

A photograph of three female police officers in tactical gear standing outdoors at sunset. The officer in the center is smiling and looking slightly upwards, while the two flanking her look directly at the camera. They are wearing olive green uniforms with tactical vests and belts. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees under a warm, golden light.

Together, we thrive.

2025

AKASHINGA
Annual Report

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[Cover Image] Talent Sonele Dube (centre), Deputy Head of Operations at Akashinga West, with Akashinga Rangers Tumulumbe Mumpane and Loice Matutu. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

[Contents Spread] Akashinga Instructor Asiyatu Phiri is congratulated by fellow graduates following the month-long Basic Paramilitary Instructors Train-the-Trainer Course at the Zimbabwe Institute of Wildlife Conservation (ZIWC), held at Mushandike Sanctuary near Masvingo, Zimbabwe. The course brings Akashinga's training in line with Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) standards, deepening the partnership between the two organisations. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

A Future for All.

Akashinga now stewards one of the largest community-partnered conservation footprints on the continent, built on local leadership, shared prosperity, and communities with a real stake in what happens to the ecosystems they call home.



Akashinga Ranger Tracy Basarokwe leads her team through the bush during a routine patrol in Zimbabwe's Phundundu Reserve, part of the ongoing work to monitor and protect this stretch of habitat in Hurungwe District. (Photo: Glenda Beselemu)

Conservation is not a service we provide. It's a stake we all share.

The crises facing Southern Africa's wild places aren't separate problems taking turns. Poverty, poaching, climate volatility, and the exclusion of women from conservation leadership are not parallel emergencies. They are the same emergency, compounding across the same communities, the same ecosystems, the same generations. Treating them one at a time is how the sector has fallen short for decades.

It is also how the sector got the story backwards. Conservation was built to protect ecosystems, not to partner with the people living inside them. Communities were treated as

beneficiaries of someone else's plan rather than the stewards they already were. And women, who make up the majority of rural communities living closest to protected areas, were largely written out of the leadership roles that decide what gets protected and how. That is not a footnote. It is a fundamental misunderstanding of who conservation is for and who it should be led by.

We have watched what happens when that changes. A woman who has walked five kilometres for water her whole life does not need to be convinced that a borehole matters. A mother does not need to be told

why her daughter should finish school instead of following her into the fields. When authority over the ecosystem is real, not symbolic, people protect it the way they protect anything that is actually theirs to lose.

That is the whole of what we've learned in sixteen years: conservation propped up by outside funding doesn't solve the underlying problem, it postpones it. Conservation led by the people who live with the consequences, every day, for generations, is the only version that holds once the funding and the attention move elsewhere.

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

Vision: Enduring, community-led conservation of connected, resilient ecosystems.

Aims: *Protect:* through scalable, replicable ecosystem protection and capacity building

Connect: through effective leadership, research, and advocacy

Restore: through community-partnered programmes



Weaver bird nests (*Ploceus sp.*) hang from the branches of a tree in Zimbabwe's Phundundu Reserve, a small but telling sign of the habitat health that sustained protection makes possible. (Photo: Glenda Beselemu)

The Akashinga Model.

Our mission is rooted in connection: **between ecosystems, species, and people.**

The Akashinga model rests on a single, consequential idea: when communities, and specifically women, are given genuine authority over the ecosystems they depend on, they protect them because they have a real stake in the outcome. Everything Akashinga does is built to make that authority real rather than symbolic.

By recognising how tightly ecosystems and communities are bound together, we work to build resilience across both at once. Our vision is one where nature thrives, wildlife moves freely, and rural communities flourish as the stewards of the ecosystems they call home.

Six Elements, One System

No single piece of this model works on its own. Rangers only hold real authority if they come from the communities they protect, not because that’s a nice idea, but because inside collaboration and enforcement builds trust. That trust only translates into safer ecosystems if the people carrying it are trained to de-escalate before they’re trained to detain. None of that matters if the underlying causes of environmental crime, poverty, exclusion, lack of ownership, go unaddressed, because enforcement alone just displaces the problem rather than solving it. A workforce that’s 98% local and Indigenous makes all of this durable rather than dependent on outside staff who rotate out. Rigorous science keeps every decision grounded in what’s actually happening in the ecosystem, not assumption. And a disciplined, criteria-based approach to expansion is what keeps growth from outpacing what the organisation can actually govern, the same discipline that shapes every strategic priority for the years ahead.

Each piece depends on the others. That’s not a description of six separate programmes. It’s a description of how one model holds together.

How We Measure What Matters

Akashinga’s impact is organised around three pillars, and each one answers a different question about whether the model is actually working.

People: Conservation Capacity

What are we doing to make conservation economically and socially valuable to the people living alongside it? Rangers are recruited and deployed in the places they call home. Jobs, training, and long-term support flow directly into the communities we work with, not around them.

Planet: Conservation Outcomes

Are ecosystems and wildlife populations actually recovering? This is the measure that matters most and the one we hold ourselves to hardest: transparent, collaborative, science-backed protection across millions of acres, from anti-poaching and ecological monitoring patrols to marine conservation.

Future: Conservation Durability

Is the model taking hold in a way that outlasts any single funder or funding period.? A sustainable future is built by the people with the greatest stake in it, through investment in education, health, infrastructure, and opportunity that lasts well beyond any one grant.

Where Our Work Meets the World’s Goals

Akashinga’s work on the ground in Southern Africa isn’t separate from the global conservation agenda: it’s one of the more concrete examples of what that agenda actually looks like in practice. Our programmes contribute directly to:

- **15 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals**, with the deepest impact on gender equality, sustainable communities, responsible consumption, climate action, and life on land and below water.
- **The Global 30x30 Challenge**, the international effort to protect 30% of the planet’s land and ocean by 2030.
- **The Protecting Our Planet (POP) Challenge**, the largest private funding commitment ever made to biodiversity conservation, supporting projects aligned with the 30x30 target.
- **Agenda 2063**, the African Union’s blueprint for the continent’s development, particularly Goal 7: building climate-resilient, environmentally sustainable economies and communities.

None of these targets get met from a boardroom. They get met, or missed, on the ground, in landscapes like the ones Akashinga protects, led by the people who live in them. That’s the throughline of everything in this report: global ambition, delivered locally.

The Mechanics of the Model

Six integrated elements. Each reinforces the others. Remove one, and the whole model weakens. Akashinga is one system, built to hold together under pressure.

Here’s what each element actually requires on the ground.

Women-Led Frontline Operations

Rangers and staff drawn from communities closest to wildlife, holding genuine authority and long-term stake in outcomes.

Accountable & Proportional Environmental Resource Protection

Operations grounded in best practise with a focus on measured response to threats, deterrence, observance of human right, field competence, and confidence.

Systems-Level Intervention

Addressing root causes of environmental crime: poverty, exclusion, and lack of community ownership.

98% Local & Indigenous Staffing

Workforce drawn from the communities and countries where we operate. 63% women. Minimal expatriate reliance.

Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning

Monitoring of wildlife populations, environmental and socio-economic trends. Scientific method applied to closing critical knowledge gaps.

A Structured, Replicable Approach to Responsible Expansion

Clear criteria, feasibility assessment, and organisational readiness checkpoints before any new landscape or partnership.

Current operations: Zimbabwe and Mozambique (primary); Botswana and Namibia (partner).

Growth should never outpace governance.

Every phase is gated: expansion into a new landscape or partnership only proceeds once the institutional foundations of the current phase are confirmed. Priority for 2026 is deepening impact within our existing footprint, while remaining open to new landscapes where opportunity, partnership, and programmatic fit align.



An elephant herd on the Songo floodplains at last light. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

A Letter From Akashinga.

What does progress in conservation sound like?

Sometimes it is the call of lions returning to regions where they had gone quiet. Sometimes it is a ranger’s footsteps before sunrise, starting another patrol. Sometimes it is a community deciding that the wildlife and ecosystems around them are worth protecting for the generation after this one.

I arrived at Akashinga at the end of 2025, which means I was not here for most of the year this report describes. I have spent months reading about last year in the records: patrol logs from the Zambezi Valley, waterpoint records from the Kunene, the completed zonation plan for *Coutada 5*, now moving toward publication and setting out how that ecosystem will be governed. None of these documents were written to be moving. They were written because someone walked those landscapes, observed carefully, and understood that every detail matters. Those are the quiet steps at the heart of conservation often unseen from a distance, but essential to protecting what matters.

2025 underscored the importance of resilience in conservation, and of leadership transitions handled well. Across the sector, shifts in funding challenged long-standing organisations and programmes, reinforcing how essential sustained investment is to protecting decades of progress. Ecosystems do not pause while institutions recover.

Nature keeps its own rhythm. Wildlife moves, seasons turn, and communities remain deeply connected to the landscapes around them. That is why continuity in conservation matters so much. Every patrol completed and every partnership strengthened builds on what has already been achieved and expands what is possible for the future.

Akashinga navigated an important period of transition last year while maintaining the strength and continuity of our work. Throughout that period, our teams remained focused on what matters most: protecting landscapes, supporting communities, and delivering on our conservation commitments. That continuity speaks to the strength of our people, our partnerships, and the model we have built together. Rangers in Zimbabwe and Mozambique kept patrolling. Rangers and community members searched

together for a missing child and brought her safely home. Four Turtle Guards walked nearly 390 kilometres of island shoreline, many of them former fishers now protecting the beaches their communities depend on. In *Coutada 5*, a new graduating class of Akashinga Rangers stood in the November dust before a Chief Prosecutor and government officials, in a landscape that had almost no protection three years earlier. Six women ran a conservation gate in the Kalahari, logging every vehicle that came through. Nineteen water committees in Namibia learned to repair their own pumps.

A strong organisation is built to endure. What 2025 demonstrated is the strength of Akashinga’s people, partnerships, and purpose and the foundation we now have to build upon.

Since arriving I have made two extended visits to our operations in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, spending most of that time with rangers and conservation teams, listening to the communities we work alongside, and meeting our partners. What I saw matches what the records suggested.

In Mozambique, community members voluntarily brought forward illegal hunting equipment, such as homemade firearms and snares, and handed it over. That decision reflects years of relationship and a growing recognition that a protected ecosystem returns more than what was being taken from it. In Namibia, a conservancy receiving its first meaningful share of tourism revenue chose to buy firefighting equipment and save the remainder for the years ahead. Different countries, different communities, the same instinct. When people have a genuine stake in an ecosystem, they invest in its future creating the local ownership and long-term commitment that make conservation endure.

The landscapes are answering. New lion prides established themselves in Phundundu last year, calling across ground where predators had grown quiet. Buffalo returned to the Songo floodplains in numbers not seen in seasons. An aerial survey confirmed a small group of dugongs near the mouth of the Save River.

Akashinga was founded on a straightforward idea: the future of conservation depends on the people who live alongside the world’s remaining wild

places. Lasting conservation is strongest when it is built with communities at its centre, creating local ownership, shared value, and opportunity alongside the protection of nature.

That principle shapes everything we do. In a sector where women remain significantly underrepresented in frontline operational roles, we believe they should be at the forefront of protecting natural resources and communities have genuine authority and a meaningful stake in the ecosystems around them. And we believe protecting biodiversity and creating opportunity for people are not competing ambitions, they are fundamental to one another.

Across four countries, we are seeing that model work.

We look ahead with ambition and with discipline. Our Strategic Plan sets a clear arc: stabilise, strengthen, then scale. It also sets a rule that will shape every decision we make. *Growth should never outpace governance*. Within that, we will keep strengthening field operations, investing in our rangers and the communities they come from, deepening partnerships, advancing ecological science, and building a conservation model capable of lasting impact at scale.

There is tremendous opportunity ahead, and we intend to be built to meet it.

Thank you to every ranger, scout, cook, mechanic, instructor, committee member, community leader, and colleague whose commitment makes this possible.

And thank you to our partners, donors, and supporters who believe in this work and in the people leading it. Your partnership shows up in every kilometre patrolled, every ranger trained, every community that holds real authority over the ecosystem it depends on, and every ecosystem given the conditions to recover.

We are grateful to have you on the frontline with us.

Dr Stacy Crevello
Chief Executive Officer
Akashinga

Ranger Spotlight: Tendai Kadohwata.

Redefining Success through Service

Ask Tendai Kadohwata what makes her good at her job and she does not talk about tracking, or firearms, or arrest procedure.

“I think my strongest skill is patience,” she says. “As an instructor, you have to be patient. Some learners are slower than others, and if you’re not patient, they can’t succeed. I want to see them grow, progress, even surpass me. That’s what makes me a confident trainer.”

It is an unusual answer from someone who spent years learning to move through the Zambezi Valley without being heard. But it is the answer of someone who has been on both sides of the training ground, and remembers what the first side felt like.

