

# Kunene Elephant Walk · Namibia

*An initiative by IRDNC*



*Namibia as a role model for wildlife conservation in Africa -  
People and wildlife sharing one landscape*

# Bridging photography and conservation

*Dr. Frank Schmielewski*



**“As a biologist and wildlife photographer, I have seen firsthand the beauty of the interaction between elephants and humans, and this needs to be conserved for future generations.”**

Former EHRA Volunteer

Patron · Kunene Elephant Walk (IRDNC)



# IRDNC: OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

## *Community-based Natural Resource Management*



*Life in Namibia is shaped by people, wildlife, and shared resources.*

The Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) was founded in the early 1980s to support Namibia's pioneering approach to community-based natural resource management, long before independence. Since then, IRDNC has played a key role in empowering rural communities to manage wildlife and natural resources sustainably.



# OUR MISSION: COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION

*People at the heart of wildlife protection*



*Himba boy from Kunene Region*

**“When communities are entrusted with managing wildlife, conservation becomes a shared responsibility and a source of pride and livelihood. This is the principle on which IRDNC was built.”**

*— John Kasanoa, Executive Director IRDNC*



# KUNENE ELEPHANT WALK

*An initiative by IRDNC*



*John Kasanoa among Herero People*

Founded in 2020 by IRDNC Executive Director John Kasanoa

Rising desert elephant numbers increased conflict with communities

Project focuses on coexistence and conflict mitigation

***“The communities have allowed elephants to roam near their homes without complaint. Now it is our turn to support them.”***

— John Kasanoa, Executive Director IRDNC



# KUNENE REGION

*Home to the Himba and Herero peoples*



*In Kunene, people and wildlife coexist through shared resources.*

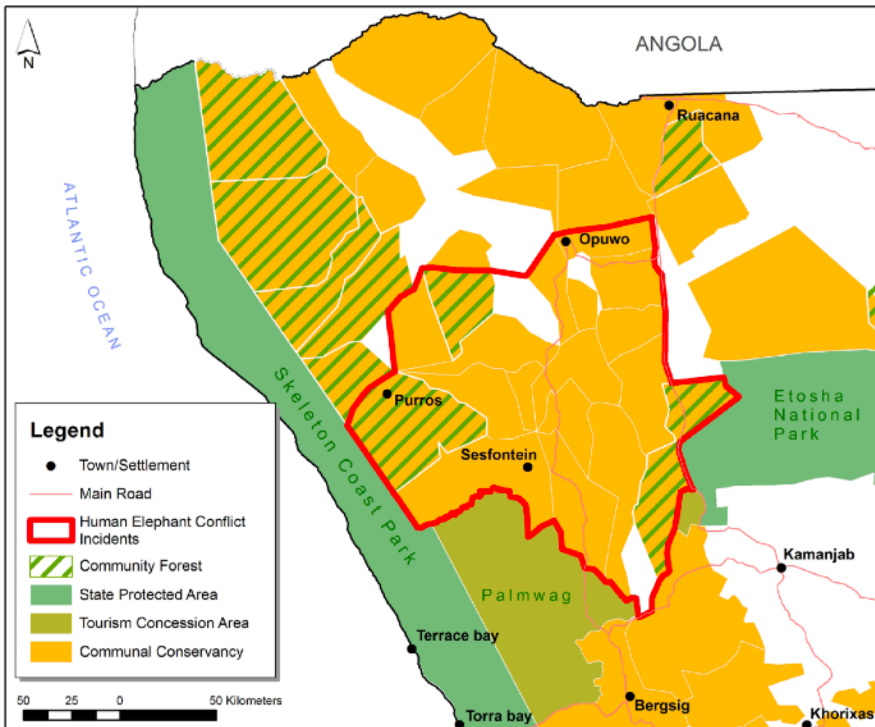
The arid northwestern Kunene Region covers 115,260 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to 88,300 people.

Four of six constituencies are engaged in community-based natural resource management.

Kunene is Namibia's third poorest region, with nearly 40% of the population living in poverty.



# HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT IN KUNENE



*Human Elephant Conflict Incidents · Kunene Region*

Shared water and crops are the main conflict drivers, affecting 19,000 people in Kunene.

Many conservancies lack stable income.



# LIVING WITH ELEPHANTS

## Challenges on the Ground



*Kunene Region · Northwestern Namibia*

Better coexistence through community engagement

Limited knowledge of elephant behavior and movements fuels conflict over water and crops, while benefits often fail to offset the costs for local communities.



# KUNENE ELEPHANT WALK

*Impact to date*



*Rangers of the Kunene Elephant Walk*

## **Foundations are in place**

50 trained community game guards (18 conservancies, 8 women)

Reduced human–elephant conflict through monitoring and safe deterrence

Support for water points and community education

Community gardens improve food security



# KUNENE ELEPHANT WALK

## *Project Goals & Impact*

### **Goals & Impact**

The project aims to become a self-sustaining model of community-based rural development and conservation.

Impact is measured through growing desert elephant populations, increased tourism, improved food security, and local employment.

### **Key focus areas**

Protection of subsistence crops

Training of junior Rangers from local primary schools in the areas

Safe water points for elephants, communities, and livestock

Youth inclusion and environmental education

Women empowerment and employment

Development of sustainable commercial ventures

Protection of subsistence crops



# KUNENE ELEPHANT WALK

## *Project Goal & Impact*

### **Proposed future commercial ventures**

Tourism - Ombahe Tours [www.ombahewildtours.com](http://www.ombahewildtours.com)

Paid volunteerism programs - first group from World Challenge booked for July 2026

Produce - elephant dung firelighters

Job creation for local communities & Utilising freely available ingredients

Annual Rangers Walk from Windhoek to Swakopmund



# KUNENE ELEPHANT WALK

## Highlights



### **2025 Highlights**

300 km ranger awareness walk

Vehicle, allowances, borehole & water points funded by WWF

Ranger Base Camp and wildlife waterhole established

Community maize project with high yields

Zero elephants killed in crop raids

SMART & EarthRanger monitoring implemented



# KUNENE ELEPHANT WALK

*Towards Long-Term Sustainability*



## **Help Secure What Has Been Built**

The foundations are in place — trained rangers, protected communities, and living elephants.

What we need now is commitment.

By supporting the Kunene Elephant Walk, you help turn short-term success into long-term resilience.

Contact: [kunene\\_elephantwalk@irdnc.org.na](mailto:kunene_elephantwalk@irdnc.org.na)



# Kunene Elephant Walk

## Further Information & Ways to Connect



*Life in Kunene is a balance between people, wildlife, and shared resources.*



Learn more about Kunene Elephant Walk



[www.thisisnamibia.com](http://www.thisisnamibia.com)

Follow our work on social media

 Instagram: [@kuneneelephantwalk](https://www.instagram.com/kuneneelephantwalk)

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