



LAC gets involved in fighting poaching

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The Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) has embarked on a community advocacy campaign focusing specifically on conservancies in the Palmwag Concession area that are most affected by the escalation in black rhino poaching. The project coordinator of the Legal Assistance Centre, Willem Odendaal, said the Conservation Support Project stems from recommendations made during a stakeholder workshop on wildlife crime held in May this year. Odendaal made the remarks when the Pupkewitz Foundation donated a Toyota Land Cruiser to the Legal Assistance Centre. One of the recommendations made at the workshop was that coordination and support at community level should be improved by raising awareness of the serious effect that poaching has on community income. According to

Odendaal the Palmwag Concession is the last area in the world where a significant black rhino population roams freely. "In recent years, the conservation of Africa's wildlife, especially its rhino and elephant populations, has come under renewed pressure due to the increase of poaching." He said that over the last year or so, it has become apparent that Namibia's wildlife populations are not exempted from this new onslaught. Odendaal said in the last year and a half, at least six black rhinos have been poached in the Palmwag Concession Area. "This is reason for concern since poaching in this area had been virtually unknown for nearly two decades." According to him the LAC is in a unique position in that it has been working with the affected communities for years. However, a stronger presence is needed in the area to not only improve communication with the communities, but also to strengthen information networking with the police, State prosecutors and other government institutions. "As the LAC, we are prepared to take on this role of advocacy campaigners and network coordinators. But we acknowledge that with initiatives such as these, resources are needed to make the implementation successful." Therefore the Pupkewitz Foundation was approached to support the initiative. The Pupkewitz Foundation's donated a four-wheel-drive vehicle that will be exclusively used to further the project goals in the Palmwag Concession area. WINDHOEK ELLANIE SMIT



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