Tendai joined Akashinga as a ranger in 2018, patrolling Phundundu, the reserve that sits in the district she is from. The work then was learning that ground on foot in a way that only distance teaches, tracking wildlife through miombo woodland, reading it for signs that someone had been through who should not have been. Poaching pressure is not an abstraction to a ranger walking a line through it, and Tendai learned that landscape at the speed it is learned, which is one patrol at a time.

Then the reserve needed instructors, and she put herself forward.

“When I found out I had been selected, I was overjoyed,” she says. “It wasn’t easy. It was my first time trying to be an instructor.”

The Advanced Field Ranger Instructor Course in 2023 took her back to the beginning of everything she already knew, this time from the front. Leadership. Instruction. Managing how people learn, and how differently they learn. Arrest procedure and survival technique, taught as things a person might one day need at three in the morning in bad terrain rather than as content to be delivered. She came through it, and went back to Phundundu to teach.

“These skills are not just theory,” she says. “They’re directly linked to the reality of being a ranger. If you don’t know how to survive in the bush, how to track or arrest properly, your life, and the lives of others, can be at risk.”

In 2025 she qualified as a ZimParks instructor, bringing her training in line with national standards. That means the rangers she teaches now meet a benchmark the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority recognises. It is a formal thing, recorded on paper, and it changes something practical. A recruit coming through Phundundu’s academy is certified in terms the country accepts, taught by a woman who came through the same programme they are entering, on the same ground.

What that means to Tendai is less about the certificate than about the watching.

“You can’t be a trainer while you’re cheating. You have to lead by example, because people are watching. You carry a title that commands respect, so you must hold yourself to the standard.”

She measures herself against that constantly. In September 2025, when Akashinga’s Habitat Crew entered a men’s team into the 21km Wildlife Ranger Challenge, Tendai volunteered to track their run and support them through it. She spent the distance at the roadside with music and encouragement, calling them on. Nobody required her to be there. She says part of why she does it is to remind herself of something she repeats often, that what a man can do, a woman can do.

The rangers she trains are the ones walking Phundundu now. Some of them will outlast her in the job. She says that is the point.

“I used to be led, now I lead. That’s how I know I’ve grown. I inspire others not by words, but by the things I do.”



Tendai Kadohwata (second from left) at the Instructor Graduation Ceremony at Mushandike Sanctuary on 2 May 2025, where she was named Best Student. All four Akashinga Instructors passed the Basic Paramilitary Instructors Course, aligning Akashinga’s training with ZimParks standards. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Our Impact: What Sixteen Years Have Built.

2025 was not a year defined by new acres added. It was a year defined by whether everything built in the years before it could hold under real pressure: a leadership transition, tightened governance, and a period of organisational review that asked hard questions before any expansion conversation could happen. It held.

It held because the model was never dependent on any single thing. Akashinga continues to support the protection, oversight, and management of 13.1 million acres across Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, and Namibia, communal areas that connect national parks and reserves, securing the wildlife corridors that let species move across intact ecosystems rather than fragmented ones. That figure is now the fixed 2026 baseline against which the years ahead will be measured, with a target to expand the area under effective conservation management by at least **40% by 2031**. And nature is answering: wildlife sightings across our programme sites are up more than **150% year over year**, the clearest sign we have that these ecosystems are actually recovering.



Enforcement That Builds Trust, Not Just Case Numbers

Every arrest, every recovered tusk, every snare pulled from the ground is the result of a choice made in the field, not a policy written on paper: a ranger who cuts a snare instead of walking past it, a patrol that reports a firearm instead of looking away. **Since inception, that discipline has added up to 2,099 arrests, 712 elephant tusks recovered, 20 rhino horns, 136 pangolins, 102 illegal firearms taken out of circulation, and more than 1,500 snares and gin traps pulled from these landscapes, including 143 arrests in 2025 alone.** What makes that record matter isn't the size of any one number. It's that every ranger behind it is also trained in ecological monitoring, wildlife rescue, and conflict mitigation, so an arrest doesn't just end an incident. It builds toward the kind of protection that lasts.

Where Leadership Actually Sits

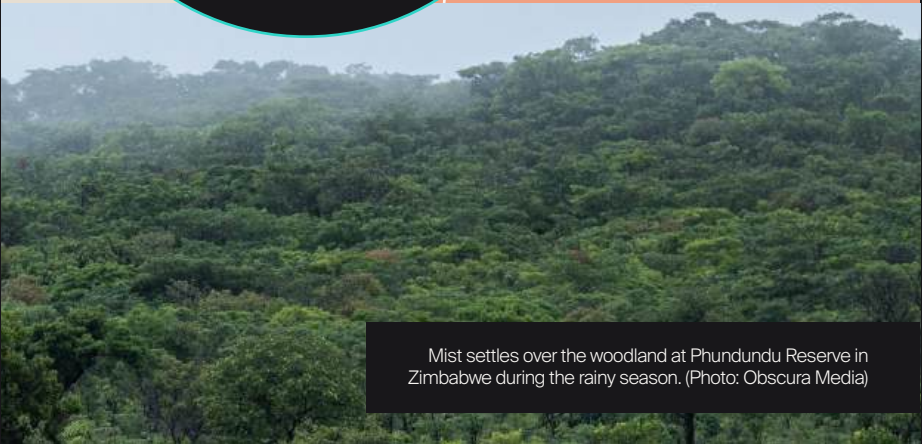
A conservation model is only as durable as the people who run it, and who runs it is the whole argument. **98% of Akashinga's workforce is local and Indigenous to the countries where we operate. 63% of our staff are women. More than 300 rangers and law enforcement staff carry that model into the field every single day,** not as employees executing someone else's plan, but as the people whose homes, families, and futures are tied to whether it works. That's not a diversity statistic sitting next to the real work. It *is* the real work: a pipeline of women moving into leadership across operational, technical, and management roles, because a model built on outside expertise disappears the moment the outside funding does, and one built on local authority doesn't.

What Protection Actually Looks Like on the Ground

Conservation that only protects wildlife and leaves people behind doesn't last, and Akashinga was never built to work that way. **More than 26,000 community members now have improved access to clean water, medical care, or a sustainable livelihood because of this model,** not as a side effect of protecting nature, but as part of the same work. **Clinics supported by Akashinga treat more than 5,000 patients a month in places where the nearest alternative can be a full day's walk away. More than 100 students are in school on Akashinga scholarships this year, 70% of them girls,** in districts where a girl finishing secondary school is still the exception rather than the rule. None of these numbers show up in a poaching statistic. All of them are the reason the poaching statistic holds.

What Durability Actually Costs

Durability was always the design. A model that depends on one funder, one leader, or one favourable season isn't a model, it's a streak, and streaks end. What Akashinga has built instead is slower and less dramatic: local authority that doesn't evaporate when a grant cycle ends, a workforce rooted in the communities it serves rather than rotated in from outside, and governance discipline strong enough to survive a genuinely hard year without the mission cracking. The years ahead will test that design further, not less. **The target is to expand the area under effective conservation management by at least 40% by 2031, and to grow women's leadership in operational, technical, and management roles by at least 30% over the same period.** Those are targets, not results, and we'll report them as exactly that until they're earned. But the reason to believe they're achievable isn't optimism. It's that the model has already been tested against the one thing every conservation programme eventually faces: a year when it would have been easier to fall short. It didn't.



Mist settles over the woodland at Phundundu Reserve in Zimbabwe during the rainy season. (Photo: Obscura Media)

Projects	Details	Outcomes
Long-term Biodiversity Protection & Trend Monitoring	2,099 arrests for illegal wildlife crimes since inception, including 143 in 2025 alone across our primary programmes,, alongside sustained joint operations with law enforcement agencies	Recovery of 712 elephant ivory tusks, 136 pangolins, 102 illegal firearms, and 20 rhino horns; more than 1,500 snares/traps removed
Community Livelihoods, Health, & Wellbeing	400+ staff and contractors, with 98% local and Indigenous to the countries where we operate and 63% women	Significant reduction in elephant poaching, achieved in partnership with other conservation organisations, and a notable increase in wildlife populations
Bridging Gender Equity & Environmentalism for Lasting Change	Akashinga puts community authority, not just community involvement, at the centre of ecosystem stewardship, directly addressing the exclusion that has long kept women and local communities out of conservation leadership.	Rangers earn a stable income for their families and communities. Many take on a mentorship role, both with fellow rangers in the programme and with community members learning to live in ways that support their own well-being alongside the ecosystems around them.

Overall Impact.
Since 2017

13.1 Million
Acres of critical wilderness land and seascapes protected

26,000+
Community members with increased access to clean water, medical care, and sustainable livelihoods

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

100+
Primary and secondary education scholarships provided (70% to girls)

400+
Local and global staff and contractors

150%+
YoY increase in wildlife sightings in the reserves we manage

90%
Reduction in elephant poaching, Lower Zambezi Valley (in partnership)

2025 Impact Overview.

Akashinga's community-partnered model kept growing in 2025, deepening conservation impact across Southern Africa. From new ranger cohorts trained and deployed in Zimbabwe and Mozambique to expanding water, health, and education infrastructure in the communities we work alongside, this was a year of real, measurable progress on the ground. Here are the highlights from what we built together this past year.

Frontline Protection & Law Enforcement

Ranger and conservation teams stayed active across every landscape this year, holding a consistent presence on the ground while coordinating more closely than ever with national law enforcement partners.

- **Zimbabwe:** 1,356 foot patrols covering more than 15,538 km, 135 arrests, and 22 joint operations, recovering seven ivory tusks, two pangolins (one rescued alive), and additional firearms and poaching equipment
- **Mozambique:** 761 patrols covering 22,803 km, plus a joint operation with the Environmental Protection Unit and the Mozambique Wildlife Alliance that led to the seizure of eight kilograms of pangolin scales and two arrests, now moving through the Machanga District Court
- **Botswana:** 98 arrests linked to illegal wildlife activity through coordinated law enforcement, anchored by a newly formed District Law Enforcement Committee

Wildlife & Biodiversity Monitoring

The data tells a good story this year, more sightings, new populations establishing themselves, and real evidence that sustained protection is working.

- **Zimbabwe:** 9,863 wildlife detections via camera trap, more than 200 elephant sightings, growing buffalo presence in the Songo landscape, and the establishment of new lion prides in Phundundu
- **Mozambique:** 1,523 wildlife encounters logged, including 451 verified terrestrial sightings, plus an aerial survey confirming a small group of dugongs near the Save River mouth, a genuine milestone for marine conservation in the region
- **Botswana:** Five lions and six wild dog packs now tracked by satellite and VHF collar, feeding a comprehensive population survey supported by the Lion Recovery Fund
- **Namibia:** Camera traps deployed at six strategic sites across the Kunene Highlands, now feeding into the national Event Book monitoring platform and annual conservation audits

Community Health, Education & Water

Conservation and community wellbeing moved forward together this year, with real investment in the infrastructure that makes daily life better.

- **Zimbabwe:** 3,100 patient visits at Akashinga-supported clinics, including new mobile outreach to Luunga Village; a new 90,000-litre water tank in Phundundu and two boreholes at Chipfuko Primary School now serve more than 570 pupils and roughly 3,000 community members across 16 villages; more than 100 students in school on Akashinga scholarships, with 20 supplementary teachers funded
- **Mozambique:** Completion of Zimuala Primary School, giving 106 students fully furnished classrooms and their first reliable water access
- **Botswana:** School support (stationery, supplies, and student awards) and a new school garden at Ncaang Primary School; solar power installed at the Ncaang village cooperative society; pit latrines built at the Zutshwa community kgotla and school uniforms provided for vulnerable learners
- **Namibia:** 114 community members, including 42 women, trained in water governance and maintenance across 19 newly established Water Point Committees

Women's Leadership & Capacity

The pipeline of women moving into leadership across the organisation kept growing this year, backed by real training and real recognition.

- **Zimbabwe:** 83 rangers completed professional training, with 43 formally recognised through a ranking and promotion ceremony; the Leading Brave Fellowship gave women leaders practical training in financial literacy and professional development
- **Mozambique:** N'Dzinda Camp hosted the graduation of the Second Class of Akashinga Forest and Wildlife Rangers in November, attended by senior officials from Mozambique's National Authority for Conservation Areas and the Sofala Province Chief Prosecutor

Marine & Coastal Conservation

Mozambique's coastline saw sustained, community-partnered protection this year, entirely staffed and led by the people who live alongside it.

