SANGO
Nature Project

Sango Nature Project

Impact Report

2025

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Introduction

Thirty-three years ago, Sango was a depleted cattle ranch in Zimbabwe. Today, it is a thriving conservancy.

Over more than three decades, science-led conservation, patience, and close collaboration with leading ecologists and neighbouring communities restored what was lost. Wildlife populations are recovering, habitats are regenerating, and ecological processes are reshaping the land again, offering tangible and measurable impacts.

Sango now hosts exceptional natural values: unique combinations of flora and fauna, high densities of iconic, endangered, and rare species, threatened birds such as vultures and ground hornbills, and emblematic river and wetland systems. These natural assets underpin important ecosystem services: 24km of the Save River acting as a biofilter regulating water flow and supporting biodiversity, significant carbon storage but also broader values including aesthetic, educational, and inspirational benefits for people. Culturally, Sango is home to rock paintings left by the area's first inhabitants, a heritage the conservancy has been protecting since 1993. Together, these values are the reflection of over three decades of successful hard work.

Sango's story demonstrates that rewilding, implemented at scale, can restore biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience, and generate lasting value for both people and nature. Not in theory but in practice, in a region where ecological complexity and social pressures make conservation anything but straightforward.

+30 years

of science-led conservation
and rewilding at scale

8,5 million tons of CO_2

stocked in our ecosystems

78% of our team

comes from neighbouring communities

57,300 ha

of protected pristine savanna,
woodland, wetlands, rivers,
and mopane forests

1/7th of the black rhinos

remaining in Zimbabwe

Big 5

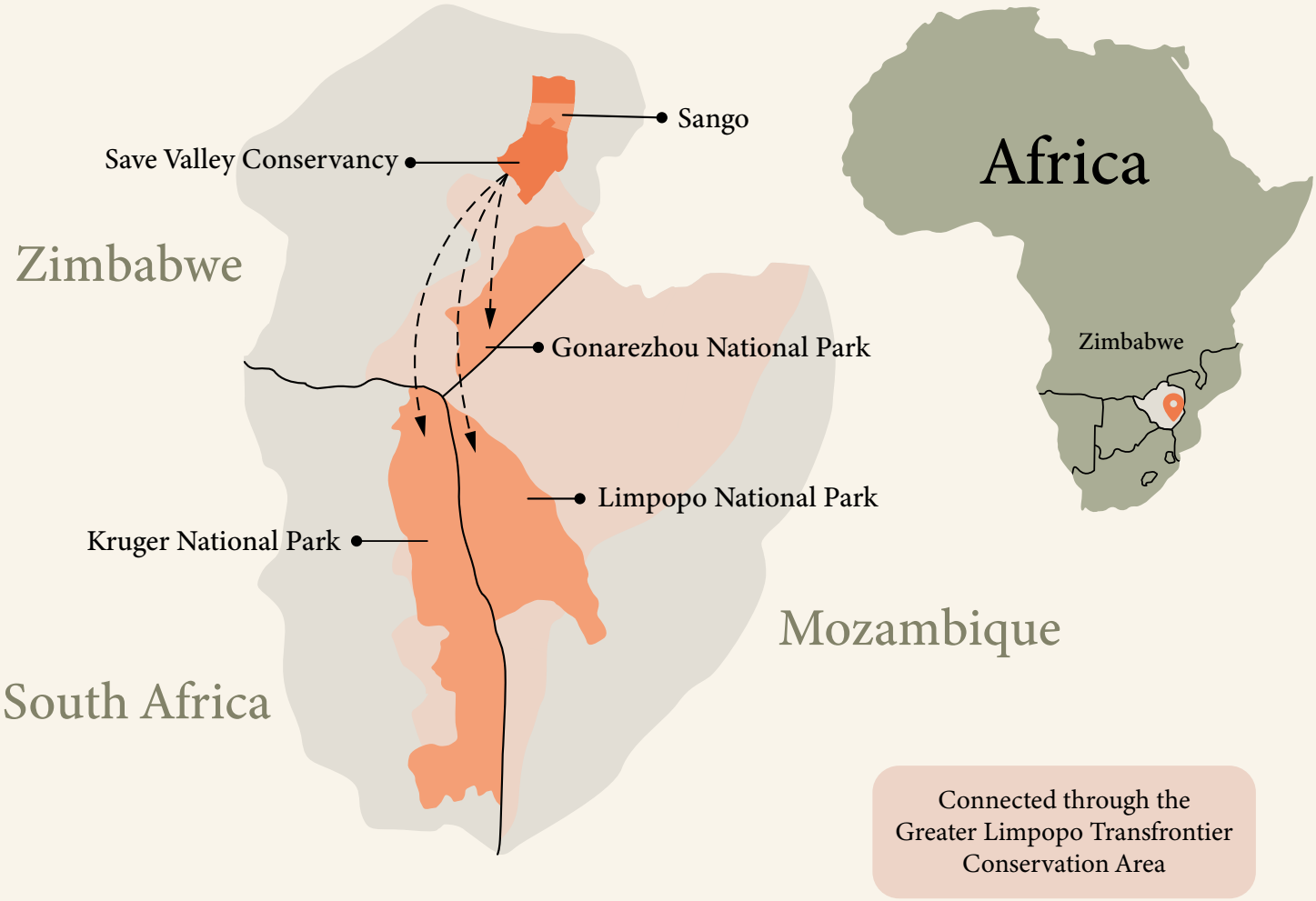
Africa's giants populations' protection, elephants,
buffalos, giraffes, lions, leopards, and rhinos

Our mission

Demonstrate the viability of a large-scale rewilding model — combining biodiversity protection, climate change mitigation, and community empowerment — and replicate it across Zimbabwe and Southern Africa.

Our vision

Build a network of vast, rewilded connected landscapes across Southern Africa.



Our History

Sango, untamed since 1992

Pre-1992

More than 70 years of intensive cattle ranching in southeastern Zimbabwe **led to severe** land **degradation**, soil exhaustion, loss of native vegetation, and decline of endemic wildlife.

1991

Establishment of the Savé Valley Conservancy (SVC), with the vision of creating a vast landscape of close to 300,000 ha of unfenced wilderness where animals could roam freely.

