

DAKTARI

BUSH SCHOOL & WILDLIFE ORPHANAGE

saving our environment through education

South African NATIONAL PARKS

Kudu Awards 2018

Non Profit Making Institution

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Founded in 2006 by
Ian and Michèle Merrifield

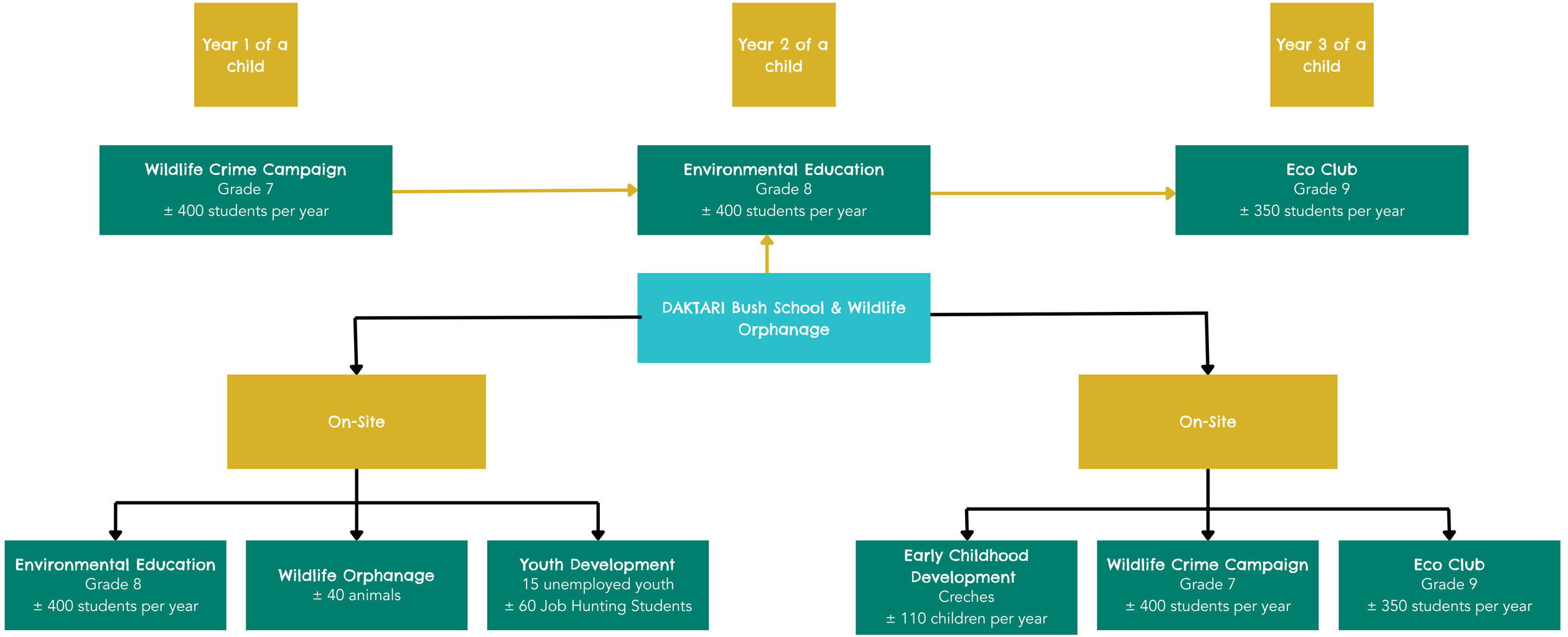






This graph is a representation of the work we do here at DAKTARI Bush School & Wildlife Orphanage.

This structure enables us to follow up for several years on our students.



WHY DAKTARI?

DAKTARI Bush School & Wildlife Orphanage was founded in 2006 in Limpopo, South Africa, by Ian and Michèle Merrifield with one simple belief:

If children learn to love nature, they will protect it.