- An aerial baseline survey of the Save Seascape, Akashinga's first, mapped marine life, fishing activity, and habitats along the coastline adjacent to Coutada 5, recording sightings of rays, sharks, dolphins, a foraging leatherback turtle, and a group of five dugongs near the Save River mouth, a discovery that may represent a new population outside known ranges
- Nearly 390 kilometres of beach patrols across Chiloane and Inharringué Islands by the Turtle Guard team
- Rescue and release of a critically endangered juvenile hawksbill turtle
- A World Sea Turtle Day celebration on Chiloane Island in June, bringing together more than 50 community leaders, teachers, students, and rangers

Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

Protecting wildlife and protecting livelihoods go together, and rangers stayed active on both fronts this year.

- **Zimbabwe:** 368 conflict incidents responded to, using non-lethal deterrents like chili bricks, firecrackers, and metal strip methods
- **Mozambique:** 31 conflict incidents responded to
- **Botswana:** 58 conflict incidents responded to
- **Namibia:** A new 400-metre electrified elephant fence at the Okakaujo communal garden, protecting 40 farmers with zero elephant damage recorded since installation

Moments of Significance

Some of this year's meaningful outcomes don't fit neatly into a statistic.

- A joint ranger and community search and rescue operation safely recovered a missing child in Zimbabwe
- Community members in Mozambique voluntarily surrendered illegal hunting equipment, including homemade firearms and snares, a real sign of trust built over years
- The completion of Zimuala Primary School gave a community, whose original school had burned down, a new place to learn

Water pools around the treeline at Songo Reserve in Zimbabwe, photographed during a wildlife road survey led by Zimbabwe Country Scientist Joshua Tsamba, with Akashinga Rangers Abdula Pote on security and spotting, Fortunate Mutale spotting, and Phillis Mudenda recording data. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Patrol Leader Eve Mudenda exudes a confidence that stems from doing a job she loves and being able to support not only her children, but her parents and siblings as well. (Photo: Davina Jogi)



Ranger Spotlight: Eve Mudenda.

Teaching Where She Learned

The heat sits heavy over the field at Akashinga's Songo Reserve in Zimbabwe's Binga District. Knee-length grass brushes against the legs of rangers standing in formation, ammunition in hand, eyes forward. Akashinga Ranger and Patrol Leader Eve Mudenda gives the command. Firearms come up together. Stances adjust. She moves down the line, checking, correcting what needs correcting, and gives it again. The conditions are not comfortable and are not meant to be. What is being built here is competence.

Eve grew up in this district. Chunga Village, an ordinary childhood by her own account, netball at school and four sisters for company. Her family had little, and her schooling ended before she wanted it to. The years that followed were not the ones she would have chosen for herself. By the time Akashinga came into her life she was raising two children alone, farming her parents' plot to keep them fed, and carrying a quiet expectation that her children's lives would end up looking much like hers had.

The ranger selection process is designed to find the limit of what a person will endure, and Eve found hers more than once. She thought seriously about leaving. Each time she thought about her children instead, and stayed until the next day, and then the day after that, until the course was behind her and she was standing on the other side of it with a job.

Five years in, she is unreserved about it in a way people rarely are about how they earn a living.

She likes patrolling, the long hours of it, the way a landscape reveals itself only to someone who covers it slowly and repeatedly. She likes learning something she did not know about the animals she protects and carrying it home to her children in the evening. She is comfortable meeting elephant and buffalo on foot, which sounds simple written down and is not, and requires a set of judgements made quickly and without visible fear. She is particularly fond of impala. There is a thing a herd does when something is hunting it, scattering upward and outward in every direction at once, so that a predator cannot fix on any single animal. Eve finds it clever, and she is not wrong.

She talks about the bush as somewhere that gave her something back. She talks about the other rangers the same way, women who arrived at Akashinga carrying their own histories, who understood without needing an explanation, and who are the reason the work held when it might not have.

What she has built from it is not only hers. Her earnings support her two children, and her parents, and her siblings. The household she grew up in is now a household she provides for.

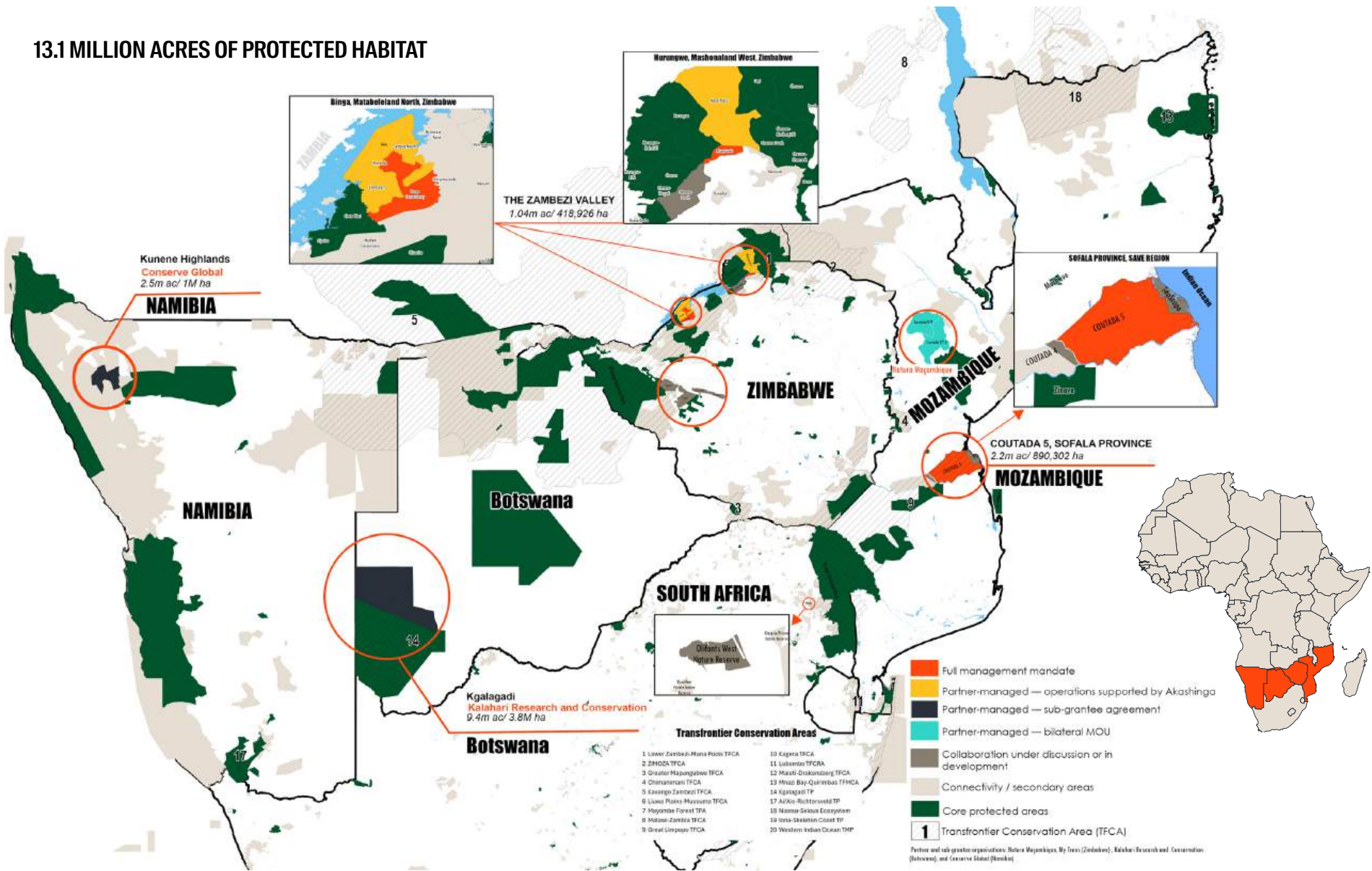
Since September 2025, Eve has been one of the people teaching this work rather than only doing it. That autumn, Akashinga staff at Songo completed three courses with Mellivora, an organisation specialising in ranger development, delivered across Songo and Phundundu Reserves over six weeks. Park planning and management. Patrol leadership and operations. Firearms training. For rangers already in leadership roles, the courses broadened what they were capable of teaching as much as what they were capable of doing.

Eve now delivers firearms training herself. She stands in front of rangers, in the district she comes from, teaching the thing that once had to be taught to her, to women who arrived by roads not unlike the one she took. Some of them will be doing her job in five years. That is how this is supposed to work.

Her children are called Confidence and Precise. What she wants for them is that they grow up with the certainty those names carry, and never find a reason to doubt it.

Our Landscape Portfolio.

13.1 MILLION ACRES OF PROTECTED HABITAT



Two thirds of Africa's protected areas exist outside national parks, and it's these communal lands, unfenced, under-resourced, and easy to overlook, that face the greatest threat of degradation and loss. A national park with a firm boundary can be defended. A wildlife corridor running through forty kilometres of communal farmland cannot be defended the same way, and that's exactly the terrain most large mammals actually depend on to survive. Elephants, lions, wild dogs, none of them recognise a park boundary. They move across whatever land connects one protected area to the next, and if that connecting land is degraded, fenced off, or lost to unsustainable use, the park on either side of it becomes an island, and an island population is a population in slow decline.

That's the fundamental problem with treating conservation as the preservation of isolated sanctuaries. A fenced reserve, however well protected, cannot sustain genetic diversity or

resilient wildlife populations on its own. What actually holds an ecosystem together is the connective tissue between protected areas: the communal lands, buffer zones, and migration corridors that let species move, breed, and adapt across a landscape large enough to matter. Protecting a single reserve is conservation. Protecting the corridor that connects it to the next one, and the community that lives inside that corridor, is what makes conservation durable.

Sixteen years after Akashinga began with site specific initiatives, we have evolved into a force for landscape-scale protection. Today, we co-manage and protect 13.1 million acres across Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, and Namibia, with a model rooted in community partnership, women's leadership, and ecological integrity. That's a 187 fold increase from our original footprint, and it reflects our growing role in the shared oversight of Africa's most threatened yet promising ecological strongholds. That figure is now the fixed

baseline against which the growth ahead will be measured, with a target to expand the area under effective conservation management by at least 40% by 2031.

None of that scale matters if it isn't held by the people who actually live in these ecosystems. By focusing on communal areas that link formally protected zones, we help secure the wildlife corridors that might otherwise be lost, corridors that only stay intact because the communities inside them have a genuine stake in keeping them that way. Our approach extends protection beyond park boundaries precisely where it's needed most, because the urgency here isn't abstract. Every corridor left unprotected is a population cut off from the next, a migration route quietly closing, a landscape one drought or one bad season away from unravelling. Landscape-scale conservation isn't an ambitious way to do this work. Given how fragmented these ecosystems already are, it's the only way that actually works.

“ Elephants were never meant to occur at high densities in small areas. They moved, they followed the rains, they had heavy impacts in one area and left it fallow for years to recover before returning. What we've done is create barriers, roads, cities, fences, farms, and cut down forests to plant crops, and you end up with very disconnected, disjointed habitats. The Akashinga model is large, connected landscapes of conservation. ”

— **Dr Byron du Preez**
Director of Science, Akashinga



An elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) moves through the bush near Akashinga's Phundundu Reserve in Zimbabwe, part of the wider Zambezi Valley landscape that connects protected areas across the region. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin)



Egrets and an African darter (*Anhinga rufa*) roost above the shoreline at Songo. Lake Kariba draws waterbirds in numbers that make the lake one of the region's most significant sites for them. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Zimbabwe.

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



Eyes on the horizon, Akashinga Ranger Future Sibanda scans the Phundundu landscape during a morning ranger patrol. (Photo: Dory Gannes)

A Landscape That Demands Adaptation

The Zambezi Valley doesn't make conservation easy. High temperatures, unreliable rainfall, and thin agricultural potential already strain the communities living in Hurungwe and Binga Districts before poaching pressure or human-wildlife conflict enter the picture. Layer in a history of forced removals and resettlement, and you get a landscape where survival itself has required constant adaptation, long before Akashinga arrived.

Akashinga's Phundundu Reserve in Hurungwe District announces itself first through sound: insects building to a wall of noise by mid-morning, then dropping out almost entirely in the flat white heat of early afternoon. The miombo woodland here isn't dense the way a rainforest is dense; in the places where the trees are at their thickest, it's open enough that light falls in broken patches through the canopy. Rangers moving through this terrain learn to read it in layers, the sudden grunt and scatter of a warthog breaking cover, the

specific crack of a branch under an elephant's weight versus a buffalo's, the change in birdsong that means something has moved through recently. This year, that landscape gave something back: new lion prides established themselves here, a sound Phundundu hadn't carried that close in years, low and carrying at dusk across ground that predator populations had largely abandoned.

