balancing insect and rodent populations. (Photo: Steven Dean)



Community engagement is central to Akashinga's work in Botswana. By building trust and collaboration with local people, we are creating stronger foundations for conservation and sustainable livelihoods across the Kalahari. (Photo: Steven Dean)

People

In 2024, Akashinga and KRC supported a variety of grassroots community projects designed to promote education, social welfare, youth engagement, and inclusive community development. All projects were identified, prioritised, and coordinated by Community Development Committees and Community Trusts to ensure local relevance and ownership. Highlights include:

Education Support: Akashinga provided annual stationery supplies and sponsored the Letswai Primary School prize-giving event in Zutshwa, encouraging academic excellence and boosting school morale. We purchased a much-needed photocopier for Ncaang Primary, installed outdoor play equipment for a community creche in Ngwatle, and provided similar educational resources – including electrification – for Zutshwa Preschool.

Sports and Youth Engagement: Donations were made to football and netball tournaments, traditional dance troupes, and to supply equipment for horse races in Ukhwi, celebrating local culture and supporting youth participation. In addition, we facilitated the development of rugby fields

and organised rugby training programmes for youth in Zutshwa, Ngwatle, and Ukhwi, promoting teamwork, leadership, and physical well-being.

Community Infrastructure: In Zutshwa, Ngwatle, and Ncaang, Akashinga supported the construction of shaded meeting areas and provided chairs and cooking pots, enhancing spaces for public dialogue and governance gatherings. Ngwatle also benefited from the electrification of the community-owned shop and the refurbishment of its ageing solar system. The Ukhwi guest house received a similar solar upgrade, while a new drinking water tap was installed to serve the community in Gapebana ward.

Social Welfare: We partnered with Women Against Rape to run gender-based violence awareness and education programmes in Zutshwa. These efforts responded to reports of abuse, particularly affecting women and children, including sexual exploitation and child labour.

Although some of the projects listed above provided targeted support for specific needs,

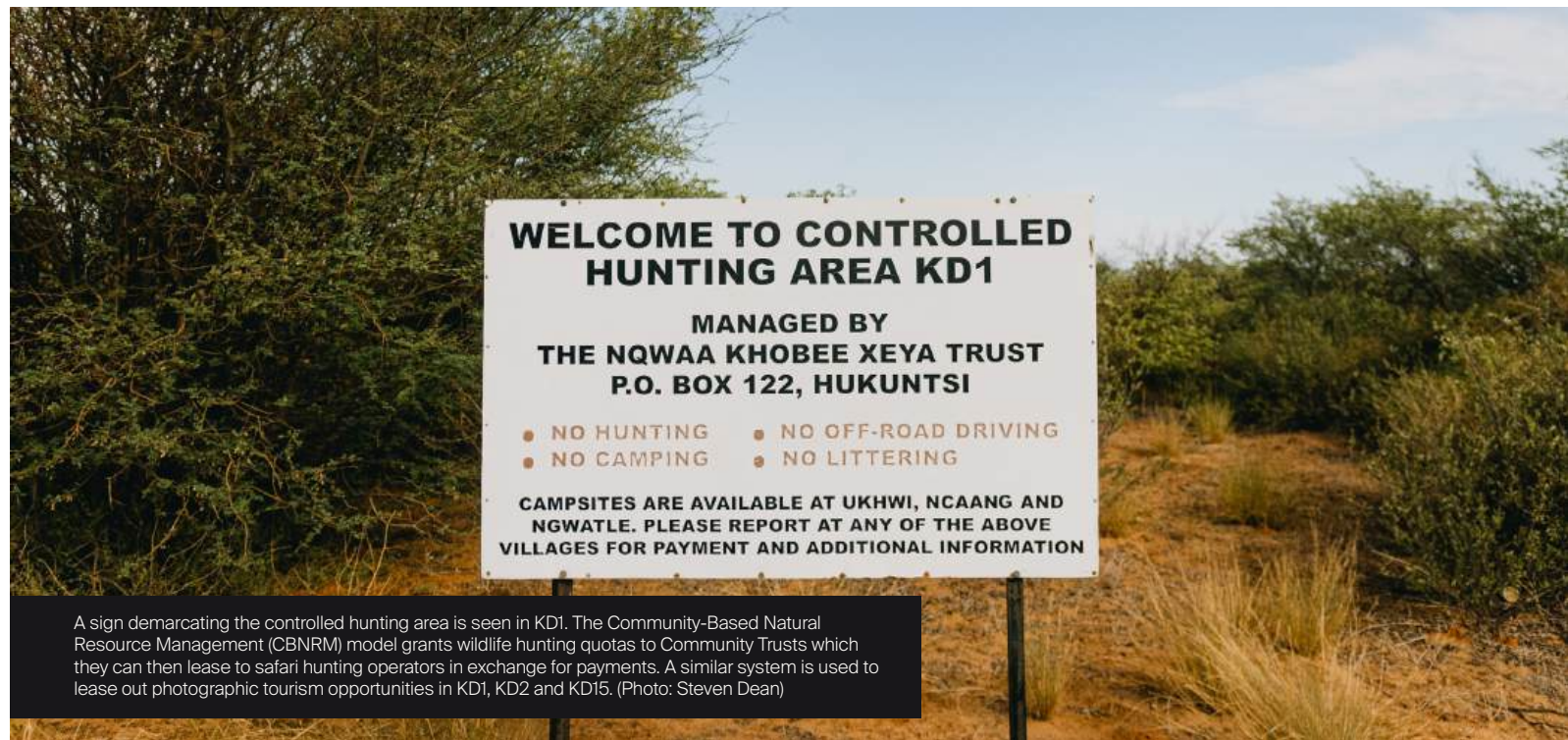
the majority were designed to benefit the general community.

In addition to these programmes and developments, all five communities receive direct income from hunting or photographic tourism fees (or a combination of both), benefiting a total of 3,402 people. Walk Botswana Safaris (WBS) partners with KRC on the hunting and tourism agreements in KD1 and 2, strategically providing the relevant licences that allow our partnership to oversee these operations. This enables us to work closely with Community Trusts, ensuring equitable distribution of tourism fees into well-planned projects which maximise benefits for each community while also contributing to the conservation of the concession areas.

