

New Namibia wildlife leadership program focuses on rhino conservation (AGRIMONITOR)

The International Rhino Foundation (IRF) and the Wildlife Conservation Network have partnered to launch a new wildlife leadership program focusing entirely on rhino conservation practitioners, which includes Namibia.

The IRF said that the program will start this month and will include rhino professionals in Namibia, Zimbabwe and Kenya.

It said that the transformative program Rising Wildlife Leaders: Careers, will equip local conservationists with the knowledge of where rhinos live and with the skills, mentorship and career support they need to make a lasting impact.

Over the next three years, according to IRF, selected participants will receive individualized training, peer learning opportunities, and professional guidance to bolster their leadership in rhino conservation.

“All five rhino species are at risk and need all the help they can get,” said Nina Fascione, IRF executive director.

“This new program will strengthen the corps of conservationists working to protect these incredible animals. Together with the Wildlife Conservation Network, we are making sure rhinos have a fighting chance.”

Markus Hofmeyr, director of WCN's Rhino Recovery Fund said that they are at a critical juncture for rhinos, with fewer than 28 000 across Africa and Asia.

“Securing their future means equipping conservationists with the experience and on-the-ground expertise needed to lead the way. Having an entirely rhino-focused Rising Wildlife Leaders: Careers cohort this year gives me tremendous hope.

IRF said that the rhino cohort of Rising Wildlife Leaders includes six extraordinary individuals from Indonesia, Kenya, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

Dedi Riyanto from Indonesia is the area manager for Yayasan Badak Indonesia (YABI) at Ujung Kulon National Park where he works to protect Javan rhinos.

Meanwhile for Namibia, Deoclearancia Lorna Dax, is a program and partnership development assistant for Save the Rhino Trust, working to conserve the desert-adapted black rhino.

From Zimbabwe Diana Marewangepo protects both black and white rhinos through her position as senior terrestrial ecologist for the Harare region with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.

Also from Zimbabwe Donald Misheck, is a rhino coordinator for the Gonarezhou Conservation Trust, helping to conserve black rhinos.

Ilham Ananda from Indonesia is the Sumatran rhino rescue manager with Leuser Conservation Forum Foundation, while Kenneth Ayiego, from Kenya, is the rhino program manager with the World Wide Fund for Nature Kenya.

The Rising Wildlife Leaders: The Careers Program will reduce barriers to employment, foster career growth and ensure conservation leadership remains rooted locally in the regions where it is needed most.

IRF said that by investing in the next generation of rhino conservation leaders, the program will sharpen local expertise, enhance decision-making and secure a sustainable future where rhinos thrive in the wild and holistic conservation approaches are taken.