Akashinga's Songo Reserve in Binga District is a different register of landscape entirely, defined by water rather than woodland. Lake Kariba's frontage stretches wide here, and when the rains come, the floodplains around it turn to shallow, mirror-flat lakes of their own, alive with wading birds and the tracks of hippo moving between water and grazing ground at night. Buffalo presence has grown here this year, dark shapes gathering at the waterline in numbers that weren't visible a few seasons ago, grazing floodplain grass that rises and disappears with the lake's own rhythm.

Both landscapes connect to Lake Kariba's wider basin, a region recognised globally as a biodiversity hotspot, linking to three national parks and eight safari areas beyond Akashinga's own boundaries. Protecting that connectivity was never going to succeed through outside enforcement alone. It required people who already understood how to read this specific stretch of woodland and water, and adapt to what each one demands, sound by sound, season by season.

2025 marked the eighth year of Akashinga's women-led ranger model here, built on a simple premise: the people best equipped to protect the Zambezi Valley are the ones who never left it. Removing people from the landscape was never the strategy. Building on the knowledge and resilience they'd already developed, and putting women at the centre of that effort rather than at its margins, was.



Akashinga Ranger Pedzisai Phiri dances during a break in the Leading Brave Fellowship at Phundundu. The course gave participants a safe setting to be vulnerable and share their personal experiences, strengthening their bond as fellow leaders. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

2025 Impact in Zimbabwe.

People

When Akashinga’s Zimbabwe Maternity Policy took effect in September 2024, formalising six months of maternity leave followed by three months of light duty at camp with the new baby, it was a policy on paper. In 2025, it became something else entirely. Ranger Loice Matutu had her daughter Michelle cared for at a maternity camp located at Akashinga’s Songo Reserve, took extended breaks to breastfeed her, and finished work at 4pm every day to make sure she got that care. “Akashinga has helped me to support my family, buy what we need, and live without the stress I once knew,” Loice says. “Before, I was lost. Now, I know who I am.” Her own path here started with her Aunt Grace, a hospitality staff member at Akashinga’s Songo Reserve who took her in as a child and never expected the girl she raised would end up in an Akashinga uniform. Now Grace watches her raise a daughter of her own with that same confidence.

That same investment in women’s leadership showed up at scale this year through the Leading Brave Fellowship, launched in February with The Rallying Cry. Financial literacy training in budgeting and saving, professional online presence development, in-person leadership workshops built on confidence and peer mentorship, the Fellowship gave women across the programme practical tools most conservation careers never offer. It closed with a multi-day gathering where participants reflected on their own growth together, and came away with a kind of confidence that doesn’t show up in a patrol report but shapes every decision made afterward.

That kind of trust doesn’t happen by accident, and building it has been

Community Development Manager Blessing Neya’s work for years. In 2025, she invested in sharpening that work, completing Planet Women’s eight-week Gender Mainstreaming Course, technical training in embedding gender considerations directly into fieldwork and planning. “There’s a better chance for conservation if the community is 100% in,” she says, speaking to a dynamic she’s navigated her whole career: growing up in a culture where women were expected to stay out of exactly the discussions, human-wildlife conflict, climate change, that affect them most directly. Ninety-seven community meetings took place across Hurungwe and Binga this year, and around 500 community members took part in human-wildlife conflict awareness events, with farmers in Village 21 receiving hands-on training in the metal strip deterrent method, a small, practical tool that protects a season’s crop without escalating conflict with the wildlife moving through it.

Water shortages in these districts don’t fall evenly. They disproportionately affect women and children, who carry the burden of long-distance collection, so the infrastructure Akashinga built this year was never just plumbing. A 90,000-litre water tank went up in Phundundu, alongside a second tank at India Village and two new boreholes at Chipfuko Primary School, together reaching more than 570 pupils and roughly 3,000 community members across 16 villages, water that’s already reviving a previously dormant community garden. In Songo, new solar-powered boreholes at Sinamasanga and Siamupa Primary Schools are easing that burden and reducing the risks, including gender-based violence, that come with it; community members were trained in system maintenance themselves, so the water

keeps flowing under local ownership rather than outside dependency. Nurse Tarisai Munkuli’s mobile clinic reached Binga District’s Luunga Village for the first time this year, delivering primary healthcare, vaccinations, and family planning support to a fishing community that previously had to travel for basic care, part of the 3,100 patient visits Akashinga-supported clinics recorded in Zimbabwe overall. More than 100 students are in school on Akashinga scholarships, with 20 supplementary teachers funded to keep classrooms staffed. Two classroom blocks at Sinamasanga Primary School were fully refurbished and repainted, and learners from Nyamakate, Huyo, and Chipfuko schools took part in the RIFA School Camp, a week of conservation leadership and environmental education built directly into their school year, supported by donations of 87 indigenous tree seedlings and 70 grafted fruit tree seedlings, along with stationery, clean water supplies, and Akashinga’s presence at school prize-giving ceremonies celebrating academic achievement.

Even the ordinary work of keeping these districts clean became something more this year. Rangers and community members collected more than three tonnes of litter during World Clean-Up Day, sorted and compressed into 68 recyclable bales bound for markets in Harare, with 15 more bales produced through ongoing community-led waste management since. Out of that effort, a recycling steering committee introduced a floor-polish micro-enterprise supporting women’s livelihoods, proof that the same discipline that clears a snare line can also build something new out of what everyone else considers waste.



Ranger Loice Matutu holds her nine-month-old daughter Michelle after work at Songo Reserve in Zimbabwe’s Binga District. (Photo: Davina Jogi)



Students at Chipfuko Primary School use a newly installed borehole, one of several water infrastructure projects delivered in 2025 to strengthen water access, sanitation, and community resilience. (Photo: Steven Dean)



Community members near Songo Reserve take part in National Clean-Up Day, collecting litter that will be sorted, compressed, and sent to recycling markets in Harare. (Photo: Steven Dean)



Two lions (*Panthera leo*) are captured on a camera trap at night at Phundundu Reserve in Zimbabwe. Camera traps like this one generated 9,863 wildlife detections in 2025, feeding directly into Akashinga's patrol planning and helping confirm the return of lion prides to this landscape. (Photo: Akashinga)

Planet

Ranger teams maintained a strong field presence in Zimbabwe throughout 2025, conducting 1,356 foot patrols covering more than 15,538 kilometres, alongside 22 joint operations with partner law enforcement agencies. In July alone, that meant 63 local patrols and 35 extended patrols across Main Camp, Foma, and Songo, working jointly with the Wildlife Crime Unit, Binga Rural District Council, and ZimParks across zones from Bombodube and Dam 2 to Kapinda and Upper Sinamwenda, the kind of routine, unglamorous coverage that adds up to the year's total one patrol at a time. That work resulted in 135 arrests linked to wildlife and environmental crime and significant recoveries: seven ivory tusks, roughly 215 kilograms of ivory, illegal firearms, antelope hides, axes, and twine nets, all taken out of circulation before they could do further harm. In July specifically, five suspects were apprehended, three Zambian nationals fishing Zimbabwean waters with prohibited gear, two Zimbabweans caught with wire snares, axes, and knives, handed over to Siabuwa Police Station and transferred to Binga for prosecution; ZimParks separately handed Akashinga three confiscated fishing rigs for safekeeping at Chete.

Among the year's recoveries were two pangolins, one rescued alive. Pangolins are the most trafficked mammal on earth, more heavily poached than elephants or rhinos by volume, driven by demand for their scales in traditional medicine markets and their meat as a luxury food. A single rescued pangolin doesn't make headlines the way an ivory seizure does, but it represents the same disruption to the same trafficking networks, and a live animal returned to the wild is a rarer outcome than the arrest statistics alone suggest.

Staying ahead of conflict matters as much as responding to crime. Rangers responded to 368 human-wildlife conflict incidents this year, involving elephants, lions, crocodiles, and hyenas, working directly with affected households to assess risk and implement practical, non-lethal solutions: chili bricks, firecrackers, vuvuzelas, and the metal strip deterrent method farmers in Village 21 were trained in this year. In July, that meant distributing 45 firecrackers to communities affected

by six separate elephant and hippo incidents, small numbers that represent real households kept safer without a shot fired. Left unaddressed, incidents like these are exactly what turn a family that tolerates wildlife into a family that resents it; every incident resolved without violence is a small vote for the model continuing to work.

Patrol teams recorded sightings of more than 200 elephants this year, growing buffalo presence in the Songo landscape, and the establishment of new lion prides in Phundundu, deepening a recovery already underway there, alongside a significant increase in large predator sightings and growing eland numbers at Phundundu later in the year. That recovery isn't uniform or automatic, and the data says so plainly: a July survey across Songo and Sengwa recorded 136 wildlife encounters spanning ten species, elephant, impala, duiker, bushbuck, grysbok, waterbuck, kudu, bushpig, buffalo, and zebra, with duiker the only species seen consistently across every operational area, while predator sightings like hyena and leopard were absent that particular month. Akashinga reports what the cameras and patrols actually find, not what would make the better headline. Akashinga Rangers, Science Dept, and camera traps deployed across priority zones generated 9,863 wildlife detections over the year, capturing a wide range of antelope, canine, and equid species alongside warthog and the high-value indicator species that matter most for tracking ecosystem health: elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard, and wild dog, data that feeds directly into patrol planning and hotspot identification, shaping where rangers walk next week based on what the cameras actually saw last week.

Beyond enforcement, rangers contributed to the less visible work of ecosystem restoration: fireguard construction and maintenance, road repairs supporting patrol access, indigenous tree planting, and environmental health campaigns across both ranger camps. That work includes the tree nursery Biodiversity Officer Nyaradzo Hoto continues to grow at Phundundu, with seedlings sourced from the same communities that will eventually plant them, turning a threatened ecosystem back into a living one, one tree at a time.



An Akashinga Ranger raises a hand signal to alert her patrol unit to a pair of elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) grazing nearby at Songo Reserve in Zimbabwe. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

2025 Impact Stats.

1,356

Foot patrols with a total distance of 15,538 km (~9654 mi)

9,863

Wildlife sightings recorded by Akashinga Rangers, Science Dept, & Camera Traps*

135

Arrests linked to wildlife & environmental crimes

200+

Verified elephant sightings by Akashinga Rangers

22

Joint operations with partner law enforcement

368

Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) responses in local communities**

* Significant Species Sighted: Elephant, Buffalo, Lion, Leopard, Wild Dog, Impala, Duiker, Bushbuck, Gnybok, Waterbuck, Kudu, Bushpig, Zebra, and Eland

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



Akashinga Rangers move through dense woodland during a rainy season patrol at Phundundu Reserve in Zimbabwe. (Photo: Obscura Media)



Akashinga Instructor Tendai Kadohwata (centre) congratulates newly graduated rangers at Chinhoi Caves in Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe, on 13 June 2025. The three-month paramilitary training was a collaboration between ZimParks, Akashinga, and Peace Parks Foundation, with women making up 54% of the graduates. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

Future

A conservation model is only as durable as the people trained to carry it forward, and 2025 was a year of real investment in that pipeline. Eighty-three rangers completed professional training, including 20 trained in Kariba through a collaborative initiative with ZimParks and the Peace Parks Foundation, deployed afterward to expand protection in the Phundundu landscape. Six experienced rangers moved the other direction, deployed to Mana Pools National Park to support cross-landscape operations, an exchange that depends entirely on both sides trusting the other's standards. In May, four Akashinga instructors, Tendai Kadohwata, Sharai Viola Tunhira, Moreblessing Khumalo, and Asiyatu Phiri, graduated from the Zimbabwe Institute of Wildlife Conservation's month-long Basic Paramilitary Instructors Train the Trainer Course, formally aligning Akashinga's training with ZimParks national standards. Tendai, awarded Best Student, has since moved into a Junior Instructor role shaping the next generation of rangers directly.

That same investment extended into technology and global visibility. Fourteen women from Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Mozambique gathered at Phundundu for the GEF EarthRanger Women's Summit, specialised training in the conservation software rangers rely on daily for security, human-wildlife conflict response, and ecological management. Nyaradzo Hoto, Akashinga East's Biodiversity Officer,

carried that same leadership onto a global stage, delivering a talk at TEDx Vail Next on her route from ranger to research. Margaret Darawanda's own path traces this arc at the operational level: from field ranger to team leader to Head of Operations at Phundundu, now leading daily patrols, making strategic field decisions, and mentoring the next generation of women coming up behind her.