1992

Bankruptcy of the Devuli Cattle & **acquisition of Sango by Wilfried Pabst,** with an ambitious vision: restore this degraded landscape and allow a self-sustaining ecosystem to emerge once again.

1993

Establishment of Sango Wildlife Conservancy (SWC) and initiation of ecosystem restoration activities, including the dismantling of cattle infrastructure whilst initiating the return of all wildlife species formerly present on this land.

1995 - 1997

- Reintroduction of formerly eradicated **elephants**, by translocating 550 animals from Gonarezhou National Park, with support from the IMF.
- Reintroduction of **40 black rhinos** from Zimbabwe's National Parks for custody and safekeeping.
- Successful establishment of **four wild dog packs** in the SVC after being eradicated in the 1970's.

1995

Signature and mutual ratification of the German–Zimbabwean Investment Promotion and Protection Treaty, ensuring secure land ownership and enabling long-term conservation planning.

1999

Start of ecological monitoring and annual surveys at Sango and **establishment of a Natural Resource Protection Unit** dedicated to anti-poaching actions.

2005 - 2006

- **Reintroduction of lions and white rhinos** received from Malilangwe Reserve into Sango.
- Accelerated recovery of ecological processes and wildlife populations following species reintroductions.

2008

First translocations of Sango species to depleted reserves (kudu, waterbuck, wildebeest and zebras).

2000s–2010s

- Starting to record the **gradual regeneration** of savanna, woodland, and wetland ecosystems.
- Starting to recognise the gradual reduction of Sango wide grass cover due to climate change and growing overpopulation of grazers.
- **Growth of populations** of **threatened and endangered species**, including black rhinos and African wild dogs.
- **Expansion of community partnerships** focused on education, sustainable livelihoods, and human–wildlife coexistence

2013

Partnership with ATS to set up a **dedicated rhino protection unit** operating at the scale of the **SVC**

2018 - 2022

First two elephant translocations of 100 elephants each.

2024

Carbon stock inventory and assessment by TÜV Nord, **initiation of the B Corp and IUCN Green List** certification process.

I

Sango Wildlife Conservancy

A Rewilding Success Story

A. Endangered species protection

Black rhinos: from local extinction to recovery

Black rhino populations, once widespread across Africa, declined by 95% between 1970 and 1994 due to poaching, leaving the species critically endangered. Today, the Save Valley Conservancy hosts one of the world's few "plus 200 rhino populations" and Sango sits at the center of that recovery.

The joint venture with ATS forming the SSPU or Special Species Protection Unit, is one of Sango's longest-standing conservation partnerships and the operational backbone of this work. Primarily staffed by members of the surrounding communities, the SSPU monitors each rhino individually, tracking location, health, and vulnerability around the clock. Multi-layered anti-poaching strategies, including aerial patrols and canine units, enhance security. In the past year alone, SSPU teams spent 11,048 days in the field and logged over 600 hours of aerial and drone surveillance.

The results speak for themselves: zero rhinos have been poached at Sango since 2021. In 2025 alone, 60% of general poaching attempts were intercepted, 29 poacher groups dismantled and 331 snares recovered before they could cause harm. Across the Save Valley Conservancy, the black rhino population has grown at an average net rate of 10.10% over the past four years and is now nearing its biological carrying capacity, demonstrating that committed, professional and science-driven conservation can restore endangered species.

Zero rhino poached

at Sango since 2021

29 poacher groups

dismantled in 2025

10% over 4 years

Average net annual growth Rate

Rewilding beyond our borders: wildlife translocations

Since 2008, Sango has translocated 2,781 animals across 10 species — leopards, rhinos, elephants, impalas, eland, wildebeest, warthog, and others — to conservancies and protected areas across the region[1]. Most recently, two translocations moved 100 elephants each, in 2018 and 2022. These operations were among the most logistically demanding movements we have undertaken, and were completed successfully thanks to the finest experts.

Each translocation, regardless of species or scale, demands months of preparation. It requires assessing destination sites for local residents' acceptance, ecological suitability, ensuring receiving areas are able to control poaching pressure, and maintaining populations at Sango large and healthy enough to allow for sustainable offtake. On the ground, operations require specialist equipment, aircraft availability, veterinary expertise, and precise coordination. Our team has built that capability over nearly two decades of practice, in partnership with the African Wildlife Management and Conservation and Mzungu Vet.

These movements are one of the clearest expressions of Sango's regional role: a conservancy that has reached sufficient ecological integrity to actively contribute to the restoration of other landscapes.

1 Malilangwe Conservation Trust, Nyangambe Community Trust, Zambezi National Park, Gonarezhou National Park, Elephant to Rifa and Sapi in Zambezi Valley.

10 species
translocated from Sango since 2008

2,781 animals
translocated from Sango since 2008

201 elephants
translocated from Sango between 2018 and 2022

20 years
of experience in animal translocation

Translocation video
Click here to watch

Endangered species protection

Flagship actions 2026-2027

Rhino translocations

In 2026-2028, we will conduct our first rhino translocation to other areas in Zimbabwe, a milestone that marks both the recovery of our own population and our commitment to accelerating rewilding beyond Sango's boundaries.

Annual rhino ear notching program

Conducted annually by Sango's ecological team and SSPU, rhino ear notching is our primary tool for individually identifying rhinos. Each animal is assigned a unique ear pattern, enabling us to monitor movements across the conservancy and track individuals that require special attention. Each operation follows the same sequence: a veterinarian darts the rhino from a helicopter and cuts a small triangular notch into the ear for permanent identification, alongside basic veterinary tests.

Intensive Care Unit development

As part of its long-term commitment to species conservation, Sango is building a dedicated Intensive Care Unit in 2026 — a secure facility designed to provide urgent care for injured or orphaned animals, with a focus on endangered species such as black and white rhinos. It will allow for close monitoring, veterinary interventions, and recovery before individuals are released back into the wild. Approved in 2025, construction begins in 2026. The facility will include a 1,728 m² secure boma, on-site accommodation for 24/7 monitoring, solar power, X-ray and other electronic equipment, piped water, and storage for feed and veterinary supplies.