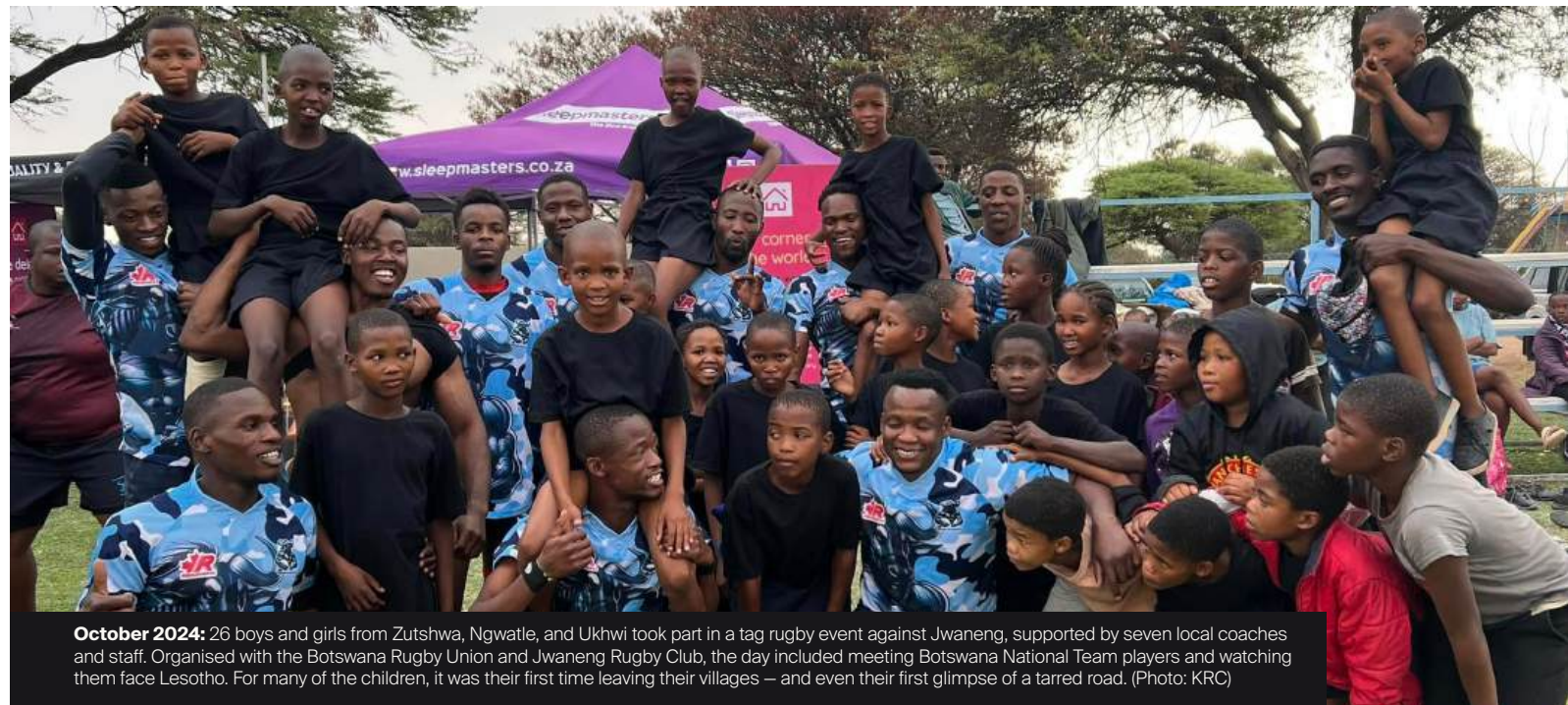
Tourism, alongside conservation, remains a critical driver for preserving Botswana's wildlife. Akashinga's holistic approach ensures that not only is wildlife protected, but that surrounding communities also benefit from sustainable and contextually relevant economic development.



Students at Letswai Primary in Zutshwa celebrate a prize-giving event supported by Akashinga. From providing annual stationery supplies and photocopiers to installing preschool play equipment and electricity, Akashinga's education initiatives are boosting morale and encouraging academic excellence across local schools. (Photo: Steven Dean)



A sign demarcating the controlled hunting area is seen in KD1. The Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) model grants wildlife hunting quotas to Community Trusts which they can then lease to safari hunting operators in exchange for payments. A similar system is used to lease out photographic tourism opportunities in KD1, KD2 and KD15. (Photo: Steven Dean)



October 2024: 26 boys and girls from Zutshwa, Ngwatle, and Ukhwi took part in a tag rugby event against Jwaneng, supported by seven local coaches and staff. Organised with the Botswana Rugby Union and Jwaneng Rugby Club, the day included meeting Botswana National Team players and watching them face Lesotho. For many of the children, it was their first time leaving their villages – and even their first glimpse of a tarred road. (Photo: KRC)

In 2024, Akashinga intensified its biodiversity conservation efforts in south-western Botswana – one of Southern Africa’s most ecologically significant, yet under-protected landscapes. Through KRC, we work across this vast dryland ecosystem, situated between two of the country’s most iconic protected areas: the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and the Central Kalahari Game Reserve.

While not formally protected, this corridor serves as a vital buffer zone and ecological connector, supporting a rich array of nomadic herbivores such as eland, blue wildebeest, gemsbok, red hartebeest, and springbok. These species depend on large, unfenced landscapes due to unpredictable rainfall and seasonal resource shifts. Notably, many of these animals spend the majority of their time outside the national parks – within community lands – making the conservation of these areas essential for the long-term sustainability of Botswana’s dryland ecosystem.

Our presence in this landscape goes beyond traditional conservation; we work directly with local communities – many of whom previously depended on hunting and gathering – to foster a model of sustainable co-existence between people and wildlife. By assisting communities in managing their hunting quotas responsibly, promoting tourism, and providing alternatives to bushmeat economies, Akashinga helps to demonstrate the tangible benefits of living in harmony with nature. We also play an active role in mitigating human–wildlife conflict, particularly in managing livestock grazing areas and preventing retaliatory killings of large carnivores. This year, our conservation scouts in Zutshwa continued to monitor livestock movements, ensuring they remained within agreed grazing boundaries (within 10 km of the village) and recording signs of

carnivores or illegal activities.

Our conservation strategy is underpinned by a strong partnership with Botswana’s law enforcement agencies, which is essential to uphold the legal framework for wildlife protection. These collaborations enhance our anti-poaching operations, ensuring arrests are made within a lawful and human-rights-based approach. Botswana Police Services, the Defence Force, and the Anti-Poaching Unit of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks carry out arrests in the areas we manage, and the partnership has contributed to a significant reduction in illegal hunting in the area.

2024 marked a significant year in our wildlife monitoring initiatives. We continued our long-term research programmes focused on some of Botswana’s most threatened and iconic species: African lion, African wild dog, and five vulture species. Through satellite collaring, we monitored movement patterns and group dynamics of lions and wild dogs, especially around settlement areas. Lion Recovery Fund and WildiZe Foundation provided support for collaring and surveying lions, and covered the costs for a PhD student to participate in the study. Our findings revealed a critical insight: these carnivores spend most of their time outside protected parks, reinforcing the importance of conserving the broader landscape.