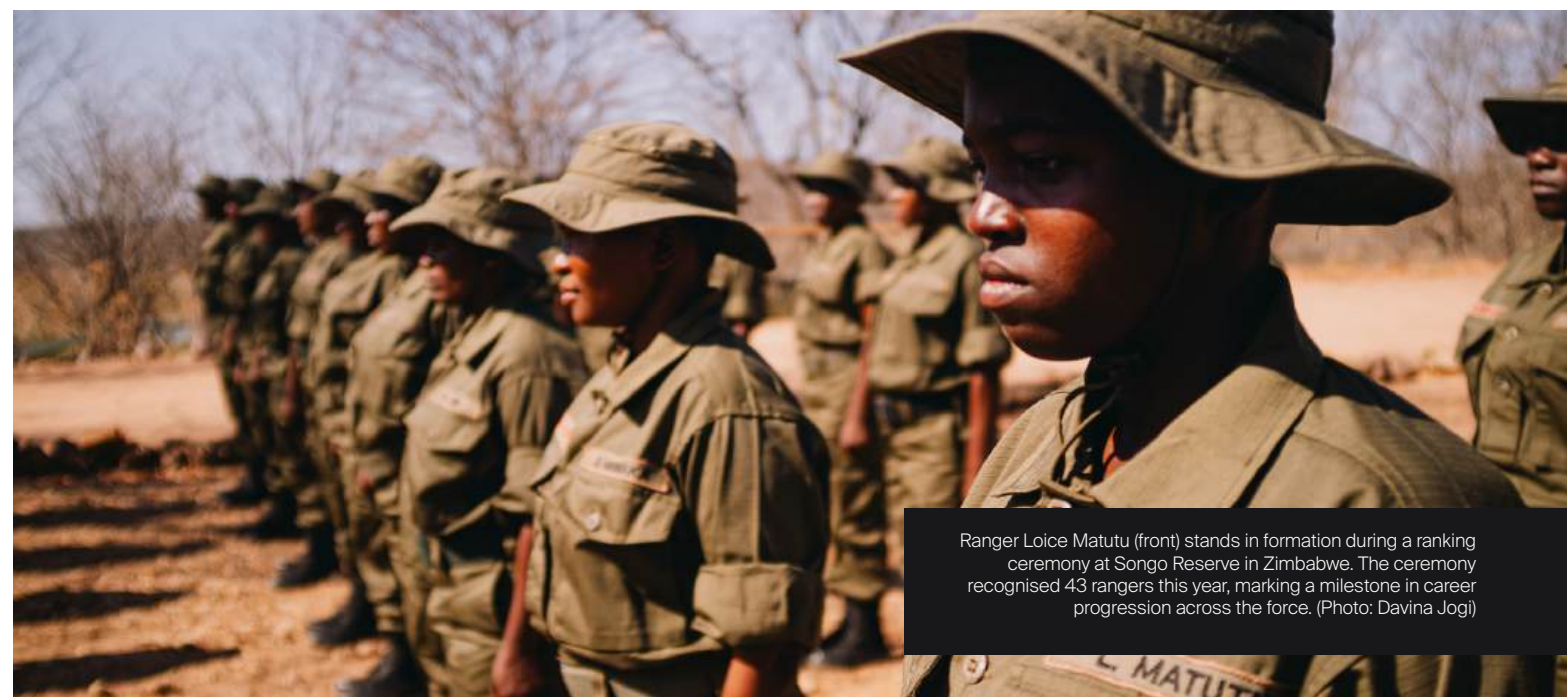
The Akashinga Academy kept that standard current year-round, with in-house training covering firearms proficiency, data systems, operational readiness, and physical fitness. A formal ranking ceremony recognising 43 rangers marked a real milestone in career progression, turning a job into a career worth staying in. That same investment in durability extends into the legal systems around enforcement. In August 2025, Akashinga West's Reserve General Manager Power Mupunga met with Zimbabwe's Prosecutor General to formalise a new partnership with the National Prosecuting Authority of Zimbabwe, built around three commitments: community awareness of the role local people play in wildlife protection, GPS and camera technology to strengthen prosecutions, and better training for both prosecutors and rangers. An arrest only matters if it holds up in court, and this partnership is what makes sure it does.



Rangers and conservation leaders take notes during the GEF EarthRanger Women's Summit at Phundundu, which brought together women from Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Mozambique for specialised training in the conservation technology used across Akashinga's operations. (Photo: Obscura Media)



Biodiversity Officer Nyaradzo Hoto and Habitat team member Norest Chirasasa weed saplings in the indigenous tree nursery they've established at Phundundu, a reforestation project that engages surrounding communities. (Photo: Davina Jogi)



Ranger Loice Matutu (front) stands in formation during a ranking ceremony at Songo Reserve in Zimbabwe. The ceremony recognised 43 rangers this year, marking a milestone in career progression across the force. (Photo: Davina Jogi)

“ The site we have in Mozambique is a massive area. That includes large forested areas, open palm savannah, and the concession boundaries run all the way to the Indian Ocean, including heavy mangrove forests. My role includes a mix of terrestrial ecology and marine and coastal ecology, because this isn’t two separate systems. It’s one landscape that happens to end in the ocean.”

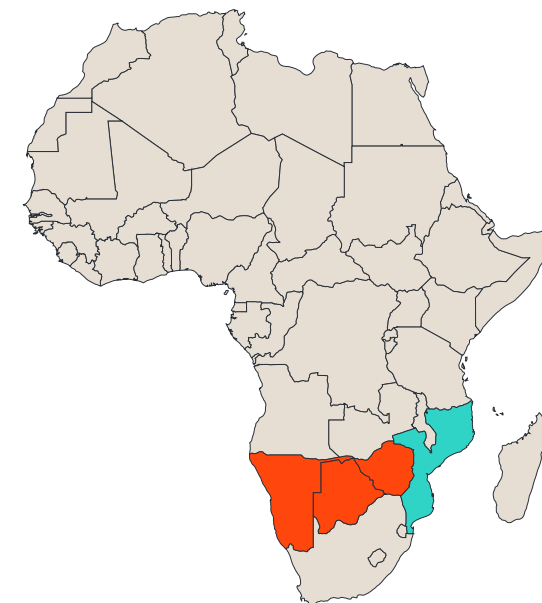
— Dr Jess Williams
COUNTRY SCIENTIST, MOZAMBIQUE



Children cross the tidal flats near Chiloane Island, part of the same coastline Akashinga's science team studies as one connected system, from mangrove forest to open ocean. (Photo: Glenda Beselemu)

Mozambique.

Entering its fourth year, Akashinga’s Mozambique programme continues to safeguard *Coutada 5*, the nation’s largest former trophy hunting concession, through an integrated approach uniting terrestrial and marine conservation.



An Akashinga Ranger patrols the misty terrain near N'Dzinda in Mozambique's Coutada 5 during the early morning. (Photo: Glenda Beselemu)

Where the Coast Meets the 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 and bordered by national parks, community lands, and 64 kilometres of coastline, C5 is one of only three core sites where Akashinga delivers primary programming directly, alongside Phundundu and Songo in Zimbabwe’s Zambezi Valley.

Offshore, the Save and connected Greater Bazaruto Seascapes shelter extraordinary biodiversity: five of the world’s seven sea turtle species, all vulnerable, endangered,

or critically endangered, alongside what may be one of the last viable dugong populations in the Western Indian Ocean. In 2025, Akashinga’s science team completed its first aerial baseline survey of the Save Seascape, mapping marine life, fishing activity, and habitats along this stretch of coastline. The survey recorded sightings of rays, sharks, dolphins, a foraging leatherback turtle, and a small group of five dugongs near the Save River mouth, a discovery that may represent a new population outside the species’ known range, and a genuine foundation for the long-term monitoring programme Akashinga is now building around it.

Onshore, C5 contains some of Mozambique’s most productive

mangrove systems, representing around 10% of the nation’s mangrove coverage. These forests act as nurseries for fish, protect communities from tidal surges and erosion, and function as powerful carbon sinks, even as they face escalating threats from cyclone frequency, illegal logging, overfishing, and poaching.

People choosing to protect this corridor is what actually holds it together. Akashinga’s approach combines ranger deployment, community-led initiatives, and scientific monitoring to reverse decades of ecological loss across this landscape, work that depends as much on the fishers and coastal communities who call C5 home as it does on any patrol.



A community member in Beia-Peia hands over a pangolin to an Akashinga Ranger on 19 June 2025, one of two pangolin rescue operations the community supported this year, ensuring the animal's safe return to the wild rather than the illegal trade. (Photo: Akashinga)

2025 Impact in Mozambique.

People

An awareness session about conservation law in a village square doesn't look like much on its own. Multiply it by dozens, across dozens of villages, over a full year, and it starts to look like the difference between enforcement and cooperation. Twenty-seven community members completed training for Natural Resource Conservation Committees in Zimuala and Beia-Peia this year, sessions run jointly by C5 management and community department staff, with Chiefs and local government officials in the room alongside them. That kind of engagement scaled across the year into 36 community meetings and workshops, 31 environmental awareness programmes, and 74 capacity-building sessions focused on governance and natural resource management, real, sustained contact rather than a once-a-year checkbox. A dedicated Human-Wildlife Conflict mitigation training in Mapadje e Beia-Peia gave residents practical, non-lethal tools to protect their crops and livelihoods, and the numbers back it up: a measurable decline in reported conflict incidents across the villages that took part.

The same pattern showed up repeatedly across the year, too consistent to call a single moment. Informal awareness sessions on conservation law in Dois Mil, Machanga junction, Mbassa, and Cruzamento de Machanga led, again and again, to residents voluntarily handing over homemade firearms, spring traps, steel cables, and snares, not because they were caught, but because the awareness work had done its job. Rangers also supported two separate pangolin rescue operations this year, removing animals at

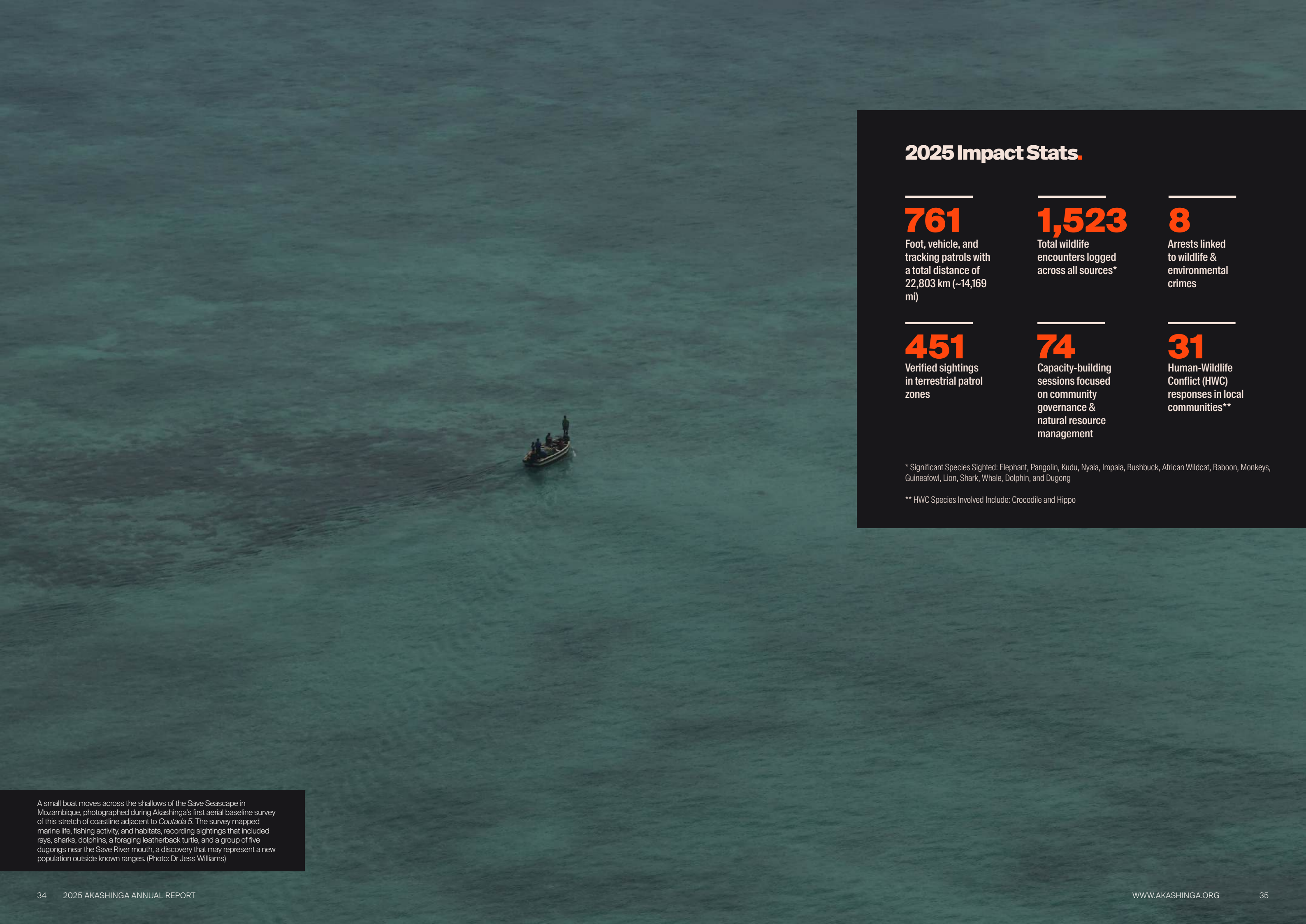
risk from illegal trade pathways.