B. Legacy Landscape Management

Monitoring wildlife and ecosystems

Sound conservation decisions rely on accurate data. At Sango, ecological monitoring has been in place since the conservancy's earliest years, tracking the full range of values that make this landscape exceptional: unique combinations of flora, high densities of iconic and threatened fauna, freshwater systems, more than 400 different bird species fully intact population of small mammals, reptiles and insects.

Vegetation has been monitored since the mid 1990's, with regular surveys of herbaceous and woody layers, measuring biomass, species composition, ground cover, grazing and browsing resources to assess ecosystem health and ecological capacity. Wildlife populations have been assessed through annual aerial surveys since 1998, complemented by road strip counts, spoor surveys, and recent AI-assisted photogrammetric counts.

Freshwater systems receive particular attention, given Sango's exceptional river and wetland systems. Rivers, wetlands, and pans have been monitored since 2002, using sensitive aquatic organisms as indicators of water quality. The African Water Bird Census has also been conducted at Suni and Chinga pans every year since 2014. Our monitoring data also contributes to conservation projects beyond our frontier. Since 2025, Sango has provided data collected on its site to the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project which aims to slow and reverse the decline of the Endangered Southern Ground-hornbill, of which Sango holds a robust population.

In 2025, we launched a dedicated monitoring programme for endangered white-backed vulture populations. Sango hosts numerous nesting sites and the programme aims to assess the stability and resilience of these populations within the conservancy. Overall, more than 20 years of continuous data underpin something quite unique occurring at Sango: a genuine science-based adaptive management.

More than 25 years

of fauna and flora monitoring data

Holding the line against invasive species

Sango's location within a mosaic of disturbed lands makes it permanently exposed to Invasive alien plant species (IAPs). These are among the most significant and fastest escalating threats to biodiversity.

We have been addressing this issue since 2003, when we launched our first biological control initiative targeting invasive alien plants (IAPs). Following a resurgence identified in 2024, Sango developed a comprehensive IAP Monitoring and Control Programme, combining assessment, monitoring, rapid response, control, and restoration. Additionally, field scouts use EarthRanger to map and track infestations. This enables targeted removal efforts and informs land management policies that actively favour indigenous vegetation.

In November 2024, in partnership with the Centre of Biological Control (South Africa), we successfully reintroduced a biological control agent for *Opuntia stricta* (prickly pear), one of the most aggressive invasive cacti in the region.

Preserving ancient lives' testimonies

Sango's landscape tells a story that extends beyond ecology. Since 1993, the conservancy has identified and protected the archaeological and cultural sites embedded within it. These are traces of the Masarwas, hunter-gatherer peoples of the southeastern Lowveld present in the region for at least thousands of years, who in part are still present in the region today. Their rock paintings, identified as one of Sango's exceptional cultural values during the IUCN Green List process, are among the most tangible traces of this ancient presence.

To date, approximately 24 historical sites have been identified at Sango, seven of which are now registered with the Zimbabwean National Museum. Each is documented through photographs, detailed descriptions, and interpretive materials. This information is then brought together into a mapped portfolio, making this heritage more accessible for tourism.

In 2024-2025, we developed a dedicated monitoring plan for these sites. Next steps include strengthening data collection through EarthRanger and developing tailored interpretive materials for guides and tourism personnel.

24 Historical sites

identified and protected

Legacy Landscape Management

Flagship actions 2026-2027

Leopard population survey

Sango's team perfected a new methodology of counting our leopard population in the late 1990's. The last population survey was conducted by Panthera in 2022. In order to reaffirm the population structure on Sango, a repeat survey will be conducted in 2026-2027, using camera traps, a non-invasive approach that documents animals without disturbing their natural behaviour. Individual leopards are identified through the recognition of their unique spot and whisker patterns - each as distinctive as a human fingerprint - and matched against a database of known individuals to build a detailed picture of population structure over time.

Leopards are a keystone species. Their presence and distribution are direct indicators of ecosystem integrity, making population monitoring an essential component of science-led landscape management.

Implementation of acoustic surveys and pan monitoring

Pans, shallow seasonal water bodies scattered across the landscape, provide critical water sources for wildlife, support aquatic biodiversity, and act as indicators of broader ecosystem health. Pan monitoring was revived in 2024-2025, with nine pans now monitored across a range of ecological criteria. In 2026-2027, acoustic surveys will be deployed to extend this monitoring to amphibian populations, a group widely recognised as reliable indicators of environmental change.

C. Community Empowerment

Local employment and skills development

More than 78 % of Sango's 119 staff come from neighbouring communities, and the entire workforce is coming from Zimbabwe. This figure is a deliberate expression of our belief that conservation and community prosperity are inseparable. Employees are paid in U.S. dollars, providing financial stability in an economy exposed to currency volatility. Beyond wages, staff develop practical skills across carpentry, tailoring, hospitality, and conservation management. Rangers and anti-poaching experts receive dedicated technical, tactical, weapons and intelligence-gathering training, contributing to wildlife protection. In 2025, a medical facility, the ACE clinic, was established to provide medical support to all employees and rangers on site. Together, stable income, skill development and access to healthcare strengthen both individual and community resilience and are foundational to our conservation success.

Women at the fence line

Sixteen local women serve as fence guardians along Sango's western boundary, employed through a partnership between Sango, the African Wildlife Conservation Fund, and Savé Valley Conservancy. They monitor and maintain the fence, directly reducing human-wildlife conflict, limiting poaching exposure, and preventing livestock losses for surrounding communities. The programme offers stable income and a formal role in conservation for women historically excluded from both. Working closely with Sango's ranger network, they share ground-level intelligence that extends their impact well beyond the fence line.

Maintained access to clean water for 9,000+ people

In a region facing worsening drought and water scarcity, access to clean water is the foundation for everything else. Working with partners and donors, Sango maintains and repairs boreholes serving neighbouring villages and their livestock in surrounding villages. In 2025, these operations helped to maintain access to clean water for more than 9,000 people.

The impact goes beyond immediate health benefits. Reliable water access supports food security, reduces the time women and children spend collecting water, reduces disease and strengthens community resilience against climate-related shocks.