We also tagged vultures to monitor feeding behaviour and help us detect possible threats to the carrion species.

While our efforts are making progress, the region continues to face pressing conservation challenges. Wildlife populations are showing signs of stress, particularly large herbivores that are becoming increasingly elusive – likely a direct result of illegal

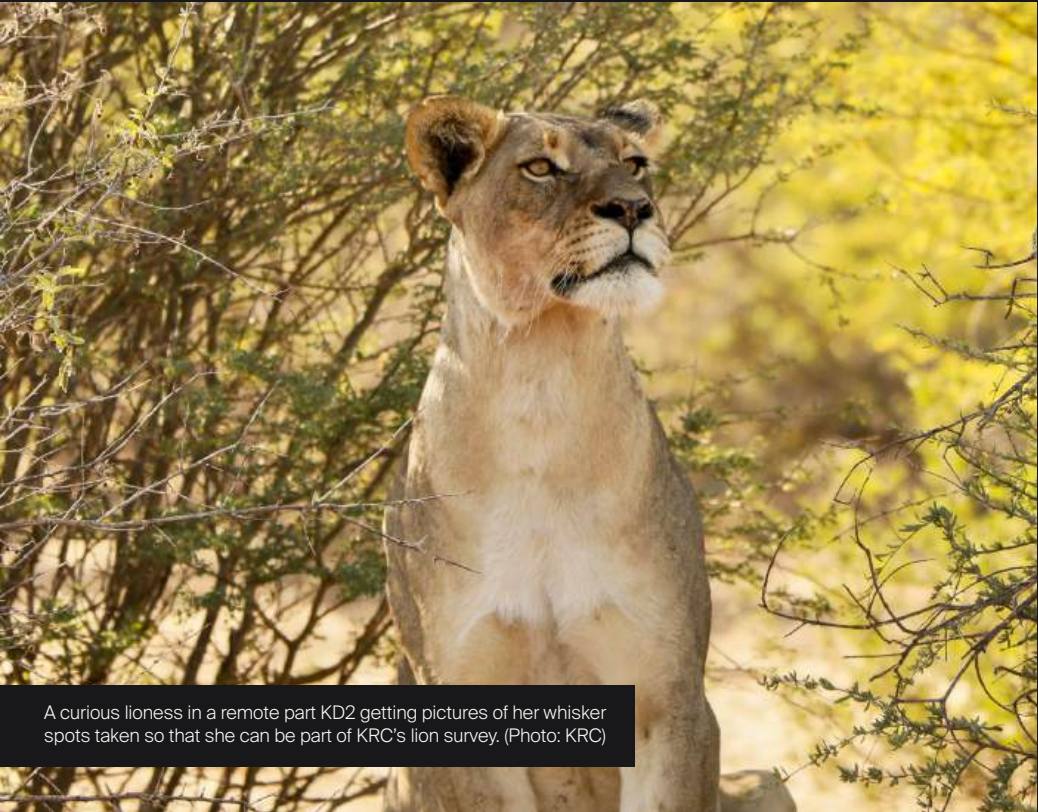
hunting. This year, we recorded 58 human–wildlife conflict incidents between Zutshwa and Ngwatle, the majority of which involved wild dogs and lions, but also included attacks on livestock from leopard, black-backed jackals, spotted hyaenas, and raptors. These incidents underscore the continued pressure on wildlife from human encroachment, emphasising the urgent need for sustained community engagement and conflict-mitigation strategies.

To support our monitoring work, we expanded our use of solar camera traps across the landscape, including around grazing boundaries, with support from the Global Environment Facility’s Small Grants Programme. These camera traps have proved invaluable in tracking wildlife and livestock movement.

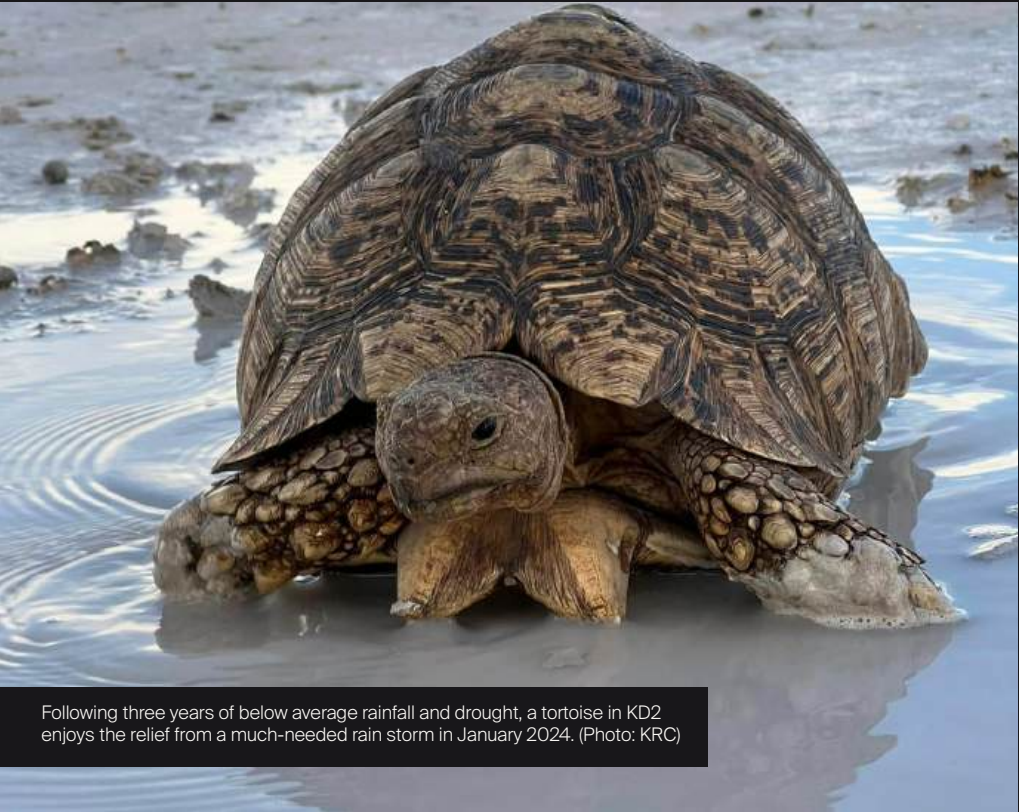
Operating in this vast and remote terrain is not without difficulties. The region’s limited road infrastructure means that much of our wildlife research and anti-poaching patrols require off-road driving, significantly increasing vehicle maintenance costs. Additionally, limited mobile phone coverage necessitates the extensive use of satellite communication, which restricts real-time coordination between field and base teams.

