

## CONSERVATION UPDATES FROM OUR DONORS

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### **Fighting for their survival: The International Rhino Foundation ensures the survival of rhinos through strategic partnerships, targeted protection, and scientifically sound interventions**

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The International Rhino Foundation (IRF), based in the United States operates on-the-ground programmes in Africa and Asia where rhinos live in the wild, supporting viable populations of the five remaining rhino species and the communities that coexist with them.

Through grants and field programmes, IRF has funded rhino conservation efforts in 10 countries, focusing on scientific research, anti-poaching, habitat conservation, captive breeding, environmental education, and demand reduction strategies. Over the last decade more than \$20 million has been invested in rhino conservation.

The organization was founded by concerned individuals in response to intense poaching of Zimbabwe's black rhinos in the early 1990s. IRF with supporters and partners helped to virtually eliminate the threat and stabilize the population there. To this day, we support conservation programmes in Zimbabwe and IRF has expanded to support all five species of rhinos.

IRF prioritizes collaboration. Through a network of hundreds of conservation organizations, private foundations, corporations, government agencies and individuals all over the world, we achieve common goals for rhinos together. We are Team Rhino.

IRF listens to local communities living in close proximity to rhino populations. Working together, we participate in mutually beneficial partnerships

through wildlife conservation. A key objective is to build a unified front to save rhinos by engaging and activating the many people around the world who are as concerned as we are about the rhino. Our global team of rhino conservationists is calling for an end to rhino poaching and sharing the plight of the rhino with others.

### **Rhinos in crisis**

Rhinos are in crisis. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were 500,000 rhinos roaming the earth. By 1970, the worldwide population plummeted to 70,000. Today, the number of rhinos surviving in the world is just 28,000.

Furthermore, three of five species remaining are threatened with extinction. Black rhinos in Africa and Javan and Sumatran rhinos in Indonesia are critically endangered, the reality is that they could go extinct in our lifetime.

In the last decade, poachers have killed almost 10,000 rhinos across Africa to feed the demand for rhino horn in the illegal wildlife trade. If rhino deaths outpace births, their populations will continue to decline.

Burgeoning middle classes in China and Vietnam are increasingly able to afford rhino horn, which is illegally traded on the black market. (Rhinos are poached for their horn, which is primarily made of the protein keratin—the same substance as your hair and fingernails). This demand drives record poaching rates. Consumers in Vietnam use rhino horn as purported

cures for everything from hangovers to cancer and in showing-off their wealth. Consumers in China use rhino horn as a status symbol and in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) to reduce fever and treat other ailments. There is no scientific evidence that rhino horn has any significant medicinal value, and other products have better efficacy than rhino horn at affordable prices.

Human development especially in Indonesia oil palm plantations and coal mining has fragmented landscapes where Sumatran rhinos live. Furthermore, Sumatran rhinos are mostly solitary or live in small, isolated units and this decreases the probability of breeding-age animals encountering one another across divided ecosystems.

We advocate that range countries and consumer countries alike crack down on corruption, enforce their laws, and uphold their commitments to international treaties. This is crucial if rhinos are to survive.

## **Taking action to reverse the decline**

IRF has outlined the following four priorities for all five species of rhinos:

1. Bolster anti-poaching activities or “boots on the ground” to meet the challenge of increased poaching created by economic losses.
2. Maintain intensive monitoring and active management of wild populations in the face of revenue losses, employing conservation breeding where needed.
3. Work with local communities to ensure they are active participants in wildlife conservation and receive economic incentives that improve livelihoods.
4. Governments must commit to enforcing their wildlife crime laws with commitments to international treaties to foster more effective international collaboration on investigations to address the entire criminal supply chain, particularly in Asia.

Throughout its 30-year history, the International Rhino Foundation has supported and managed rhino conservation projects in Africa and Asia. Our core values—integrity, collaboration, adaptability, sound decision-making and commitment—are at the heart of everything we do.

IRF invites you to join Team Rhino as a partner, supporter or advocate. More information is available at [rhinos.org](http://rhinos.org).



Pumpkin, a black rhino orphaned in Zimbabwe when her mother was shot by poachers, was rehabilitated and successfully released back to the wild.



Rocky, a young black rhino in Zimbabwe  
Photos: Lowveld Rhino Trust for the International Rhino Foundation.