Inspiring the next generation

Since the late 2000s, Sango has partnered with regional schools to give students the chance to connect directly with the landscape around them. In 2025, 759 students (415 girls and 344 boys) from 18 schools visited the conservancy, experiencing its biodiversity firsthand while learning about wildlife protection, poaching, and sustainable resource use.

Beyond these visits, Sango has renovated six local schools, donated books, and installed educational billboards in neighbouring schools. The idea is simple: young people who understand and value their natural environment become the conservancy's strongest long-term partners.

+78% of our workforce

comes from local communities

Providing 9,000+ people

with maintained access to clean water

~800 Children

enrolled in environmental education visits

Community Empowerment

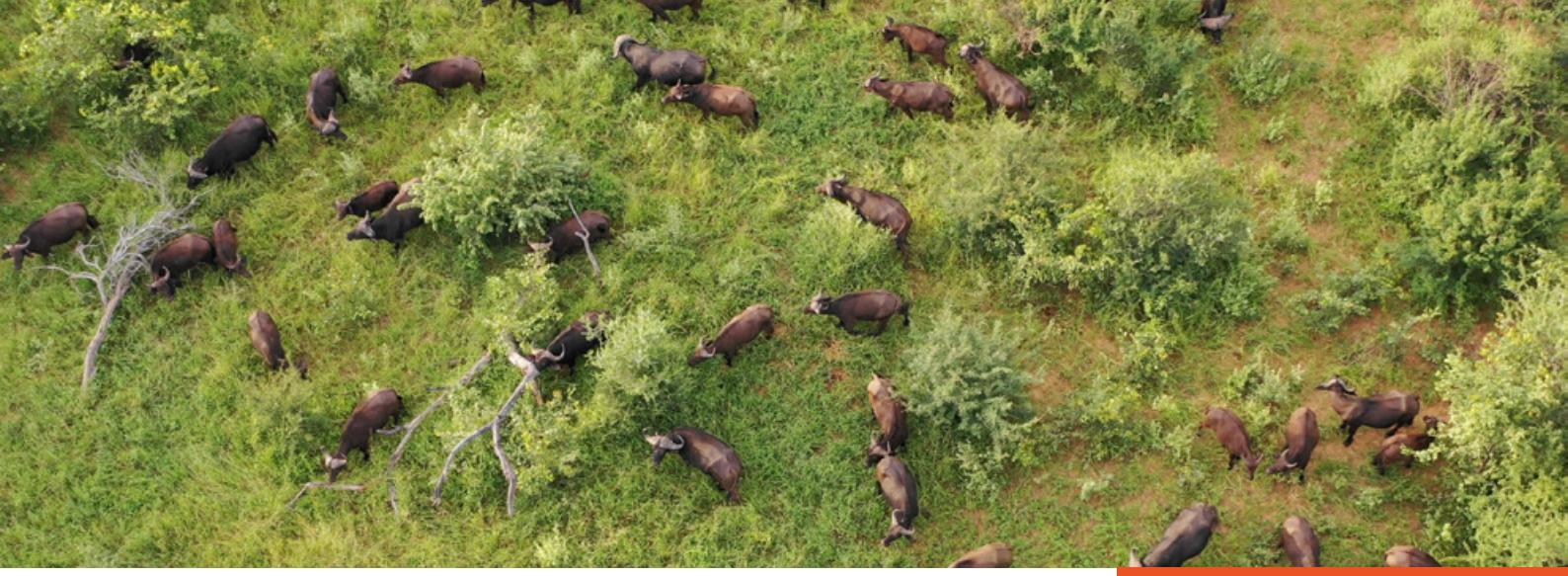
Flagship actions 2026-2027

Continued support for clean water access initiatives

We aim to repair around 70 boreholes in partnership with Isaiah's House International, extending reliable water access to more households. Solar panels will be installed at the Village 26 and Makota Primary School boreholes, improving long-term reliability. Dams at Village 11, Village 26, and Muvava Primary School will also be cleaned, restoring their capacity to serve both communities and livestock.

Continued environmental education

We will maintain our environmental education and school visit program in 2026-2027, ensuring that at least as many children as in 2025 have the opportunity to experience the conservancy firsthand.



D. Climate impact monitoring

8,495,054

tonnes of CO_2, stored in Sango's ecosystems

Measuring the carbon stock we protect

Over more than three decades of rewilding, Sango has steadily restored its vegetation and rebuilt soil carbon stocks. In 2023, we carried out a detailed carbon inventory to measure these gains with precision. The conservancy was stratified by vegetation type and systematically sampled using more than 300 permanent plots of 500 m², where vegetation and soil data were collected. Carbon was measured across key pools including above- and below-ground biomass, deadwood, and soil, following a robust measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) system.

The study found that Sango's ecosystems store 8,495,054 tonnes of CO_2. The results and methodology were independently audited and certified by TÜV Nord, Germany, in 2024.

Ongoing monitoring and reassessment every five years ensures that Sango's carbon reserves remain intact, contributing to regional and global climate resilience over the long term.