Despite these challenges, the Akashinga/KRC conservation team in Botswana continues to serve as a vital force in protecting a unique and under-represented ecosystem. Through scientific research, community and governmental partnerships which provide boots-on-the-ground protection, we are building a sustainable model that secures both wildlife habitats and local livelihoods – ensuring this landscape remains a living, breathing link in Southern Africa’s conservation mosaic.

An aerial view captures a herd of oryx traversing the vast Kalahari landscape in Botswana. (Photo: Steven Dean)



A curious lioness in a remote part KD2 getting pictures of her whisker spots taken so that she can be part of KRC’s lion survey. (Photo: KRC)



Following three years of below average rainfall and drought, a tortoise in KD2 enjoys the relief from a much-needed rain storm in January 2024. (Photo: KRC)





Community Scouts and Boom Gate ladies working together to try help bring a brighter future to the village of Zutshwa. (Photo: KRC)

Future

In 2024, Akashinga deepened its investment in long-term conservation by strengthening local leadership, building capacity, and creating new opportunities that position both people and nature to thrive. Our approach to sustainability focuses not only on environmental protection, but also on empowering communities, nurturing the next generation of conservationists, and fostering resilience through education, employment, and leadership development.

Capacity Building & Leadership Development

Recognising that successful conservation is people-powered, we focused on enhancing the skills and confidence of local conservation leaders.

Twenty community conservation scouts from Zutshwa and Ngwatle received intensive training in bush survival and first aid, delivered by expert instructors from LEAD Ranger Zimbabwe. This training prepared them for field-based conservation work and included certification upon completion. A week before the instructors arrived, a Zutshwa resident had been mauled by a leopard, making the training not only relevant to the KRC scouts but also an asset to the wider community, whose remote location makes even basic medical treatment challenging.

We also conducted a 10-day specialist tracker training course through EcoTraining, involving 16 participants (eight women and eight men), in keeping with the San culture's long-standing egalitarian values and ensuring gender-inclusive skills development in one of the most critical areas of fieldwork.

Tracking is more than a practical skill; it is a bridge between past and present. Once integral to survival, it now offers opportunities in conservation and eco-tourism – sectors crucial to the region's sustainable future.

These initiatives represent a long-term investment in local conservation leadership, equipping community members with the skills and expertise needed to monitor wildlife, safeguard ecosystems, and respond effectively in the field.

Expanding Local Employment in Conservation

Employment remains one of the most direct and transformative ways in which conservation can benefit communities. This year saw a significant expansion of our team, creating dozens of new roles across four key villages:

Conservation Scouts: *These scouts play a frontline role in managing livestock movements, preventing rangeland degradation, and reducing human-wildlife conflict.*

- **Zutshwa:** 10 scouts
- **Ngwatle:** 12 scouts
- **Ncaang:** 7 scouts
- **Ukhwi:** 7 scouts

New Positions Hired:

- **Horse herders** hired to support the introduction of community horse patrols
- **Boom gate attendants:** 10 total employed in Zutshwa and Ngwatle
- **Projects Community Coordinator:** Hired in Zutshwa to manage day-to-day operations and staff

- Employed in Zutshwa on behalf of the Community Trust
- **Rugby Development Staff:** 6 employed across Zutshwa, Ngwatle, and Ukhwi
- **Human-Wildlife Conflict Data Recorders:** Employed in Zutshwa, Ukhwi, Ncaang, and Ngwatle
- **Project Manager in Khawa:** Appointed to oversee the implementation of tourism development projects

This broad employment initiative has not only improved livelihoods but also strengthened community ownership of conservation efforts, a factor vital to long-term success.

Youth Engagement & Education

Investing in the next generation is key to achieving a sustainable conservation future. In 2024, Akashinga continued to integrate education and conservation awareness into its community outreach.

This included rugby leagues and festivals which combined sport with conservation messaging, engaging primary school pupils and the wider community through pre-game talks and environmental awareness activities. Additionally, we created school support programmes as needed, providing educational materials and performance incentives across four primary schools, and delivering toys, games, and early learning resources to pre-school children in Ngwatle village.

These initiatives support academic achievement and nurture early awareness of conservation, planting the seeds for a future generation of environmental stewards.

Measuring Our Impact

Key achievements in capacity building and community involvement in 2024 included:

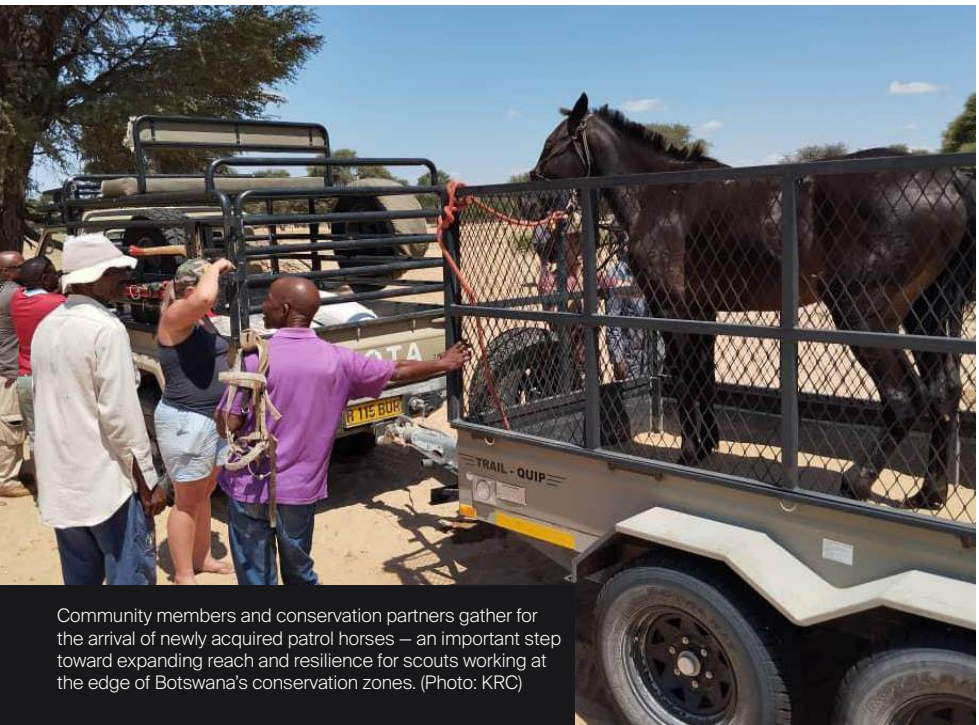
- **20 community conservation scouts** trained and certified in first aid and bush survival
- **16 individuals** (eight women and eight men) completed a professional tracker training course
- **More than 40 community members employed** across conservation and support roles
- **Four schools** supported with educational and extracurricular programmes, reaching dozens of pupils