On Chiloane Island in June, Akashinga's Science Department led a World Sea Turtle Day celebration bringing together more than 50 community leaders, teachers, students, rangers, and fishing committee members, a real gathering, not a symbolic one, built around the same species the Turtle Guard programme protects year-round. That programme is staffed entirely by former fishermen and, in some cases, former turtle poachers themselves, hired as *guardas de tartarugas* to patrol beaches, monitor fisheries landings, and watch for poaching through nesting season, a team that welcomed its first woman *guarda* this year. "We've had several times now where fishermen have called our guarda team and said, we've just accidentally caught a turtle, come help us release it," says Dr Jess Williams, Country Scientist for Mozambique. "That voluntary participation, and the ability to save these turtles and release them back to the open ocean, is an awesome success." Conservation awareness sessions delivered at primary schools on Inhagosse and Inharringué islands are building the next generation of the same stewardship.

A major education milestone landed in November with the completion of Zimuala Primary School. The original building had burned down; in its place now stand three fully furnished classrooms, 70 desks and chairs, and a 1,500-litre water tank, with 106 students walking in on day one carrying their own school kits.



Members of Akashinga's Turtle Guard team stand along the coastline on Chiloane Island. Drawn from local fishing communities, and in some cases former turtle poachers themselves, they now patrol these beaches to protect nesting turtles and monitor illegal fishing, a team that now includes a woman *guarda* for the first time. (Photo: Glenda Beselemu)



A small boat moves across the shallows of the Save Seascape in Mozambique, photographed during Akashinga's first aerial baseline survey of this stretch of coastline adjacent to *Coutada 5*. The survey mapped marine life, fishing activity, and habitats, recording sightings that included rays, sharks, dolphins, a foraging leatherback turtle, and a group of five dugongs near the Save River mouth, a discovery that may represent a new population outside known ranges. (Photo: Dr Jess Williams)

2025 Impact Stats.

761

Foot, vehicle, and tracking patrols with a total distance of 22,803 km (~14,169 mi)

1,523

Total wildlife encounters logged across all sources*

8

Arrests linked to wildlife & environmental crimes

451

Verified sightings in terrestrial patrol zones

74

Capacity-building sessions focused on community governance & natural resource management

31

Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) responses in local communities**

* Significant Species Sighted: Elephant, Pangolin, Kudu, Nyala, Impala, Bushbuck, African Wildcat, Baboon, Monkeys, Guineafowl, Lion, Shark, Whale, Dolphin, and Dugong

** HWC Species Involved Include: Crocodile and Hippo



Biodiversity Assistant Edilson Saize installs a camera trap at Nzinda in Mozambique's Coutada 5. Placed near water sources, trails, and ecological corridors, these cameras run for 45-day cycles with maintenance checks every 15 days, generating the data that shapes patrol planning and human-wildlife conflict strategy across the reserve. (Photo: Glenda Besselemu)

Planet

Frontline protection stayed a constant across *Coutada 5* throughout 2025. Rangers conducted 761 patrols covering 22,803 kilometres, on foot, by vehicle, and through targeted tracking, resulting in 8 arrests linked to wildlife-related crime and 10 joint operations with national law enforcement partners. Along the way, they recovered 710 snares and traps, four 12-gauge shotguns, four short-calibre firearms, four bows, eleven arrows, and a pile of timber logs, saws, axes, pangas, ammunition, and bolts, physical evidence of exactly how much pressure this landscape is still under.

One case cut deeper than the rest. In collaboration with the Wildlife Crime Unit and the Mozambique Wildlife Alliance, rangers helped seize eight kilograms of pangolin scales, traced to two pangolins killed for them, and arrest two suspects now facing prosecution in Machanga District Court. A pangolin doesn't survive its scales being taken. The two suspects now facing court do, and that's the distinction accountability is actually built on.

Biodiversity monitoring expanded significantly this year. Of those encounters, 451 were verified sightings across terrestrial patrol zones: elephant, pangolin, kudu, nyala, impala, bushbuck, African wildcat, baboon, monkeys, and guinea fowl, confirmation that this landscape's ecological richness has survived its history of exploitation. Camera traps recorded a genuine standout this year: a lion, caught on camera near Nzinda, a rare enough sighting that it reshaped what the science team believed possible for this stretch of *Coutada 5*. Forty-six camera traps

and monitoring at eight permanent water points now feed that picture with continuous data, tracking population stability and movement patterns rather than a single snapshot in time.

The biggest single finding of the year came from the water. A confirmed aerial sighting of a small group of dugongs north of the Save River mouth marked a genuine breakthrough for the Save Seascape, dugongs are among the most endangered marine mammals on Earth, and a live sighting like this one is rare enough to reshape how the science team plans future surveys. On land and along the coast, the Turtle Guard team covered 162.9 kilometres of beach and mangrove on Chiloane Island and 226.78 kilometres on Inharringué. That monitoring found both outcomes conservation work actually produces: a critically endangered juvenile hawksbill turtle rescued and released alive after local fishers spotted it first, and, on Inharringué's mangroves and beaches, five turtle carcasses recovered alongside one live green turtle found and released, evidence of losses the programme is working against as much as successes it's building on. Thirteen awareness sessions across the two islands that same period are the direct response to that data, not a separate initiative.

Coexistence work stayed steady too. Rangers responded to 31 human-wildlife conflict incidents this year, primarily involving crocodiles and hippos, species that pose an immediate risk to communities living along the river.

Future

Akashinga's Mozambique programme spent 2025 turning institutional foundations into institutional facts: a zonation plan concluded rather than proposed, a headquarters under construction rather than planned, a trafficking case moving through an actual courtroom rather than sitting in a police report.

The *Coutada 5* Zonation Plan was concluded in early 2025, with publication now in progress, a formal, legally recognised vision for how this ecosystem is managed going forward. This is a document local authorities can govern by.

Construction at N'Dzinda Headquarters advanced through a second phase this year: a new ranger dormitory block, gatehouse, septic systems and ablution facilities, and the start of a solar energy system, work that trades short-term convenience for lower costs, lower environmental impact, and better living conditions for field teams based there for years, not months. In

November, N'Dzinda Camp hosted the graduation of the Second Class of Akashinga Forest and Wildlife Rangers, attended by senior officials from Mozambique's National Authority for Conservation Areas and the Sofala Province Chief Prosecutor, institutional recognition a programme still finding its footing simply doesn't attract.

That investment extended to the people already in the field, not just the buildings around them. A seven-day Plant-Based Nutrition and Cooking Training reached seven field cooks this year, covering everything from balanced meal planning to food hygiene and stock control, and a further nutrition education session reached 30 rangers and senior staff directly. An on-site camp assessment tested whether ration standards actually held up against the physical demands of field operations, and trained eight rangers on the findings, the kind of unglamorous, practical maintenance that keeps a ranger force able to do the work another five years from now, not just this one.

The pangolin trafficking case that began with

an August seizure of scales and an arrest is still working its way through Machanga District Court as this report goes to print. That's not a loose end left dangling for effect. It's what accountability actually requires: enforcement that survives past the moment of arrest, all the way to a courtroom, because a conservation model that stops at confiscation doesn't change the incentives driving the crime in the first place.

Marine governance took a real step forward too. A multi-stakeholder review meeting on Chiloane Island brought together Akashinga leadership, local government, Marine Police, and community leaders from both Chiloane and Inharringué to align on the Turtle Guard programme's direction, the kind of shared ownership that has to exist before community-managed marine protected areas, the next phase Akashinga is building toward, can actually work. The four Turtle Guards covering these islands walked nearly 390 kilometres this year, on foot, on sand, in a job that didn't exist before this programme created it.



The Second Class of Akashinga Rangers on parade at their graduation, N'Dzinda Camp, November 2025. (Photo: Charmaine Chitate)

Botswana.

Since 2021, Akashinga has worked with Kalahari Research and Conservation (KRC) across the Greater Kgalagadi, a corridor lion and wild dog cross as one continuous range. In 2025 the partnership operated across four Wildlife Management Areas. Under Botswana’s Community-Based Natural Resource Management model, the Community Trusts here hold the authority and decide what conservation revenue builds. This year it built gate operations, solar power, school gardens, and connectivity, alongside ten community scouts and horseback patrols reaching country vehicles cannot. Conservation that communities own is conservation that lasts.



The Scale of Wild Things

Kgalagadi means place of thirst. That is the first thing to understand about this landscape, and most of what follows from it. Rain is scarce and unreliable, and the people and animals living here have organised themselves around that fact for a very long time. The communities of KD1 and KD2, Bakgalagadi and Basarwa, are among the oldest on the planet, and they have lived alongside this wildlife for centuries.

What these areas share is position. KD1 and KD2 sit in the Wildlife Management Area corridor between the Central Kalahari Game Reserve and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, a park of 38,000 square kilometres straddling the border with South Africa. KD15 extends that same connective ground southward, and its addition in 2024, alongside Modisa Wildlife Project, brought a further 1.93 million acres under joint stewardship. Seventeen per cent of Botswana is designated as national parks and game reserves, with a further 21 per cent classified as Wildlife Management Areas. That second figure is the important one here. It is the ground communities themselves

govern.

The wildlife has always treated it as one range. Six wild dog packs tracked through 2025 moved across KD1, KD2, KD12, KD15, and the transfrontier park without registering a boundary between them. Five lions fitted with satellite collars this year spent most of their time outside formally protected areas altogether, living on community ground. That data settles an old question about where Kalahari conservation actually happens. Meanwhile the pressure on this corridor is rising, with bushmeat poaching and human-wildlife conflict both increasing across KD1 and KD2. Connectivity is not an aspiration here. It is the difference between a lion population and a remnant.

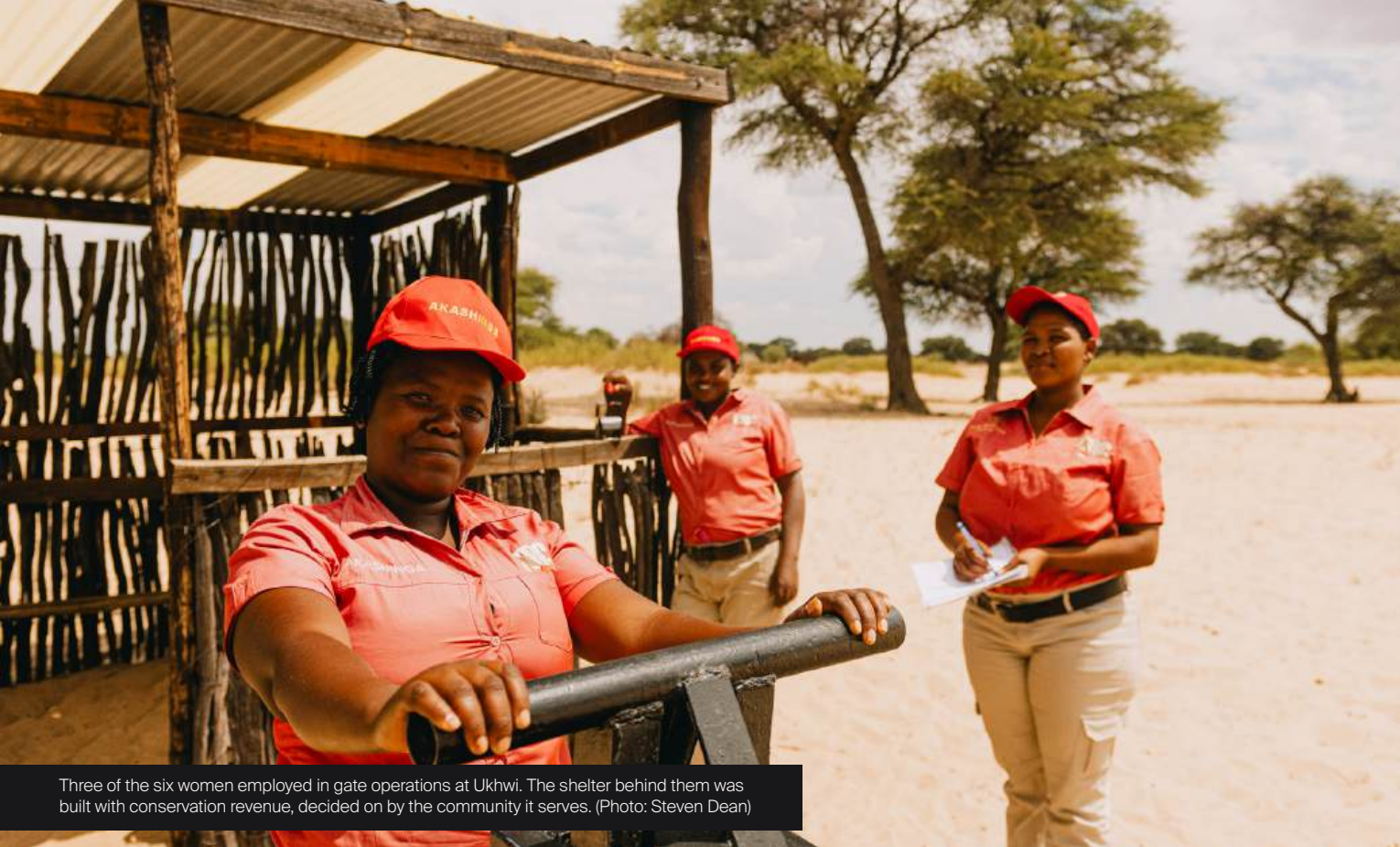
The skills to work at that scale were already present. Tracking in this region is San heritage, carried for generations before it was ever a conservation qualification, and the partnership has been rebuilding it deliberately since 2020. In August 2023, Tracker Academy South Africa ran an intensive course at the Nakalatshphe and

Name pan campsites in KD2, training sixteen trackers, eight women and eight men, in keeping with San egalitarian values that never treated this as men's work. In 2025 the line continued at Jack's Camp Academy in Makgadikgadi, with participants drawn from neighbouring communities as well.