Carbon Report

Click here to download

Carbon stock measurement study and video

Click here to watch

Tracking and reporting our carbon footprint

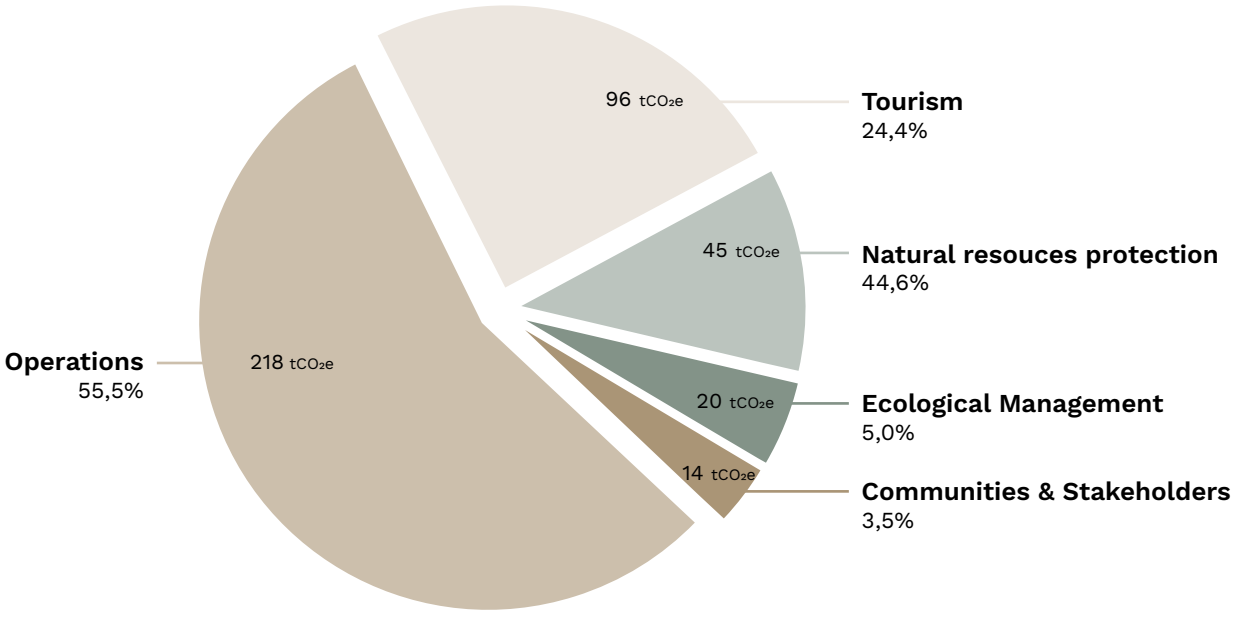
In 2024, Sango completed its first full greenhouse gas emissions inventory, covering all activities under our operational control. The methodology and results were independently assessed and audited by TÜV Nord.

The main drivers of our GHG emissions are clear: diesel use in vehicles and machinery accounts for roughly 50% of emissions, diesel generators for electricity a further 25%, with refrigerant leaks from cooling equipment, grid electricity, and other smaller sources making up the remainder. Operationally, day-to-day maintenance and workshops represent the largest share (56%), followed by tourism activities (24%) and natural resources protection (~11%), a breakdown that directly reflects the fuel and energy intensity of each activity.

We have chosen to be transparent about indirect emissions as well. Visitor travel to and from Sango (outside our operational control) is estimated at between 109.6 and 112.6 tCO_2e, representing approximately 30% of additional emissions if included.

Reducing diesel dependence, grid dependence and GHG emissions linked to our activities have been a priority for several years. A large-scale solar system now powers all workshops and the main warehouse, and solar installations have been rolled out across staff housing and two of the lodges, and led to substitution of up to 75% of the total yearly electricity consumption. These changes have already driven a significant reduction in emissions. In 2026, building on these efforts and on the verified data now available, we will formalise and deepen our carbon emission reduction strategy. A key next step is extending solar coverage to the remaining lodge, which will further reduce generator use. Overall, reducing diesel consumption in such a remote and large area remains a challenge for which we are actively exploring solutions.

BREAKDOWN OF SANGO GHG EMISSIONS BY ACTIVITY (2024)



Carbon stock protection and carbon footprint

Flagship actions 2026-2027

Streamlining our GHG emissions monitoring process

Improving the data collection process and moving toward a more structured tracking system to ensure our inventory remains accurate and consistent year on year.

Drafting of a carbon emission reduction strategy

Structuring our reduction efforts within a single strategic document, bringing together existing initiatives and planned actions. To date, the main lever remains the expansion of solar coverage, building on investments already made across workshops, housing, and lodges, while also exploring additional opportunities.

F. Financial overview

Sango's financial model mirrors its conservation philosophy: built for permanence, not for short-term cycles.

Income

Three-quarters of Sango's funding comes from philanthropic sources, primarily through the founding Pabst family's long-term capital commitment and carefully selected philanthropic partners. This patient, mission-aligned investment, has enabled ambitious, uninterrupted conservation planning, independent of grant cycles. This has been instrumental in making large-scale rewilding possible at Sango.

Alongside this philanthropic foundation, tourism has grown into a meaningful secondary revenue stream as well as a direct expression of our conservation model. By design, we limit visitor numbers to protect the integrity of the ecosystem, prioritising quality of experience over volume. Within these constraints, our lodges currently self-finance approximately 25% of the conservancy's annual operating costs. Further developing tourism, in line with our conservation values, is a natural path toward long-term financial sustainability.

Looking ahead, conservation finance represents our next frontier. With 8.5 million tonnes of certified carbon stocks and independent verification underway through the IUCN Green List and B Corp, Sango is well-positioned to access biodiversity credits markets. We are currently exploring these mechanisms that could generate recurring revenues directly tied to our ecological impact (see section II.D 1).

Spendings

Sango's expenditure reflects the operational reality of managing a remote, ~60,000-hectare landscape. Operations represent the largest single line at 33% — covering materials, fuel and maintenance for vehicles, day-to-day infrastructure upkeep, and operational management. In a conservancy of this scale and remoteness, maintaining infrastructure and daily operations is not a support cost but a conservation cost.