LEAD Instructor Asiyatu Phiri supports a community scout learning how to pack a wound during Ranger Life Saver training in Ngwatle. The trainers were impressed with the enthusiasm and focus of the learners. (Photo: Steven Dean)



Participants of the 10-day specialized tracking course are pictured during a break in training. Each female tracker expressed pride in mastering technical abilities traditionally dominated by men. They also voiced a shared hope: to see more women joining the field, gaining confidence, and supporting their families. (Photo: KRC)



Community members and conservation partners gather for the arrival of newly acquired patrol horses – an important step toward expanding reach and resilience for scouts working at the edge of Botswana's conservation zones. (Photo: KRC)

“ In Tswana culture, you wouldn't expect women to be rangers and be out in the bush patrolling. But with this new model, it's an opportunity for them to showcase their skills. It might take some time, but with this training coming in, we should see a huge difference in terms of women in conservation. ”

— **Tshepo Moatswi**
KRC PROJECT COORDINATOR

These metrics reflect our commitment to measurable, community-driven conservation outcomes.

Challenges & Community Dynamics

While our programmes continue to gain momentum, we remain mindful of persistent challenges. The influence of a small number of individuals involved in illegal hunting continues to create resistance within some parts of the community. These actors often attempt to undermine conservation efforts by spreading misinformation or discouraging participation. However, we are encouraged by strong community support and leadership – especially in villages such as Zutshwa – where the majority of residents have embraced conservation as a pathway to prosperity and security.

A highlight of 2024 came during a community meeting in Zutshwa, where elders, youth, and local leaders gathered to reflect on the impact of our conservation work. The message was clear: people are seeing real, tangible benefits. Residents praised the employment opportunities, education support, and visible recovery in wildlife. Many expressed hope that Akashinga's involvement – and that of our partners – would continue for years to come. This shift in community perception marks a critical turning point for the landscape and for long-term conservation success.

Looking Forward

The future of conservation in this region lies in the hands of local people, and 2024 has shown just how much can be achieved when communities are equipped, empowered, and included. As we move into 2025 and beyond, Akashinga remains committed to building resilient ecosystems and resilient communities, side by side.

Namibia.

In 2024, Akashinga partnered with [Conserve Global](#) to support conservation in Namibia’s Kunene Highlands. Covering 2.5 million acres (1 million hectares), our role as a funding partner strengthens governance within conservancies, advances rangeland restoration and carbon initiatives, and supports human–wildlife coexistence.



Majestic and rugged, the Kunene Highlands in Namibia is a breathtaking panorama of wilderness where ancient landscapes meet vast skies. (Photo: Peter Chadwick)

A Landscape of Connection

Akashinga’s partnership in Namibia centres on the Kunene Highlands, a 10,000 km² corridor connecting Etosha National Park with the pro-Namib conservancies bordering the Skeleton Coast National Park. This vast, rugged region is one of southern Africa’s most critical ecological linkages, supporting healthy populations of elephants, predators, and herbivores, including zebras and kudu, alongside pastoralist communities.

In 2024, we strengthened our collaboration with Conserve Global, and their partner Kunene Conservation (KC), investing in governance systems, community livelihoods, and ecological resilience across four conservancies: Orupupa, Ozondundu, Okangundumba, and Ehi-rovipuka. Unlike

other Akashinga operational areas, our role in Namibia is as a funding partner, resourcing and enabling the local institutions that lead on-the-ground work.

The Kunene Highlands are both ecologically rich and socially complex. For generations, pastoralist families have lived in close connection with their land, relying on livestock, subsistence farming, and shared water systems in a landscape marked by aridity and extremes of climate. Communities now manage resources through conservancy structures recognised under Namibia’s renowned Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) model. While this system has delivered important conservation successes, it also faces

challenges: limited infrastructure, geographic isolation, climate change, and the pressures of poverty and inequality all constrain local capacity to fully benefit from conservation.

Akashinga’s support is designed to strengthen governance and accountability within conservancies, reinforce human–wildlife coexistence, and unlock opportunities tied to rangeland restoration, carbon markets, and tourism enterprise. By investing in both people and ecosystems, our partnership is helping to secure the Kunene Highlands as a landscape where biodiversity thrives and local communities share directly in its value.



In Namibia’s Kunene Highlands, a Himba elder gathers firewood against the backdrop of rugged mountains. Community life and sustainable resource use remain central to Akashinga’s conservation partnerships in this remote landscape.(Photo: Peter Chadwick)

2024 Impact in Namibia.

People

In Namibia’s Kunene Highlands, Akashinga is supporting Conserve Global and their local partner Kunene Conservation (KC) to strengthen community-led conservation across one of the country’s most remote and ecologically significant landscapes. Through our funding, communities in Orupupa, Ozondundu, Okangundumba, and Ehi-rovipuka conservancies are being equipped with new tools for governance, livelihoods, and resilience.

In 2024, a comprehensive socio-economic baseline study was conducted across the Highlands, capturing the perspectives of 241 households, traditional leaders, and conservancy members. This data now serves as the foundation for long-term planning, ensuring that future conservation activities align with community aspirations. At the same time, KC facilitated training sessions for waterpoint committees and caretakers, embedding local ownership of infrastructure and reducing incidents of conflict between people and wildlife.

The introduction of Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) has also been a breakthrough. This participatory approach empowers women and men to co-develop strategies for rangeland rehabilitation, financial literacy, and household resilience. By creating space for equitable decision-making, the programme is building new leadership roles for women in conservancy governance, while reinforcing a culture of collective problem-solving. These investments underscore that successful conservation depends not just on ecological outcomes, but on strengthening the social fabric that supports them.



Community members in the Highlands cultivate crops in the drylands. Strengthening local livelihoods through sustainable land use is central to Akashinga’s conservation partnerships in the region. (Photo: Peter Chadwick)

The Kunene Highlands form a 10,000 km² ecological corridor linking Etosha National Park with the pro-Namib conservancies bordering the Skeleton Coast National Park. This rugged landscape is home to healthy populations of elephants, predators, and herbivores, including zebras and kudu, as well as pastoralist communities who have stewarded these lands for generations. In 2024, Akashinga's funding enabled targeted interventions to safeguard this critical ecosystem.