For nearly 20 years, more than 5,500 children from underserved rural communities have spent a life-changing week at DAKTARI. Many of them live close to world-famous game reserves, yet have never seen wildlife up close or understood its importance for their future.

At DAKTARI, children do not only sit in a classroom. They care for rescued animals. They learn about conservation, climate change, and wildlife crime. They gain confidence, leadership skills, and hope. They begin to see themselves as protectors of their environment.

Limpopo has one of the highest unemployment rates in South Africa, and one of the highest poaching pressures. Education is not a luxury here — it is a necessity. By connecting environmental awareness with real career opportunities in conservation and ecotourism, DAKTARI gives children practical tools to build a sustainable future.

When a child leaves DAKTARI, something changes. They go back to their village as ambassadors for nature.

By supporting DAKTARI, you are not only protecting wildlife — you are empowering the next generation to protect it long after we are gone.



The mission of DAKTARI is to educate and inspire local children to value their environment and stimulate community development.

Program Overview



Each Monday morning, eight Grade 8 learners from underserved rural communities arrive at DAKTARI for a five-day immersive experience in environmental and life skills education.

For one week, they leave their traditional classroom and step into nature.

The programme is led by three full-time, locally employed Programme Coordinators who deliver the curriculum and ensure educational consistency and quality. International volunteers support the programme under their guidance, assisting with teaching activities and animal care. This model guarantees continuity, professionalism, and meaningful local employment, while exposing learners to positive international role models.

Education at DAKTARI is experiential. Twice per day, children participate in animal care within our wildlife sanctuary. They assist with feeding, cleaning enclosures, and observing animal behaviour. For many learners, it is their first close encounter with wildlife in a safe and respectful environment. These interactions build compassion, responsibility, and confidence. For many children, this is the moment when fear turns into understanding.

Our wildlife orphanage provides lifelong sanctuary to animals that cannot be released, while rehabilitated animals are transferred to specialised centres when ready. Each resident animal serves as an ambassador for conservation education.

The impact continues beyond the week at camp. Learners may join our six-week Eco Club programme at their schools, where they deepen their environmental knowledge and lead practical community actions such as clean-up campaigns and tree planting.

Every two months, DAKTARI also conducts Wildlife Crime Awareness Campaigns with Grade 7 learners in the surrounding primary schools. The campaign concludes with a presentation delivered to the entire school, strengthening awareness across the wider student body.

To address youth unemployment in the community, DAKTARI extends its impact to young adults. Our six-month local Internship Programme provides structured, hands-on hospitality and operational experience to unemployed youth from surrounding villages, building confidence and workplace skills. In addition, our one-week Job Hunting Programme equips participants with practical tools such as CV writing, email creation, interview preparation, and job market awareness.

Through this structured, multi-level approach — from early environmental education to youth employability — DAKTARI promotes long-term behavioural change, economic empowerment, and sustainable community development.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The day at DAKTARI begins at 7 am and combines structured lessons, practical activities, and meaningful animal interactions. In contrast to overcrowded classrooms, groups remain small, allowing individual attention and personalised learning. Some lessons, such as animal knowledge, are conducted one-on-one to strengthen understanding and confidence.

Alongside environmental education, we address important life skills. Lessons such as Boundaries & Consent raise awareness about personal safety and protection, while open discussions about relationships and sexual health help remove taboos and encourage respectful dialogue. Within this safe and supportive environment, children gain the confidence to speak openly, understand their rights, and make informed decisions.

Career exposure is also a key part of the week. Learners are introduced to employment opportunities in conservation and ecotourism, and visit a neighbouring game lodge to engage with staff and discover realistic career pathways close to home.

Toward the end of the week, learners take part in a session entitled *"Making South Africa a Better Place,"* where they reflect on how environmental protection, wildlife conservation, and responsible citizenship contribute to their country's future. Each child writes six personal promises, printed on a certificate to take home and share with their family.

The week concludes with an awards ceremony where learners present what they have learned. For many, this is their first experience speaking publicly, building lasting self-confidence.