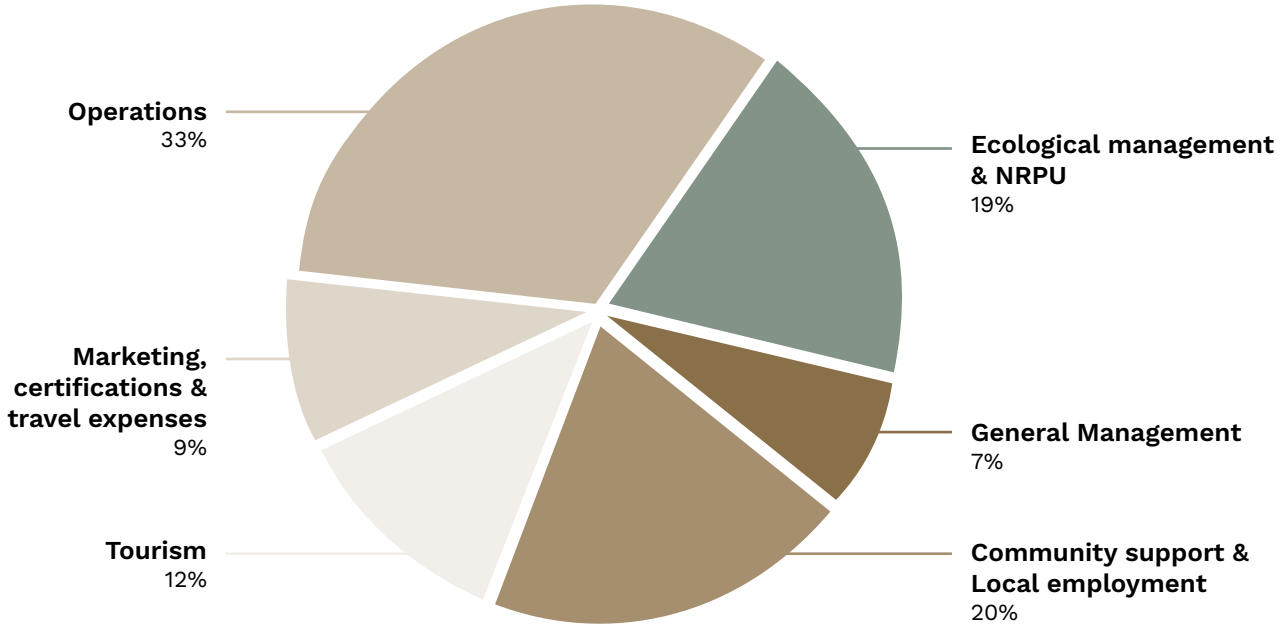
Ecological management and natural resources protection unit accounts for 19% of our expenditures. It covers our anti-poaching operations, ecological monitoring teams and management. Community support and local employment represents 20%, ecompassing our education and women's empowerment programs, our community liaison, as well as employement supporting people from neighbouring communities. Sango also provides support to communities through inkind donations of meat, school furnitures, and educational material, those benefits are not included in the graph and are estimated at USD 96,000 for 2025. Tourism accounts for 12% of expenditure. It is both a cost and an investment, covering guest operations and hospitality management while generating revenues that cover a significant share of total operating costs.

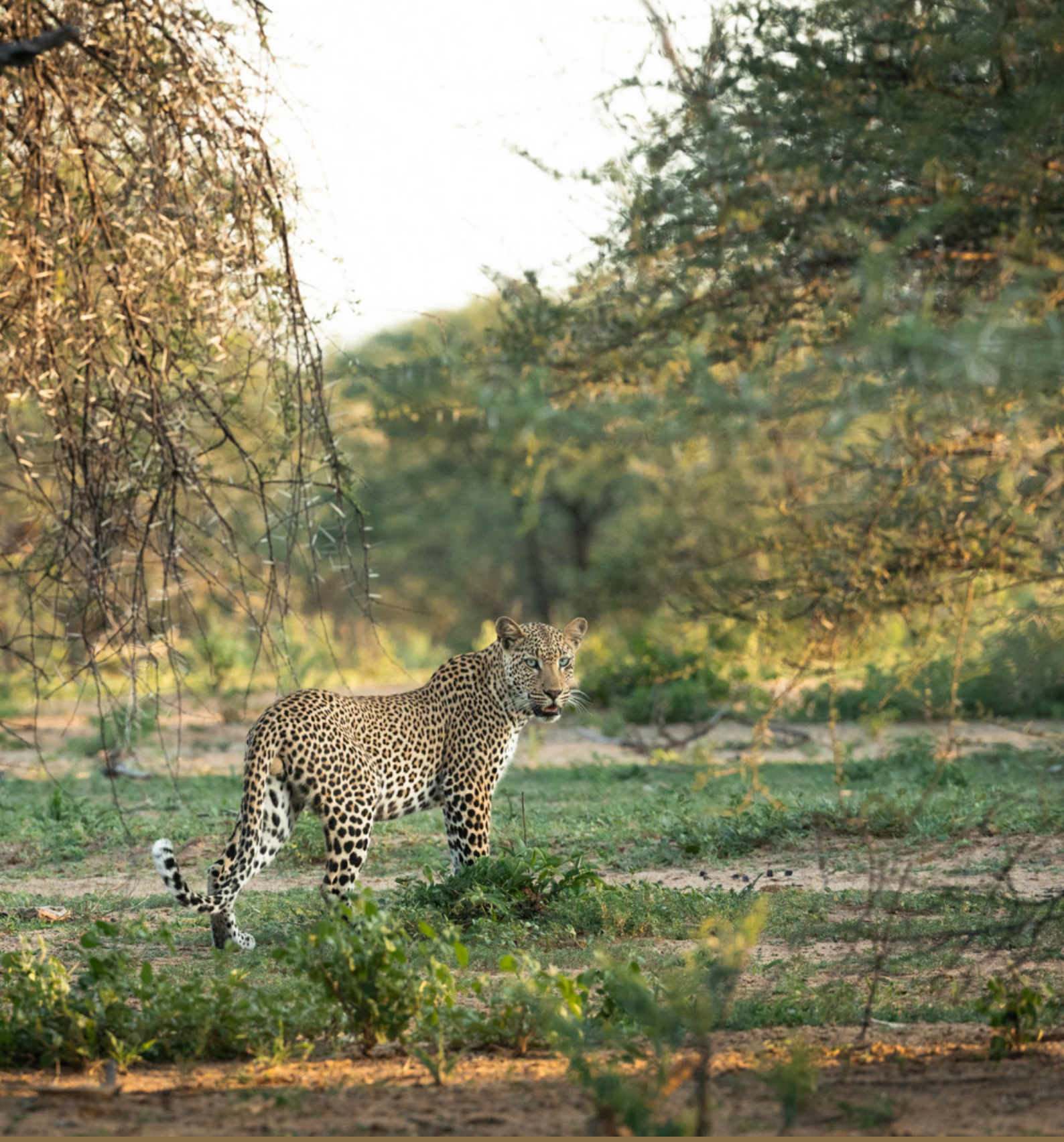
Nearly half of our expenditure (45%) is dedicated to human resources, including salaries, pensions and training, with all positions filled by Zimbabwean staff. Combining ecological management, community empowerment, and the operational costs that directly enable them, the majority of Sango's expenditure goes to on-the-ground conservation and community impact.