Joint anti-poaching patrols were reinforced across conservancy borders, increasing the operational reach of Community Game Guards and leading to the removal of snares and traps. These investments not only protect wildlife but also strengthen local institutions charged with frontline enforcement. Human–elephant conflict remained a pressing challenge, but upgrades to solar-powered waterpoints — now fortified with elephant-proof walls — drastically reduced incidents at high-risk sites such as Otjondeka, Okanandjira, and Otjitundua. Alongside this, investments in vegetable gardens are enhancing food security, helping to reduce dependency on fragile grazing lands and mitigating competition with wildlife.

Rangeland restoration emerged as the most urgent ecological priority for the Highlands. In 2024, consultations with Namibian experts and local communities laid the groundwork for a large-scale rehabilitation and carbon credit project, now formally listed on the Verra registry. This initiative represents one of the most ambitious nature-based solutions in the region, designed to restore degraded rangelands into thriving carbon sinks. It has already attracted global interest, with the World Bank and Microsoft among early partners, demonstrating the international significance of this work. Together, these interventions are building ecological resilience in a landscape that is both highly vulnerable to climate change and vital for regional biodiversity.

Elephants gather at a water source in Namibia's Kunene Highlands. (Photo: Matthieu Gallet)



Solar-powered waterpoint in the Kunene Highlands. (Photo: Peter Chadwick)



Trees stand resilient in the expansive Kunene Highlands of Namibia, a testament to nature's enduring strength. (Photo: Peter Chadwick)



Fresh produce growing in a community conservation garden in Orupupa, Kunene Highlands, part of efforts to link sustainable livelihoods with conservation in this vital landscape. (Photo: Peter Chadwick)





Rosy-faced lovebirds (*Agapornis roseicollis*) nest in the rocky cliffs of Orupupa, Kunene Highlands, where protecting habitats helps safeguard the region's unique biodiversity. (Photo: Peter Chadwick)

Future

Akashinga's partnership approach in Namibia is designed to build systems of conservation that endure because they are owned and led by local people. Looking ahead, KC's Service Level Agreements with multiple conservancies — each spanning twenty years — provide a framework for continuity and scale rarely seen in community conservation. In 2024, agreements were signed with Okangundumba and Ozondundu, while engagement began with Ehi-Rovipuka as a precursor to a formal agreement. These long-term commitments ensure that communities are not only participants but custodians of conservation in the Highlands and underpin efforts to expand rangeland rehabilitation, strengthen community game guard networks, and diversify economic opportunities linked to conservation.

Enterprise development is also taking root. In 2024, Akashinga supported Conserve Global in brokering and providing investment for the first tourism joint venture in the Kunene Highlands. At Ekoto, Orupupa Conservancy signed this joint venture with a Namibian tourism operator to develop a mid-market camp, with construction due to begin in 2025. This project is expected to generate jobs, create new revenue streams, and

deepen the direct link between community benefit and biodiversity protection.

Institutional growth remains central to this vision. With Akashinga's support, Kunene Conservation held its first AGM and external audit in 2024, milestones that affirm transparency and accountability. The organisation is also expanding its technical and managerial staff, strengthening its ability to deliver at scale. These developments mark an important step in KC's evolution from a fledgling NGO into a durable institution capable of managing conservation at landscape level.

By investing in governance, infrastructure, natural capital, and enterprise, Akashinga and its partners are helping to secure the Kunene Highlands as one of southern Africa's most important conservation corridors — a place where people, wildlife, and wilderness remain inseparably linked, and where conservation outcomes are designed to last for generations.

Spotlight: Women Leading the Future of Conservation.



Sergeant Margaret Darawanda leads her team during a patrol at Akashinga's Phundundu Reserve in Zimbabwe's Hurungwe region. (Photo: Davina Jogl)

In 2024, Akashinga's impact was measured not only in acres protected or wildlife restored, but in the growing leadership of women across our programmes. From the Zambezi Valley to Mozambique's coast and Botswana's Kalahari, women rangers, supervisors, instructors, and community leaders are carrying forward a model of conservation led from within. Their journeys tell a larger story of courage, resilience, and the transformation of communities through leadership.

From Challenge to Leadership

In April, Akashinga hosted a [virtual event](#) that brought together rangers in Zimbabwe, Sergeant Nyaradzo Hoto and Sergeant Petronella Chigumbura, and supporters from across the globe. The rangers shared their stories in their own words — stories of endurance, of being doubted, and of proving, through courage, that they belonged on the frontline of conservation. For many participants, it was the first time audiences could hear live from women who balance family responsibilities with physically demanding patrols, shifting perceptions

of what leadership looks like in their communities. The theme echoed what our Earth Month reflections revealed: women living closest to nature often feel the impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change most acutely, yet are under-represented in decision-making. By investing in women's leadership, Akashinga addresses this imbalance — ensuring that those most affected are also leading solutions.

Profiles of Courage

Wadzanai 'Wadza' Munemo, [Ranger Supervisor at Phundundu](#), rose from a difficult personal past into a leadership role recognised by her peers and superiors. She balances long deployments with raising her children, while mentoring the next generation of rangers. "I am proud of myself for all those positions because it shows even my boss ... knows that I am doing a good job, and it gives me strength and confidence."

Sergeant Margaret 'Maggie' Darawanda was honoured with the [International](#)

[Ranger Federation Young Ranger Award](#) in 2024, recognising her leadership in patrols, community engagement, and wildlife protection. She dedicated the accolade to her team: "As Akashinga Rangers, we are not just protecting wildlife. We are protecting our communities, we are protecting the environment, we are protecting our future."

Sergeant Nyaradzo Hoto, now Biodiversity Officer, has driven [Akashinga's reforestation work in Zimbabwe](#). This year, she and her team propagated 20,000 indigenous seedlings, sourced from community farmers. "This project has taught me patience and persistence, as nurturing seedlings requires time and careful attention. It reminds me that meaningful change starts with small, dedicated steps."

In 2024, Nyaradzo was invited to attend the [Skoll World Forum in Oxford](#), joining global changemakers to share Akashinga's community-driven model of conservation. Her presence on that stage reflected not only her personal leadership journey, but the growing recognition of women rangers

as influential voices in shaping the future of conservation.

Sergeant Petronella Chigumbira, Deputy Ranger Supervisor and one of the first female recruits in 2017, has risen through the ranks to become a certified LEAD Ranger instructor, training others in advanced fieldwork. In March 2024, her leadership was recognised globally when she was selected to represent Goal 15: Life on Land in Portraits of Progress: Women Powering the Global Goals, a [Vital Voices exhibition](#) at the United Nations. Her resilience is summed up in her own words about ranger training: "That's why we get the name *The Brave Ones*. We survived all that."

