

Scaling the Rhino Ranger Incentive scheme

During the past six months, something very special has been happening in the remote northeast of Namibia. Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) have been working together to expand the rangeland of the Critically Endangered black rhino, whilst creating much-needed employment opportunities for local people.

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Namibia hosts around one-third of the world's remaining black rhino population (a total of 2,156 black rhinos were estimated at the end of 2021) and the country is recognised as the last stronghold of the South-western subspecies.

Nyae Nyae Conservancy has recently become the first community conservancy in Namibia to have populations of both black and white rhinos.

Of course, we want to see the rhino population grow, and for this to happen, we must secure more habitat. Successful rhino introductions, however, rely on engaging and empowering local people in rhino protection efforts.

SRT and MEFT have been working together on a rangeland expansion project at Nyae Nyae Conservancy, a community-run conservancy that was first established in 1988. It has recently become the first community conservancy in Namibia to have populations of both black and white rhinos, after white rhinos were translocated into the Conservancy in March 2021. Thanks to the Rhino Ranger Incentive Programme (CRR) – a programme spearheaded by Save the Rhino Trust – more rangers are now monitoring and protecting these rhinos.



The CRR was first implemented in the Kunene Region, where SRT is based, by understanding the needs of local communities and developing strategies that would support them and the rhinos around them. These strategies include:

- Monetary and non-monetary incentives
- Development of community-led eco-tourism enterprises
- Creating a sense of ownership and stewardship toward rhinos
- Improving education and awareness about conservation and the illegal wildlife trade

Pursuing a partnership with the Nyae Nyae Conservancy has been an ideal opportunity to test the scalability of



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the CRR programme. It has shown that with the right mix of local buy-in, enabling policy frameworks, and incentives, rhinos can thrive outside of formally protected areas.

To date, six new rhino rangers have been hired by Nyae Nyae and several exchange visits between Nyae Nyae and Kunene have taken place. The new rangers have undergone rhino monitoring training, basic first aid training and have spent time on patrol with experienced ranger teams. All Nyae Nyae's new rangers have received field equipment for patrols and are already reporting conservation success.

The expansion of the CRR programme represents a watershed moment in Namibia's conservation history. The move indicates the success of the programme, as well as strong

buy-in from the Namibian Government, showing its commitment to the community-based conservation model. We hope the CRR programme can be an example for other African countries, showing mutual benefits for communities and conservation.

Rangers working within the community rhino ranger programme are supporting key rhino monitoring and protection efforts across Namibia.

Last year, you raised £8,592 to support rangers at Nyae Nyae Conservancy, through our Keep Rhinos Connected appeal. This helped purchase remote camera traps placed around Nyae Nyae to improve rhino monitoring and protection. Thank you!