72%

of our expenditure is dedicated to on the ground conservation and community impact

SANGO EXPENSES (2025)





II

The Sango Nature Project

Scaling our model across Southern-Africa

A. The Sango rewilding model

Sango's model rests on **five principles**, shaped by experience and refined over time.

Led by Nature

Restoring functional ecosystems requires humility and patience. At Sango, we have never defined a fixed "optimal state" of conservation. Instead, we focus on creating the conditions for nature to recover and thrive on its own terms. This approach combines carefully chosen interventions, such as the removal of cattle infrastructure and strategic species reintroductions, with large-scale management. By giving ecosystems the time and space they need, we reduce the need for human intervention and allow living systems to restore themselves.

Built on Trust

No project can succeed without a foundation of trust. At Sango, we cultivate lasting relationships with neighbouring communities and regional partners, grounded and solid governance, and a committed team. Legal safeguards, such as the German–Zimbabwean Investment Protection Treaty protecting the land, provide secure land tenure and enable conservation planning not just for years, but for generations.

Designed by Impact

Conservation at Sango has always balanced three connected priorities: restoring biodiversity, strengthening climate resilience, and supporting community development. None can be achieved in isolation. From the outset, protecting wildlife has gone hand-in-hand with generating socio-economic opportunities for neighbouring communities. We believe ecosystem protection is one of the best ways to mitigate both climate and socio-economic challenges, as it reduces vulnerability to drought and flooding, increases carbon storage and generates opportunities for nature-based economies.

Verified by Standards

Thirty-three years of work speak for themselves, but we believe in external accountability. Sango's ecological and social impact is currently being independently verified through three complementary, internationally recognised frameworks: the IUCN Green List, B Corp, and TÜV Nord, covering biodiversity, climate, and social outcomes. We pursue verification not to collect credentials, but because rigorous, transparent evidence is the only honest basis for the claims we make.

Guided by Evidence

Only what can be measured can be managed. From the onset, Sango has partnered with leading scientists and trained ecologists to implement ecological monitoring and annual surveys. Today, with more than 25 years of monitoring data at hand, this rigorous, continuously refined process allows us to understand wildlife and ecological trends, enabling us to make informed, science-led management decisions.



B. Our goal: deepen, expand and replicate

Over three decades of rewilding have given Sango something rare: a proven conservation model, a functioning ecosystem, and the confidence to go further. Building on that foundation, our goal is to strengthen what works, expand the conservancy's reach, and ultimately replicate Sango's approach across new landscapes in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa.

Strengthening our model

Our priority is to deepen the ecological and social impact of ongoing work and to document it with rigour, to make our impact tangible and our model replicable. On the ground, this means reinforcing anti-poaching capacity, expanding wildlife and habitat monitoring systems, and continuing with science-based ecological management practices. Additionally, we will deepen community engagement, enhance human–wildlife coexistence, and inspire young people through environmental education. Conservation should generate tangible socio-economic opportunities, ensuring that local communities benefit directly from the long-term protection and sustainable management of the landscape.

At the same time, we are demonstrating the economic viability of integrated conservation. By combining sustainable tourism, conservation finance, and long-term land stewardship, Sango is building a robust economic model capable of sustaining large-scale conservation in the long term.

Scaling up

Our long-term vision is to build a network of vast, rewilded connected landscapes across Southern Africa. To support this vision, our objective is to scale up the Sango model through **three concrete steps**.

At Sango

We aim to extend the conservancy by an additional 40,000 hectares through the acquisition of or joint-venturing with neighbouring land and its transition to high conservation standards. This will enable conservation efforts across a broader, more ecologically coherent territory.

Beyond Sango

We aim to help restore ecological balance in neighbouring protected areas, drawing on the conservancy's thriving wildlife populations and three decades of translocation experience.

Across the region

Our ambition is to replicate the Sango approach beyond a single site. We aim to support the restoration of new landscapes across Zimbabwe and Southern Africa—whether through knowledge exchange and technical partnerships, or by taking on direct land stewardship where opportunities arise.



C. From action to certification

The real proof of Sango's impact is visible on the ground: recovering wildlife populations, restored habitats, and neighbouring communities that benefit directly from our conservation actions. However, the claims we make about our impact should be supported by independent evidence. Since 2023, we have been working on the obtention of three complementary, internationally recognised frameworks covering the full scope of our work: environmental, social, and organisational.

TÜV Nord, Germany - Carbon stock certification

In 2024, Sango's organic carbon stocks were independently assessed and certified by TÜV-Nord CERT GmbH, one of the world's leading independent certification bodies, accredited across major carbon and forest standards. The assessment covered the 57,299.35 hectares of the site, including living vegetation, dead wood, and soil. It revealed that Sango's ecosystems store approximately 8.5 million tonnes of CO_2. Carbon stocks will be reassessed every five years to track changes and ensure continued accuracy.

Carbon assessment stock report

Click here to download

Our General Management Plan

Click here to download

Our Panorama Story

Read the story online

IUCN Green list - Conservation excellence

The IUCN Green List is the global benchmark for effective, fair, and successful conservation. It is led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the world's most authoritative voice on biodiversity and natural resource management. It recognises protected and conserved areas that deliver ongoing results for both nature and people, assessed across four dimensions: good governance, sound planning, effective management, and successful conservation outcomes.

In 2025, Sango officially achieved Candidate status, the final stage before full certification. A site visit by the IUCN Green List team is expected in 2026. Once certified, Sango will undergo verification every five years to demonstrate continuous progress.

As part of the candidacy process, Sango's conservation values were formally identified and assessed across **three dimensions**:

Sango's conservation values

Natural

- **Unique combinations of flora**
- **High population densities of fauna**, including iconic, endangered and rare species
- River draining and **Wetlands** (Branchiopod hotspot)
- **Threatned birds** - vultures and ground hornbills

Ecosystem Services

- **Hydrology** - 24km of Save River acting as biofilter, water flow regulationsand support biodiversity
- **Carbon storage** - calculations confirmed by TUV NORD
- **Tourism** - aesthetic value, inspiration, education and research, mental well-being and health, peace and stability

Cultural

- **Cultural Art** - Rock paintings

As part of the certification process, our conservation education programme was independently featured on the IUCN Panorama Stories portal, a recognition of both its design and its impact on the ground.