Fourteen-year-old Debra from Rakgolokwana High School shared:

> "During my week at DAKTARI, I have learnt that we have to protect our environment and our nature. It was really an opportunity of a lifetime."



Through this programme, DAKTARI equips children not only to protect the environment, but also to protect themselves and shape a responsible future.

TIMETABLE & LESSONS

MONDAY	
Time	**Activity**
7:00	Tea/Coffee
7:45	Animal Care
8:15	Animal Interaction
8:30	Breakfast
9:00	Intro/Tours/Rules
10:45	Survey - Part 1
11:30	Politeness*
12:30	Lunch (LIONS)
13:00	Free Time/Swimming
14:00	Leadership Skills*
14:30	Animals Tracks
15:30	Refreshment
16:00	Importance of Vultures and Snakes
16:30	Animal Care
17:00	Shower Duty
17:30	Animal Knowledge
18:30	Dinner/Clean up
19:30	Pictionary
20:30	Bedtime

TUESDAY	
Time	**Activity**
7:00	Tea/Coffee/Room inspection
7:15	Game Drive (LEOPARDS)
7:30	Animal Care (LIONS)
8:15	Animal Interaction
8:30	Breakfast
9:00	Career Guidance*
10:30	Game Reserve Visit*
12:30	Lunch (LEOPARDS)
14:00	**Eco Club**
14:00	Public Speaking Skills*
15:00	Refreshment
15:30	Drawing my Future (Art Lesson)*
16:30	Animal Care
17:00	Shower Duty
17:30	Wildlife Crime
18:30	Dinner / Clean up
19:30	Night Safari
20:00	Fun games
21:00	Bedtime

WEDNESDAY	
Time	**Activity**
7:00	Tea/Coffee/Room inspection
7:15	Game Drive (LIONS)
7:30	Animal Care (LEOPARDS)
8:15	Animal Interaction
8:30	Breakfast
9:00	The Environment
10:00	Refreshment
10:15	Climate Change
11:00	Knowledge Hunt
12:30	Lunch (LIONS)
14:00	Boundaries & Consent*
15:00	Refreshment
15:30	Solar Energy
16:40	Animal Care
17:00	Shower Duty
17:30	Social Talk - Substance Abuse*
18:30	Dinner/Clean up
19:15	Movie Night
21:00	Bedtime

THURSDAY	
Time	**Activity**
7:00	Tea/Coffee/Room inspection
7:15	Game Drive (LEOPARDS)
7:30	Animal Care (LIONS)
8:15	Animal Interaction
8:30	Breakfast
9:00	Plastic & Environment
9:30	Bush Walk
11:30	Dog Lesson
12:30	Lunch (LEOPARDS)
14:00	**Eco Club**
14:00	Making SA a Better Place*
15:00	Refreshment
15:30	Student Presentation
16:30	Animal Care
17:00	Shower Duty
17:00	Fire Builder
17:30	Social Talk - Safe Sex*
18:30	Dinner/Clean up
19:30	Bonfire
21:00	Bedtime

FRIDAY	
Time	**Activity**
7:00	Tea/Coffee/Room inspection
7:15	Game Drive (LIONS)
7:30	Animal Care (LEOPARDS)
8:15	Animal Interaction
8:30	Breakfast
9:00	Survey - Part 2
9:45	Waste Collection & Camp Cleaning
10:00	Book Coloring & Volunteer Meeting
10:30	Presentation Rehearsal
11:00	Award Ceremony
11:30	Students Departure & Volunteer meeting
12:30	Lunch
14:00	Big Clean
16:30	Animal care

* General and social skills lessons to enhance the children's future

Lessons:

Animal Care:
Twice a day, students assist with the care of resident animals. They help with feeding, cleaning enclosures, providing water, and ensuring the animals' well-being. This hands-on experience builds responsibility and respect for wildlife.



Survey:
On Monday, each child completes a questionnaire assessing their knowledge of environmental protection, eco-tourism, job opportunities, wildlife, and life skills. The same survey is completed on Friday, allowing us to measure learning progression over the week.