Leadership Across Landscapes

Beyond Zimbabwe, women's leadership expanded across our regional programmes. In **Mozambique's Coutada 5**, women graduates of Akashinga's first ranger selection now serve on the frontlines of biodiversity protection. In 2024 they carried out 601 patrols and joint operations, dismantling illegal hunting networks and confiscating hundreds of snares and traps.

Women also contributed to human-wildlife conflict mitigation, supporting communities facing crop raids by elephants and hippos, and joined outreach to fishing villages where [conservation education](#) focused on protecting sea turtles and sustaining local livelihoods.

In **Botswana's Greater Kgalagadi**, Akashinga's women instructors from Zimbabwe played a critical role in training 20 conservation scouts through LEAD Ranger. These scouts, including women, learned bush survival, safety, and ecological monitoring skills, strengthening community-led protection in some of Africa's harshest environments. [Women trackers](#) are now contributing directly to lion monitoring and other ecological research, blending traditional San knowledge with modern conservation science.

Rooted in Community

Across every story lies a common thread:

- Women stepping into roles once closed to them.

- Communities shifting from doubt to respect
- Leadership pathways built through training, mentorship, and opportunity.
- A model of conservation that is inclusive, resilient, and deeply rooted in community.

Looking Ahead

2024 proved that advancing women's leadership is not only possible — it is powerful. At Akashinga, women are not guests in conservation; they are leaders, innovators, and guardians of ecosystems on which we all depend. Their voices, their skills, and their courage are reshaping what conservation looks like in Africa and beyond.

From Phundundu to Coutada 5, from the Kalahari to the United Nations, Akashinga's women are stepping into leadership roles that once seemed impossible. Their journeys signal what is already true: when women lead, nature thrives.



Garase Nai joined our tracking team in Botswana and immediately added value with her own tracking knowledge and bush skills. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Our Donors.

Akashinga has garnered support from a diverse array of donors who believe in our mission to protect the natural world. As we reflect on another year of progress and impact, we are deeply grateful for the unwavering support from our donors. Your generosity and belief in our mission have empowered us to protect wildlife, uplift communities, and inspire change. To our **individual contributors**, thank you for your heartfelt donations. Your personal commitment fuels our daily efforts and brings us closer to our goals. To the **foundations**, your substantial grants have been pivotal in expanding our reach and enhancing our programmes. Your trust in our vision is immensely appreciated. To our **corporate partners**, thank you for integrating our mission into your corporate values and providing both financial support and essential resources. Your partnership amplifies our impact and visibility. To the **NGOs**, your collaboration and funding have strengthened our initiatives and allowed us to share knowledge and resources, creating a stronger, united front for conservation. To the **government bodies**, your grants and support are crucial in driving our mission forward. Your commitment to conservation and gender equality aligns perfectly with our goals. Every contribution has a significant impact. Your support enables us to train and equip more women, protect more wildlife, and foster sustainable communities. Together, we are making a difference. We look forward to continuing this journey together, creating a better future for our planet.

- Anonymous
- Ariel Fund
- Ariel Premium Supply, Inc.
- Australian Embassy in Harare – Direct Aid Program
- Gail W. Berkley
- The Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust
- Nicole Brodeur and Alex Payne
- Cynthia von Buhler and Russell Farhang
- Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
- Danny Bystrak
- Antony Clarey
- Joel Comer
- Cathy and Jack Demos
- Dume Wolverine Foundation
- Joan Egrie
- The Emerald Fund
- Empowered by Light
- EverHope Foundation
- F5
- Farvue Foundation
- Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC) – Resilience Fund
- Alec Goldfield and Lauren Tatsuno
- Head Family Charitable Foundation

- Judith Neilson Foundation
- Connie Kemmerer
- KH Dominion Foundation
- Tom Malzbender
- The Martin Lund Foundation
- Matthew Keith Groves Foundation
- Ramona Mays, The Mays Family Charitable Fund
- Scott & Jessica McClintock Foundation
- Brian and Thayer McGregor
- Earl Minnis
- Julie Mouser and Saro Iskenderian
- New York Community Trust
- Christa Percopo
- Lori Price
- David Reuben
- Marei and Charlene von Saher
- Andrew Shanahan, Andrew’s Airport Parking
- Shared Earth Foundation, Caroline D Gabel
- Trotula Mireille Mulierum Fund, Benjamin Kahl
- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Vegan Grants
- Wildhood Foundation
- Yaffa Foundation

Our Partners.

At Akashinga, our impact is possible because of the partnerships we build. The protection of vast wilderness and coastal ecosystems requires the commitment of many: our host countries, their governments, and their ministries, wildlife institutions, conservation authorities, traditional leaders, and both local and international NGOs. Together, these partners form the backbone of our work, ensuring that conservation is not only effective but deeply rooted in community and national priorities.

We are grateful for their trust, collaboration, and dedication. It is through these relationships that we can advance shared goals, strengthen ecological resilience, and create conservation models that endure.

- Africa Futura Wildlife Restoration
- Binga Rural District Council - Zimbabwe
- Conserve Global
- Hurungwe Rural District Council – Zimbabwe
- Kalahari Research and Conservation
- Machanga District Government - Mozambique
- National Administration for Conservation Areas – ANAC
- National Prosecuting Authority of Zimbabwe
- Peace Parks Foundation
- Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority



Drilling a new borehole at Kalungwizi near our Songo Reserve in Zimbabwe. By expanding clean water access in surrounding villages, Akashinga reduces human-wildlife conflict, supports community health, and strengthens the link between conservation and well-being. (Photo: Steven Dean)

“ I see humanity is at the mouth of a very, very long dark tunnel. And right at the end of that tunnel is a little star, and that’s hope. But it’s no good sitting at the mouth of the tunnel and hoping the star will come. No, we have to roll up our sleeves and crawl under, climb over, work around all the obstacles like climate change, loss of biodiversity, commercial agriculture with its reliance on pesticides and herbicides, poverty, unsustainable lifestyles – all of these kinds of problems. But the good news: for every one of those problems, there are groups of people working to try and solve them. You must get involved with something. You must think about what you do in your daily life, which everybody can do, and realize that you do make a difference. And everyday, you must choose what sort of difference you want to make. ”

— Dr Jane Goodall, DBE
Akashinga Advisory Committee Chair & Patron

Our Leadership.

Akashinga is governed by a Leadership Team, a Steering Committee, and a Board of Directors. Guidance is sought where needed from key partners, industry experts, and the Akashinga Advisory Committee.