B Corp - Holistic performance standard

The B Corp Certification is one of the most rigorous and holistic standards for businesses committed to social and environmental performance in the world, recognised across more than 90 countries and held by over 10,000 companies globally. Certification requires demonstrated performance across five dimensions: governance, worker welfare, community engagement, environmental responsibility, and customer stewardship, with full documentation and third-party verification.

At Sango, all activities are undergoing the B Corp certification process, from tourism operations to conservation management. In 2025, we completed and submitted our full BIA assessment along with all supporting documentation. The submission is currently under review, with certification expected in 2026.

Once certified, Sango will undergo reverification every three years, against progressively higher standards, as B Corp's requirements increase regularly.

D. Diversifying our economic model: exploring Nature finance

Conservation is at a turning point. Global frameworks, shifting reporting standards, and rising awareness of nature-related financial risks all point to the same imperative: conservation needs more funding, and a wider coalition to mobilise it. The global target of protecting 30% of land and marine habitats by 2030 cannot be reached through public funding and philanthropy alone.

New tools are beginning to emerge. Nature finance mechanisms are developing rapidly, while a growing number of private sector actors recognise nature as the infrastructure underpinning all economic activities. Yet, corporate engagement with conservation remains too often confined to philanthropy, when the real opportunity lies in risk mitigation, asset protection, and long-term value creation.

At Sango, we believe the future of conservation lies in diversified, resilient funding models, combining philanthropic commitment, on-site economic activity, and emerging nature finance instruments. We also believe that integrated conservation models are the most efficient in reaching global conservation goals–ones that bridge climate, biodiversity, and social outcomes, grounded in secured governance and externally verified results.

Building on our existing model, combining philanthropic funding and tourism revenues, we are actively exploring nature finance opportunities. Biodiversity credits are among the most promising tools in this space. Unlike carbon-only instruments, they support a holistic approach to conservation, integrating climate, biodiversity, and social outcomes within a single, accountable framework. This makes them well suited to integrated conservation and restoration projects like Sango.

In 2025, we identified a shortlist of biodiversity credit schemes best suited to large South-Eastern African ecosystems and conservation projects. We are now actively engaging with nature finance actors and potential partners to begin testing these approaches on the ground.

We are also partnering with Restore, a dedicated biodiversity finance vehicle that connects investors directly with conservation projects, enabling corporations to translate nature commitments into measurable, balance sheet–recognised assets. Together, we are turning Sango's verified ecological and social outcomes into investable instruments for the private sector.

We are always looking to expand these conversations. If you are a company, financial institution, or nature finance actor interested in biodiversity credits, nature finance, or conservation investment, please feel free to reach out: info@sangonatureproject.com

E. Sharing our experience

For thirty years, Sango's approach has been simple: focus on the work, let the results speak. Communication was never a priority, boots on the ground always came first. In 2025, we decided it was time to share our story more broadly.

Sango's introductory film

Click here to watch

Telling our story

We launched a dedicated website, featuring a full account of our model, history, impacts and ambitions across landscape management, endangered species protection, community empowerment, and climate impact monitoring. Every photograph displayed on the website was taken at Sango by Kim Wolhuter, our award-winning on-site wildlife filmmaker and photographer. His work captures what words alone cannot. To complement the site, we produced a 10-minute introductory film bringing our mission and impacts to life. The film is also available on the homepage of our website.

Presence at the IUCN World Conservation Congress

IUCN World Conservation Congress Abu Dhabi 2025

In October 2025, Sango participated in the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi, one of the most significant gatherings in global conservation.

We were invited to speak at "*Commitment to Quality Conservation: Welcoming New Members to the Green List Community*", marking Sango's official entry into the IUCN

Green List Community as a candidate. Speaking alongside established Green List members, we shared our approach to transparent, inclusive and science-based conservation, and our contribution to the Global Biodiversity Framework's 30x30 target.

Wilfried Pabst alongside other conservation project funders at the IUCN Green List welcoming event - IUCN World Congress in Abu Dhabi, 2025

We also contributed to two sessions on biodiversity credits, conservation finance, and certifications, exploring how innovative mechanisms can strengthen partnerships between business and nature, and used that platform to advance a position we believe matters.

Conservation finance has become too narrowly focused on carbon. While climate mitigation remains critical, many established conservation areas are already functioning ecosystems that require sustained protection rather than restoration-focused funding models. We highlighted the need to place ecosystem health, governance, and community engagement at the center of investment strategies. Biodiversity credits, capable of integrating climate, biodiversity, and social outcomes into a single, accountable framework, represent a promising step in that direction.

Ultimately, our call to the private sector was direct: conservation should not be seen exclusively as philanthropy. It is a strategic investment, particularly within the landscapes that underpins economic actors' operations and supply chains.

Joining of the Global Rewilding Alliance

In early 2026, Sango became a member of the Global Rewilding Alliance (GRA), a growing network of rewilding practitioners, scientists, and conservation organisations working to restore nature at scale. Joining this community is a natural step for Sango and a commitment to contributing our experience, data, and lessons learned to a broader movement.

We are currently exploring participation in dedicated initiatives such as Animating the Carbon Cycle— a science based approach co-developed by the Global Rewilding Alliance and Yale University to quantify the role of large mammals in capturing and stocking carbon. For Sango, exploring the connection between wildlife populations and carbon stocks fits naturally into a broader commitment to demonstrating the full value of functioning ecosystems and rethinking the economic models that support them.

Be a part of our story

We work to demonstrate that large-scale rewilding is one of the most effective ways to protect biodiversity, address climate change and generate lasting socio-economic impact. Our goal is to deepen our impact at Sango, extend our reach across Southern Africa, and help build the economic models that make conservation viable and replicable at scale. In doing so, we are always seeking partners who share our vision.

If you are a conservation initiative, research institution, or rewilding practitioner, we'd love to hear from you. Sharing expertise, exchanging experiences, and collaborating on joint projects are essential to achieving the global conservation outcomes we aim for.

Conservation at scale requires sustained, mission-aligned investment. If you are a company, foundation, nature finance organisation, or an individual eager to be part of the next chapter of a proven rewilding story and help enhance Africa's precious wilderness, we would love to connect and explore potential partnerships.

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