

# OPUWO RHINO CUP ON WORLD RHINO DAY 2018

One of the benefits of sports tournaments for a small town like Okanguati in the Kunene Region is the formation of stronger neighbourhoods and more wholesome communities, evident in the 14 soccer teams of 22 players each and 7 netball teams of about 14 players each participating in this year's Rhino Cup in Opuwo (Photo 1). In total, about 308 young men and 112 young women took part in this significant event, all wearing Rhino Friends sweatbands in support of the rhino campaign. Among the invited guests were the Epupa Constituency Councillor, Namibian Police, Okanguati Station Commander, Okanguati & Ehama Conservancy Chairmen, Okanguati Youth Organiser, Traditional Authorities and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.



| 1



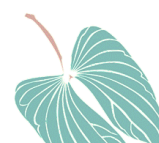
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Now in its second year, the Opuwo Rhino Cup was an initiative by the Rhino Pride Campaign to bring awareness to rhino conservation and disseminate anti-poaching messages for this threatened species (Photo 2). The pledge by participants to protect rhinos (Photo 3) and the performance of rhino-specific songs created by local artists has become a tradition at each of these events. About 300 pledges were done and the total audience of about 500 participants were engaged through speeches, ceremonies and the concert.

This year's tournament was rightfully held on the World Rhino Day (22 September) and purposefully so in the non-rhino areas including five conservancies in the far north of Kunene Region – Okanguati, Ehama, Epupa, Ombazu and Ombombo Masitu conservancies – in order to spread awareness even further, and work collaboratively within the Region as a whole.



| 3





In Photo 4, the Councillor of Epupa Constituency, Honourable Nguzu Muharukua (far right), is presented with a Rhino Friend Forever bracelet to kick-off the rhino-friendly pledge during rhino day commemoration in Okanguati, while IRDNC's Dave Kangombe in Photo 5 garbed the rest of the attendees with bracelets signifying their pledge.

The Rhino Cup tournament in Okanguati would not have been possible without the Okanguati Young Kings Football Club whose initiative - the Kunene North Rhino Friends League - led by an organising committee made up of different stakeholders including a few of IRDNC team, took the Rhino Cup League to non-rhino range conservancies in north Kunene. The participating soccer teams converged from all corners of Kunene Region, and this independent diverse group of people is a testimony how civil society can play a critical role in combating wildlife crime through different interventions.



**The next Opuwo Rhino Cup tournament is planned for 21 – 22 September next year, with continued support from IRDNC and USAID.**