Game Drive:
During the week, learners participate in guided game drives on the reserve where DAKTARI is located. This experience allows them to observe wild animals in their natural habitat and understand ecosystem dynamics in a real and respectful setting. For many children, this is their first opportunity to see wildlife such as giraffe, zebra, or antelope in the wild, strengthening their connection to their natural heritage.

Politeness and Respect:
This lesson reinforces the importance of respecting others — including people, animals, and the environment — and promotes positive behaviour and social responsibility.

Leadership Skills:
Students explore the qualities of effective leadership, the difference between good and poor leadership, and the responsibility that comes with being chosen to lead.

Boundaries & Consent:
This essential lesson raises awareness about personal boundaries, respect, and consent. Children learn about their rights, how to recognise inappropriate behaviour, and how to protect themselves and others. The session encourages open discussion in a safe and respectful environment.

Animal Tracks and Signs:
Students learn how to identify animal prints and track patterns. A short bush walk and matching activities expose them to local fauna and strengthen their observation skills.

The Importance of Vultures:
Children discover the crucial ecological role vultures play and learn to challenge harmful myths that contribute to their poaching.

Public Speaking:
Students build confidence in speaking clearly and respectfully in front of others, practising body language, voice projection, and presentation skills.

Career Guidance and Game Reserve Visit:
With youth unemployment in Limpopo at approximately 50%, this lesson introduces learners to career opportunities in conservation and eco-tourism. A visit to a nearby game reserve allows direct interaction with professionals in the field.

Animal Knowledge:
Students learn about endangered and extinct species, the causes of extinction, and how wildlife trafficking affects ecosystems and communities.

Wildlife Crime:
Learners explore the impact of poaching locally and globally. The lesson highlights the ecological and economic consequences and introduces anti-poaching efforts and conservation initiatives.

Drawing My Future:
Students reflect on their aspirations, draw their future goals, and consider the steps needed to achieve them.

The Environment:
This lesson explains ecosystems, pollution, waste decomposition, the water cycle, and environmental protection.

Climate Change:
Students learn about the causes and consequences of climate change and practical actions they can take.

Plastics and the Environment:
This lesson addresses over-consumption and the environmental impact of non-biodegradable waste.

Solar Energy:
Learners discover how renewable energy works and how solar power can reduce environmental impact.

Knowledge Hunt:
An interactive outdoor activity where students research and classify DAKTARI animals and other South African wildlife.



Bush Walk:
A guided two-hour walk introducing learners to local trees, plants, and animal tracks in the South African bush.

Making South Africa a Better Place:
Students debate national challenges and reflect on their role in creating positive change. Each child writes six personal promises to improve their life and protect their country.

Presentation Rehearsal:
Learners prepare their final presentation with one-on-one guidance.

Students' Presentations:
Each child delivers a presentation about their week at DAKTARI, strengthening confidence and public speaking skills.



How We Built Our Teaching Programme

Since its founding in 2006, DAKTARI's teaching programme has continuously evolved to respond to local community needs and environmental challenges. What began as a simple vision — to inspire children to protect their environment — has developed into a structured, multi-level curriculum.

To ensure quality and relevance, we collaborate with specialised organisations that strengthen key lessons. For example, the Endangered Wildlife Trust and WWF contribute to our Wildlife Crime awareness content, the Kruger to Canyon Biosphere supports our waste management education and networking with other local NGO's. ALECS enriches our lessons around responsible care of domestic animals and compassion-based animal welfare. These partnerships help ensure our information is accurate, credible, and aligned with the wider conservation and education sector.

We regularly review and update our teaching materials to reflect both local realities and global environmental issues. By combining the passion of our founders, the dedication of our team and volunteers, and the expertise of our partners, DAKTARI delivers a programme that is both inspiring and professionally grounded.

KRUGER TO CANYONS BIOSPHERE REGION

ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST

WWF

ALECS

Monitoring and Evaluation

DAKTARI measures the impact of its Environmental Education Programme through both quantitative and qualitative tools.