That is why Botswana runs as a partnership. Since 2021, Akashinga has worked here with Kalahari Research and Conservation inside a system Botswana already built. Under the country's Community-Based Natural Resource Management model, the Community Trusts in these villages hold legal authority over the wildlife and resources in their areas and decide what conservation revenue funds. The partnership exists to make that authority operational, and in 2025 that meant ten community scouts employed along conservation boundaries, six women running gate operations at Ukhwi, and patrols moving to horseback across terrain no vehicle can cross, six horses covering ground daily that had been out of reach.



Open country in the Greater Kgalagadi. At this scale a boundary is an administrative idea rather than a physical one, and the wildlife moving through here treats four Wildlife Management Areas and a transfrontier park as a single range. (Photo: Steven Dean)



Three of the six women employed in gate operations at Ukhwi. The shelter behind them was built with conservation revenue, decided on by the community it serves. (Photo: Steven Dean)

2025 Impact in Botswana.

What a Gate Pays For

The boom gates at Zutshwa, Ngwatle, and Ukhwi are the least dramatic infrastructure Akashinga supports anywhere, and in Botswana they sit close to the centre of everything. Every vehicle entering these Wildlife Management Areas stops at one. Community members staff them, record who is coming in and where they are heading, and collect the fees that eco-tourism generates. That makes a gate three things at once: a source of revenue, a job held locally, and a piece of enforcement, because a log of every vehicle moving through a concession is precisely the information an anti-poaching patrol needs.

What that revenue built in 2025 was decided village by village. Ncaang put solar power into the village cooperative society and the pre-school, and finished a garden at the primary school. Zutshwa built ablution facilities at the soccer pitch, pit latrines at the community kgotla, and a shelter at the gate, and funded uniforms, stationery, student awards, and disaster management tents. Ukhwi constructed a new gate structure and employed six women to run it. In Khawa, the KD15 community chose connectivity,

and Starlink went in at the community centre alongside campsite infrastructure, directional signage, and clean-up campaigns organised by residents themselves. None of this was allocated from outside. Community Trusts named the priorities and conservation income paid for them, which is Botswana's Community-Based Natural Resource Management model doing exactly what it was designed to do. In 2025 the eco-tourism partnership approach was introduced to the KD12 community trust and leadership, opening a fourth area to the same arrangement.

Working the Corridor

Wildlife crime in KD1 and KD2 pays no attention to which agency is responsible for responding to it, so the year's enforcement work went into getting the right people into the same vehicle. Joint deployments with the Botswana Police Service, the Botswana Defence Force, and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Anti-Poaching Unit ran across key wildlife corridors through 2025. Forty poaching incidents were detected. Ninety-eight arrests followed.

The more durable result is a District Law Enforcement Committee, newly established this year, which brings government agencies, conservation partners, and community leadership into standing coordination rather than case-by-case contact. It now anchors wildlife crime prevention, environmental education, and intelligence sharing across the region. Arrest numbers describe a year. A committee that meets describes what happens after the year ends.

What the Collars Show

Five lions were fitted with satellite collars in 2025, most of them living outside formally protected areas, and the data settled an argument. These animals spend a great deal of their time on community ground, which means the Wildlife Management Areas are not a buffer around Kalahari lion conservation. They are a substantial part of where it happens. Between June and September, with support from the Lion Recovery Fund, a full survey ran across the eastern and southern Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, KD12, and KD15, and a PhD researcher is now working through movement



A field training session in the western Kalahari. Programmes through 2025 covered gate operations, tourism management, animal welfare for the horses now in patrol service, and EarthRanger for mounted teams and predation scribes. (Photo: Steven Dean)

and population data alongside dietary composition drawn from scat analysis.

Six wild dog packs are under satellite and VHF monitoring, ranging across the transfrontier park, KD1, KD2, KD12, and KD15. Individual identification began this year, which opens up dispersal tracking and long-term population modelling that pack-level data alone cannot support. Alongside it, 110 farmers in Zutshwa and Ngwatle were surveyed on conflict intensity and their attitudes toward wild dogs, on the reasoning that a mitigation strategy built without asking the people living with the animals is a strategy with a short life.

Ten community scouts worked conservation boundaries through the year, managing livestock movement and reducing the friction that turns into conflict. Covering that ground was the constraint. Sand too deep for vehicles, distances too great on foot. In 2025 patrols moved to horseback, six horses put into daily service, with EarthRanger training delivered to the mounted teams and to livestock predation scribes so that what a patrol sees becomes data the same day.

Skills That Stay

Tracking in this region is San heritage, and

it has been carried here for far longer than anyone has been conserving anything. In 2025 that line continued at Jack's Camp Academy in Makgadikgadi, where professional tracker training took participants from these villages and from neighbouring communities as well. Other training through the year ran closer to the daily work: animal welfare instruction for farmers, focused on the horses now in patrol service; gate operations and tourism management; wildlife crime prevention workshops for Hukuntsi District leadership; and climate awareness covering both mitigation and adaptation, which in a landscape this dry is not an abstract subject.

In Zutshwa, multi-phase workshops delivered with Women Against Rape brought women together on leadership and self-advocacy, on gender-based violence, on alcohol and substance abuse, and on the referral pathways that determine whether support actually reaches someone who needs it. Across KD1, women and children were connected to assistance through the Social and Community Development Division of the Hukuntsi District Council. The six women running gate operations at Ukhwi are part of the same trajectory, one that puts women in paid, visible, permanent roles inside the conservation economy rather than adjacent

to it.

Rugby and Lions

Two adult conservation groups, one in Ngwatle and one in Zutshwa, each with more than thirty active members, worked through structured programmes on climate resilience, lion conservation, and invasive species management. Climate sessions alone reached 360 participants across the year.

With younger people the approach was different. Rugby turned out to be the thing that brought them, so rugby became the platform. Programmes ran in Ngwatle, Ukhwi, and Zutshwa, with local coaches trained and employed to lead them, extending into primary schools through the year. Quarterly festivals brought villages together to compete, and community teams travelled to Jwaneng to play as curtain raisers at a national tournament. Conservation messaging ran through all of it, but the more important outcome may be simpler. Children in some of the most remote villages in Botswana spent 2025 representing their community somewhere else, and coming home having done well.

Namibia.

Akashinga works in Namibia’s Kunene Highlands with **Conserve Global** as primary implementing partner, supporting the communal conservancies that govern this landscape.



Everything Meets at Water

The Kunene Highlands run 10,000 square kilometres between Etosha National Park and the pro-Namib conservancies at the edge of the Skeleton Coast, one of the most significant ecological corridors in southern Africa. Elephants move through it, along with predators and the zebra and kudu they follow, and so do the pastoralist families who have worked this country for generations. Under Namibia’s Community-Based Natural Resource Management model, the conservancies here hold governance over their own ground. Akashinga’s role, alongside Conserve Global and Kunene Conservation, is to resource the institutions that lead the work rather than to lead it.

Water is where the pressure concentrates. People, livestock, and elephants draw on the same sources, which makes a waterpoint the place where coexistence is either designed for or fought over. In 2025 the programme upgraded seven of them, bringing the total to thirteen, and trained 114 community members to run and maintain them. In September, a twenty-year Service Level Agreement with Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy became the first new agreement of its kind here, moving the landscape toward a 5,689 square kilometre target under formal agreement by 2026.



Maize stands at a protected garden in the Kunene Highlands, where fencing has kept elephant damage out through the growing season. (Photo: Peter Chadwick)



Electrified fencing in the Kunene Highlands, protecting cultivated ground from elephant damage. (Photo: Peter Chadwick)

2025 Impact in Namibia.

The First Sixty Per Cent

In 2025 all four conservancies adopted a 60:40 revenue-sharing model, with sixty per cent of income going to the community and forty to operations. Revenue accounts are now co-signed by elected block representatives, which means money cannot move without someone the community chose putting their name to it.

Orupupa was the first to receive its sixty per cent share. The conservancy spent it on firefighting equipment and placed the remainder in an interest-bearing account. That decision is worth pausing on. Given a first real allocation, Orupupa bought protection for the ecosystem it manages and put the rest somewhere it would grow. Nothing in the structure required that. It is what happens when the people making the decision are the people who live with the consequences.

The governance around it became routine this year, which is the highest compliment available in this kind of work. Monthly Conservancy Management Committee meetings, quarterly Joint Management Committee meetings, and AGMs all held consistently. Quarterly block-level meetings were reinstated, restoring the grassroots layer of CBNRM and pushing accountability downward toward members rather than upward toward funders. Joint patrols now run across conservancy boundaries, including between Orupupa and Ehi-Rovipuka. Engagement with the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism deepened at both regional and headquarters level, and coordination with the Young Professional Accountants programme will bring formal financial management training and stronger audit compliance in 2026.

Thirteen Waterpoints

Seven waterpoints were upgraded across Orupupa and Okangundumba Conservancies in 2025, bringing the total to thirteen since the programme began. Solar pumps replaced less reliable systems. Elephant protection walls went up around infrastructure. Reservoirs were repaired and pipelines upgraded, and selected sites received wildlife troughs to reduce competition where people, livestock, and elephants arrive at the same source.

Human-elephant conflict has fallen markedly wherever water reliability is now assured. That phrasing matters. The conflict was never really about elephants. It was about a small number of water sources and too many claims on them, and it eases when the water works.

Nineteen Water Point Committees were established during the year, and 114 community members, 42 of them women, trained with the Department of Rural Water Supply in operations, maintenance, and bylaw compliance. The shift is from repair to prevention, and from waiting for outside help to holding both the skill and the authority locally. A waterpoint maintained by the

people who depend on it will outlast one maintained by anybody else.

Forty Farmers

At the Okakaujo communal garden in Ozondundu Conservancy, 400 metres of electrified fence now surrounds ground worked by forty farmers. Since installation, elephant damage there has been zero, and food security for those households has improved directly as a result.

Against N\$14 million camps and twenty-year agreements, 400 metres of wire is a small line. For forty households it is the difference between a harvest and a loss.

Monitoring expanded alongside it, with camera traps deployed at six sites feeding into the Event Book system conservancy members already use to record wildlife, livestock, and conflict incidents. Both streams now reach annual national audits, which means observations made by people walking their own ground end up in the data Namibia manages wildlife by.

Four Sites and Counting

Ekoto, a self-catering camp in Orupupa Conservancy, was completed in September 2025 and opened in November. The N\$14 million investment was half financed by Conserve and Kunene Conservation on behalf of the conservancy, and it now generates monthly lease and occupancy fees. For Orupupa this is a first: consistent tourism revenue, arriving every month, feeding the sixty per cent share.

An Ekoto Joint Management Committee brings The Forgotten Valley Camps, the Conservancy, and Kunene Conservation into shared governance of the asset. Community tourism ventures tend to come apart at the same point, a few years in, when the operator runs the business and the community receives a payment and nobody is certain who is responsible for what. Establishing the structure before that question arises is the whole idea.