Akashinga 2024 Leadership Team

- Damien Mander // Akashinga CEO & Founder
- Melody Westen // Executive Director
- Dominique Noome // Director of Operations Africa
- Glyn Maude // CEO & Founder, KRC Botswana
- Erin Mullikin // Director of Brand & Marketing
- Wayne Cumming // Country Manager, Zimbabwe
- Colin Cloete // General Reserve Manager, Akashinga East Zimbabwe
- Mags Varley // General Reserve Manager, Akashinga West Zimbabwe
- Luís Namanha // General Reserve Manager, Mozambique
- Dr Byron du Preez // Chief Scientist
- Dr Jess Williams // Country Scientist (Mozambique & Zimbabwe)
- Sergeant Nyaradzo Auxilia Hoto // Biodiversity Supervisor (Akashinga East Zimbabwe)
- Henry Macilwaine // Head of Wildlife Crime Unit (Zimbabwe)
- Petronella Chigumbura // Deputy Ranger Supervisor (Akashinga East Zimbabwe)
- Margaret Darawanda // Deputy Head of Operations (Akashinga East Zimbabwe)
- Blessing Neya // Community Supervisor (Akashinga East Zimbabwe)
- Castro Franque // Community Supervisor (Mozambique)
- Albert Paradzai // Liason & Development Manager (Zimbabwe)
- Future Sibanda // K9 Handler

Akashinga 2024 Board of Directors & Advisory Committee

- Ian Mackenzie-Ross // Board Chair & Former Akashinga Managing Director
- Elizabeth Atherton // Board Treasurer
- Michelle Nevin // Board Secretary
- Dr Jane Goodall, DBE // Advisory Committee Chair & Patron
- Dr Jeremy Anderson // Advisory Member
- Hollee & Rick Armstrong // Advisory Members
- Sebastiano Cossia Castiglioni // Advisory Member
- Major General Johan Jooste // Advisory Member
- Don MacRobert // Advisory Member
- Janet McCartney // Advisory Member
- Victor K. Muposhi // Advisory Member
- Dr Ian Player // Patron (Deceased)
- Evan Rapoport // Advisory Member
- Zainab Salbi // Advisory Member
- Professor John Simons // Advisory Member
- Susan Vitka // Advisory Member
- Mr Sean Willmore // Advisory Member
- Philip Wollen, OAM // Advisory Member

A Sixbar wrasse (*Thalassoma hardwicke*) glides over coral reef in Mozambique's Save Seascape. Akashinga partners with coastal communities here to protect marine biodiversity and strengthen sustainable livelihoods. (Dr Jess Williams)

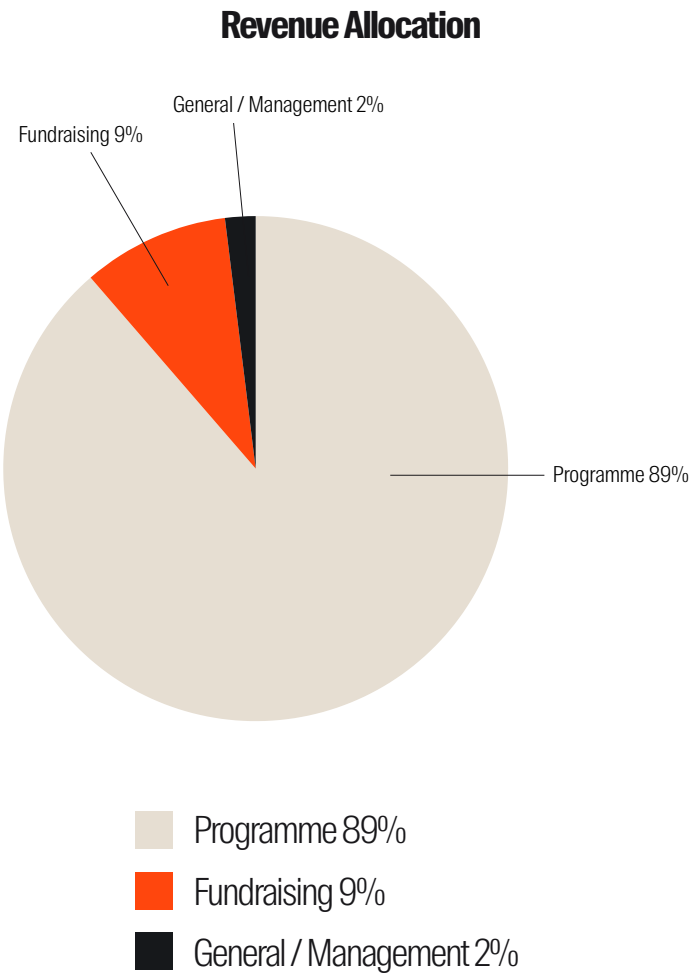


Water lilies in bloom at Dam 2, Songo Conservancy. Documented during a wildlife road survey by Akashinga's ecological monitoring team, these surveys provide critical data on habitats and biodiversity. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Financials.

Our overhead is covered by the generosity of one of our donors. Therefore, 100% of all donations go directly to our programme.

Consolidated Audited Statement of Activities		
Operating Revenue Total		
Without Donor Restrictions		\$8,316,264
With Donor Restrictions		\$847,438
Interest		\$105,192
Total Income:		\$9,163,702
Operating Expenses		
Fundraising		\$871,210
General/Management		\$180,625
Programmes Total		\$8,210,231
Education & Outreach		\$208,841
Akashinga Ranger		\$7,506,824
LEAD Ranger		\$416,958
Wildlife Crime Unit		\$77,608
Total Expenses:		\$9,262,066
Total Expenses:		
		\$9,262,066
Net Assets End of Year:		
		\$9,827,756



Join Us: How to Get Involved.

BE THE FORCE OF CHANGE THAT ENSURES FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN GROW UP IN A WORLD WHERE ALL LIFE CAN THRIVE.

Donate

Give online by visiting www.akashinga.org/donate.

Make a tax-deductible contribution by calling +1.540.316.0019 or by mail to:

Akashinga
100 N. 18th St., Suite 300
Philadelphia, PA 19103
USA

Future Gifts

Help Akashinga protect critical wildlife through a future gift in your will. Contact info@akashinga.org for more information.

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Thank You.

We see this report as more than a record of outcomes — it is a message of gratitude from Akashinga’s communities and rangers to every supporter who has walked this journey with us.

Your commitment has turned ambition into tangible change: creating jobs, restoring ecosystems, and building resilience in communities across Southern and East Africa. Because of your belief in our mission, conservation here is not imposed from the outside but led from within, ensuring that people and wildlife thrive together.

Thank you for standing with us and for helping to shape a future where nature is protected and celebrated.

[Contents Spread] Akashinga Ranger Abigail Makanyaire on patrol in Zimbabwe’s Phundundu Reserve at dusk. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin); **[Back Cover]** A herd of elephant on the Sengwa floodplain near Akashinga’s Songo Conservancy, where wildlife is slowly returning after years of decline. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Together, we thrive.

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