At the beginning of each week, every child completes a structured survey assessing their knowledge of environmental protection, eco-tourism, wildlife crime, job opportunities, and life skills. The same survey is completed again at the end of the week, allowing us to measure immediate learning progression.

The data collected over the years demonstrates significant improvement across all key subjects. Since 2011, children have consistently shown measurable increases in knowledge and awareness during their week at DAKTARI (see attached data table).

Subject questions asked to the children	Progression of the children's knowledge over the years							
	2011/2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
The importance of protecting animals	226.21%	114.00%	185.00%	133.37%	159.26%	112.12%	85.61%	55.71%
The importance of the Eco-Tourism industry	322.98%	359.00%	450.00%	347.86%	346.15%	300.00%	123.21%	113.27%
Awareness of job opportunities	267.65%	130.00%	139.00%	58.33%	82.69%	72.22%	58.12%	100.00%
Environmental awareness	103.11%	127.00%	130.00%	113.54%	68.29%	73.81%	38.86%	72.41%
Life skills - HiV awareness	95.00%	81.00%	121.00%	123.43%	52.63%	102.44%	72.95%	62.99%

In recent years, progression percentages have gradually decreased. This is not a negative trend, but rather a reflection of long-term impact. As thousands of children have passed through the programme, awareness within surrounding communities has increased. Many learners now arrive with a higher baseline understanding because former participants have shared their knowledge with family and friends. The programme is therefore contributing to a broader cultural shift in environmental awareness.

Qualitative Impact and Community Feedback

In addition to quantitative survey results, DAKTARI observes meaningful long-term qualitative impact. One former participant contacted us requesting a duplicate of his certificate because the original had been damaged. When reviewing our records, we discovered that he had attended DAKTARI eight years earlier — and had kept his certificate all that time. This illustrates how the commitments made during the programme remain meaningful long after the week at camp has ended.

The programme's long-term impact is also reflected in feedback from teachers and school principals, who report noticeable improvements in learners who have attended DAKTARI. These include increased concentration in class, greater confidence in speaking, improved politeness and self-esteem, and in several cases, higher academic performance at the end of the school year.

Former participants have demonstrated responsible action within their communities. There have been instances where students discouraged the formation of poaching groups in their villages, and others have contacted Nature Conservation authorities when wild animals were found near their homes. In one case, this led to the successful rescue and relocation of a cheetah and her cubs.

These examples demonstrate that DAKTARI's impact extends beyond knowledge acquisition. The programme fosters confidence, responsibility, and real-life conservation action within surrounding communities. Through continuous data collection, community feedback, and long-term follow-up, DAKTARI remains committed to evaluating and strengthening its impact year after year.

Our objectives in the context of Education for Sustainable Development

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), as defined by the United Nations, promotes changes in knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to create a more sustainable and just society.

DAKTARI's Environmental Education Programme aligns with 10 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), integrating environmental awareness, social responsibility, and economic empowerment into practical, community-based education.



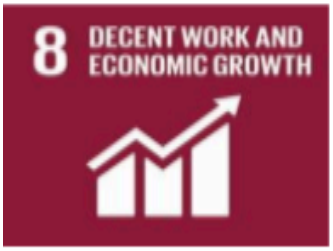


















What we do to achieve the ESD objectives

SDG 1 – No Poverty
By strengthening education and promoting environmental career pathways, DAKTARI supports income generation and employment opportunities within the conservation and eco-tourism sectors. Our youth programmes equip young adults with practical job-search skills and workplace experience.

SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being
Through life skills education, discussions on HIV/AIDS, sexual health, and personal safety (including Boundaries & Consent), DAKTARI promotes informed decision-making and healthier lifestyles.

SDG 4 – Quality Education
We provide small-group, experiential learning that complements the national curriculum. One-on-one support, practical activities, and public speaking opportunities build knowledge, confidence, and critical thinking skills.