Three further sites advanced through planning and design in 2025. Otjitaime in Ozondundu, built around tufa cliffs and caves, is moving through Land Board processes. Omuuandjai in Okangundumba has strong potential for elephant viewing drawn from Opuwo. And Okatutu in Ehi-Rovipuka carries the most significant prospect of the three, after the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism granted the conservancy rights to an adjoining exclusive access area inside Etosha National Park. A community conservancy holding exclusive access to part of Namibia’s most visited park is a considerable position to be in. Preliminary operator interest is established, and joint venture development is the focus for 2026.

Leadership Spotlight: Nyaradzo Hoto.

Growing What Belongs Here

Nyaradzo Auxilia Hoto grew up in Huyo village, in Nyamakate, in the Zambezi Valley. The reserve she works in now was the country of her childhood, and from an early age she wanted to do something for it and for the animals in it.

There was a difficulty in that ambition, which was that the rangers she saw in her life were men. She has described the moment that shifted it, and it did not happen in a classroom or a training camp. She works near the highway that runs north towards Zambia, and one day she saw a woman driving a truck along it. Nyaradzo says she would not have believed such a thing as a child, and that seeing it made her understand that nothing was holding back her aspirations.

When Akashinga ran its first pilot training programme in 2017, she was in it. She says the prospect of an all-female ranger team drew her because it was a chance to prove something to herself and to others, in a space that had not previously been open to women at all.

She spent a year on patrol as a junior ranger, learning Phundundu Reserve on foot. Then in 2019 an opportunity to study arrived, and she took it, choosing a Wildlife, Ecology and Conservation degree because it would sharpen the work she was already doing and improve how she could explain conservation to the people around her. She graduated from Chinhoyi University of Technology with a Bachelor of Science. Along the way she commanded ranger teams, and in 2022, at the IUCN Africa Protected Areas Congress in Kigali, she received an International Ranger Award, one of twelve rangers and ranger teams recognised worldwide that year for their commitment to protecting nature and supporting the communities around it.

In 2023 she became Akashinga’s Biodiversity Officer.

The role puts her at the point where fieldwork becomes evidence. Every patrol that goes out across Phundundu comes back with observations, and every camera trap deployed across the reserve produces images that must be analyzed and stored properly. In Phundundu, Nyaradzo leads the research and data analysis that turns all of it into something the organisation can act on. Where wildlife is moving. What is recovering and what is not. Which claims about this landscape can be made and which cannot yet be supported. Rangers walk thousands of kilometres a year in the Zambezi Valley. What that walking is worth depends on the person making sense of what they bring back.

It is a different kind of leadership from commanding a patrol, and she came to it having done both.

At Phundundu, Nyaradzo and the Habitat team have established an indigenous tree nursery. In 2025 they propagated twenty thousand indigenous seedlings there, grown from seed collected in the surrounding communities, held in the nursery until a vegetation survey establishes where each species belongs on the reserve. It is a long way of doing reforestation. It is also the only way that produces woodland, because the trees going into the ground are the trees that were here before, sourced from the people who live alongside them.

The nursery employs people from villages around Phundundu, which is the point as much as the seedlings are. Nyaradzo has been consistent about the connection between what grows and who benefits, saying, “As we grow vegetables, we are also supporting climate action.”

She works with a small team, and she is building it deliberately. Rangers rotate in from patrol to learn identification and monitoring, which means the knowledge is being distributed rather than concentrated. A biodiversity programme that depends entirely on one person is a programme with an expiry date. Nyaradzo is running hers so that it does not have one.

In 2025 she was one of fourteen women invited to speak at TEDx Vail Next. She used the platform to talk about the road from Huyo village to a research role, and about what changes when women are central to conservation rather than peripheral to it. Her own summary of it is unsentimental: with perseverance, commitment, and support, remarkable change is possible.

She is not finished. A master’s degree is the next step, and she has been open for years about where she is going. Asked where she sees herself in five years, she says a Chief Ecologist.

She has two daughters. The wildlife she works to protect, and the woodland she is growing seedling by seedling at Phundundu, are for them, and for whoever comes after them.

Nyaradzo Hoto identifying ground vegetation in the Phundundu landscape, where she leads Akashinga’s biodiversity research. Knowing what grows here is the foundation everything else is measured against. (Photo: Glenda Beselemu)



Our Donors.

The work described in this report was made possible by the individuals, foundations, companies, partner organisations, and government bodies named here. Some have been with Akashinga for years. Others joined in 2025. What their support became is set out in the preceding pages: rangers trained and employed in the districts they come from, waterpoints rebuilt and handed to the committees who now maintain them, gardens brought through a season intact, new ground brought under protection. All of them chose to back conservation led by the people living closest to it, and to trust them with the decisions that follow. Thank you.

- Andrew Shanahan, Andrew’s Airport Parking
- Anonymous
- Ariel Premium Supply, Inc.
- The Australian Government – Direct Aid Program Harare
- The Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust
- Brian and Thayer McGregor
- Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
- The Cathy and Jack Demos Charitable Fund
- Christa Percopo
- Darwin Initiative (Via DEFRA)
- David Reuben
- Dume Wolverine Foundation
- Edward T Engle Jr Revocable Trust
- Essential Foods
- Farvue Foundation
- Gail W. Berkley
- Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC) – Resilience Fund
- International Anti-Poaching Foundation Limited
- Joan Egrie
- Judith Neilson Foundation
- Judy Pigott
- Kathy Rall
- Lori Price
- Payne-Brodeur Giving Fund
- Scott & Jessica McClintock Foundation
- Tom Malzbender
- Wildhood Foundation
- Yaffa Foundation
- 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
- Thin Green Line Foundation
- Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority

Our Partners.

Nothing described here was done by Akashinga alone. Every landscape in this report is protected through partnership: with host governments and their ministries, with wildlife authorities and conservation agencies, with traditional leadership, and with local and international organisations that bring capabilities we do not have. Those relationships are what allow this work to fit national priorities rather than sit alongside them, and to continue when any single organisation cannot. We are grateful for the trust behind each one.

An aerial view of elephants crossing the Songo floodplains, Binga District, on Lake Kariba. (Photo: Steven Dean)

Our Leadership.

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

Akashinga’s Current Leadership Team

- Dr Stacy Crevello // Chief Executive Officer (Steering Committee)
- Dory Gannes // Senior Director of Development (Steering Committee)
- Erin J. Mullikin // Senior Director of Brand & Marketing (Steering Committee)
- Bastiaan Boon // Director of Operations (Steering Committee)
- Dr Ranga Huruba // Country Manager (Zimbabwe)
- Chris Chiparaushe // Reserve General Manager (Akashinga East, Zimbabwe)
- Power Mupunga // Reserve General Manager (Akashinga West, Zimbabwe)
- Tiago Lidimba // Project Manager (Mozambique)
- Dr Byron du Preez // Director of Science
- Dr Joshua Tsamba // Country Scientist (Zimbabwe)
- Dr Jess Williams // Country Scientist (Mozambique)
- Margaret Darawanda // Head of Operations, (Akashinga East, Zimbabwe)
- Maxwell Hanyisi // Head of Operations, (Akashinga West, Zimbabwe)
- Petronella Chigumbura // Deputy Head of Operations (Akashinga East, Zimbabwe)
- Talent Sonele Dube // Deputy Head of Operations (Akashinga West, Zimbabwe)
- Pamela Maisiri // Training Program Manager
- Arnaldo Damião Simão // Head of Operations Support (Mozambique)
- Wadzanai Munemo // Ranger Supervisor (Akashinga West, Zimbabwe)
- Valentina Ceciliano Feliz // Ranger Supervisor (Mozambique)
- Nyaradzo Auxilia Hoto // Biodiversity Officer (Akashinga East, Zimbabwe)
- Oras Moyo // Liaison & Development Officer (Zimbabwe)
- Blessing Neya // Community Development Manager (Akashinga East, Zimbabwe)
- Castro Franque // Community Development Supervisor (Mozambique)

Akashinga’s Current Board of Directors & Advisory Committee

- Kristin Brooks Titus // Akashinga Board Secretary
- Neilesh Shelat // Akashinga Board Member
- Ashley Sogge // Akashinga Board Member
- Gwen Franklin // Strategic Advisor – Development and Partnerships
- Elizabeth Atherton // Advisory Committee Member
- Janet McCartney // Advisory Committee Member
- Zainab Salbi // Advisory Committee Member
- Susan Vitka // Advisory Committee Member
- Philip Wollen, OAM // Advisory Committee Member





An Akashinga Ranger at Phundundu. Protection is a continuing cost rather than a project expense, which is why predictable funding matters. (Photo: Obscura Media)

Financials.

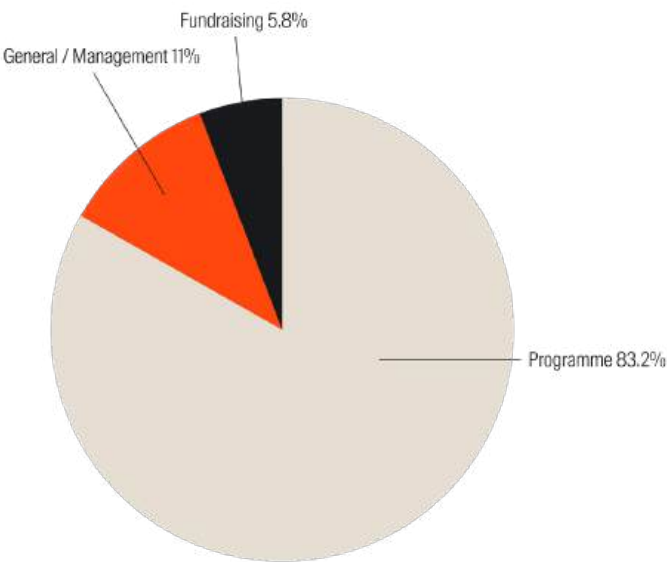
Our overhead is covered by the generosity of one of our donors. Therefore, 100% of all donations go directly to our programme and mission.

2025 demonstrated the resilience of Akashinga’s field teams and community partnerships through significant leadership and organisational transition. It also reinforced the importance of building a more diversified and durable financial base for the years ahead.

2025 Consolidated Audited Statement of Activities

Operating Revenue Total	
Without Donor Restrictions	\$8,176,823
With Donor Restrictions	(\$3,956,352)
Total Income:	\$4,220,471
Operating Expenses	
Fundraising	\$566,622
General/Management	\$1,078,148
Programmes Total	\$8,137,603
Education & Outreach	\$236,436
Akashinga Programme	\$7,553,528
LEAD Ranger	\$280,758
Environmental Protection Unit	\$66,881
Total Expenses:	\$9,782,373
Total Expenses:	\$9,782,373
Net Assets End of Year:	\$4,298,433

Revenue Allocation



- Programme 83.2%
- General / Management 11%
- Fundraising 5.8%



Join Us: How to Get Involved.

Every acre held, every ranger trained, every child in school this year happened because someone decided to be part of it. That’s the invitation.

Donate

A gift to Akashinga goes directly toward the people carrying this work forward: rangers on patrol, clinics treating thousands of patients a month, classrooms rebuilt after a fire took the last one. Give online at www.akashinga.org/donate, or make a tax-deductible contribution by calling +1 540-316-0019 or by mail to Akashinga, 29476 Northwestern Hwy, Ste 531, Southfield, MI 48034, USA.

Future Gifts

A gift in your will extends this work well beyond any single year of giving. Contact info@akashinga.org to talk through what that could look like.

Fundraise

Bring your own community into this. Start a fundraising campaign, and we’ll help you make the case to the people around you. Visit www.akashinga.org/fundraise to get started.

Join Our Community

Follow the work as it happens: our socials all carry ranger dispatches and field updates in real time.

 [Instagram](#)

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Thank You.

This report is a record of what got protected, built, and grown in 2025, but it’s also something closer to a letter: from the rangers on patrol at dawn, from the students back in a rebuilt classroom, from every community that decided this work was worth doing alongside us, to every one of you who made it possible.

You didn’t just fund a budget line this year. You backed a model that puts real authority in the hands of the women and communities who’ve always been best positioned to protect these ecosystems, and you stood behind it through a year that asked real questions of every organisation doing work like this. That kind of belief doesn’t show up as a single statistic, but it’s underneath every one in this report.

Thank you for being part of what held, and for what comes next.



[Contents Spread] Low tide on Chiloane Island, in Mozambique’s Save Seascape. (Photo: Glenda Beselemu); **[Back Cover]** A spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*) near Phundundu. Predators returning to the Zambezi Valley is among the clearest signs an ecosystem is recovering. (Photo: Erin J. Mullikin)

Together, we thrive.

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