SDG 5 – Gender Equality
Our programmes are inclusive and accessible to all learners. Respect, equality, and personal dignity are reinforced throughout our teaching.

SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation
Children learn about water conservation, pollution prevention, and the environmental impact of waste on rivers and ecosystems.

SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy
DAKTARI operates off-grid using solar power. Renewable energy systems are visible and explained to learners as practical examples of sustainable living.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth
Through our Internship Programme and Job Hunting Programme, young adults gain workplace experience, CV-writing skills, and employment readiness training.

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production
Learners are taught principles of reducing waste, recycling, water conservation, and sustainable resource management.

SDG 15 – Life on Land
Conservation education, wildlife crime awareness, and ecosystem understanding form the core of our environmental curriculum.

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals
We collaborate with conservation organisations, educational partners, and local stakeholders to strengthen programme quality and promote shared sustainable practices.

THE OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

DAKTARI believes that long-term conservation can only succeed when local communities are actively involved. Education must extend beyond the camp and into the schools and villages where children live.

Through our outreach initiatives, we empower young people to become environmental ambassadors within their own communities.



Our three main outreach programmes are:

A. Crime Awareness Campaigns
B. The Eco Club
C. Community Development Initiatives (ECD, Youth development program, Cultural tours)

A – WILDLIFE CRIME AWARENESS CAMPAIGN (OFF-SITE)

DAKTARI raises environmental awareness in three primary schools with Grade 7 students. This serves as an introduction to our on-site environmental education program and provides a first opportunity for us to introduce students to key conservation topics.

During these visits, we deliver lessons about Wildlife Crime and the importance of animals for South Africa. The programme begins with an introductory lesson on Wildlife Crime, followed by a second session that builds on the previous lesson to reinforce the importance of wildlife for both the students and the country. The programme concludes with a presentation day in front of the whole school, during which the students perform a role play to share what they have learned.

The villages selected for these campaigns include five schools whose students will later participate in DAKTARI's on-site environmental education programme. This approach allows us to build a strong foundation before the students visit our centre and enables a structured follow-up over three years through our on-site programme and Eco Club. These villages are important hotspots as they are surrounded by game reserves where numerous cases of poaching have been reported. We aim to engage with a younger audience to ensure a personalised follow-up and create a long-term positive impact on the environment.

Over the course of a year, we are able to work with five schools and directly reach approximately 240 students. We also expect students to share their knowledge with their families and communities, allowing the programme's message to spread beyond the classroom.

This program aims at developing the knowledge and understanding of our students regarding Wildlife Crime through:



- Hands-on activities: We provide a safe learning environment by working in smaller group settings and encourage open discussion about Wildlife Crime. Our lessons are designed to appeal to the

sensitivity of the students and use a lot of visual materials such as pictures, role-plays, and graphs. We provide the students with as many tools as possible to understand the issues around Wildlife Crime and trafficking. We encourage active engagement with such issues.

- Lesson content: During our lessons, the students learn about what happens when an animal is poached. We show them pictures and videos to make them aware of such practices. We also teach them about the reasons why people turn to poaching and take on a critical approach to it. We want them to learn to think for themselves and encourage them to share their thoughts about the topic in their own words. Furthermore, we encourage the students to share their stories; we want to listen to their thoughts and ideas. We also elaborate on issues around farm hunting and wild animals coming into the village. We want the students to be aware of the appropriate ways to deal with such issues. DAKTARI aims to provide the right tools and knowledge to the students regarding Wildlife Crime issues, but also to encourage individual thinking, which leads to positive change of attitudes towards wild animals and protected areas. We found that important organisations like WWF South Africa and The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) did not have context-specific lessons about such topics, so we decided to build our own while staying aligned with their set of guidelines. Our lesson content is available upon request.

- Community engagement: Engaging with the whole community is key to sustainable management of protected areas, which is why we highly encourage parents, teachers, and community members to take part in our campaigns. We encourage our students to share information with them, but also to directly engage with them. It is during the presentation day that the students raise awareness about the importance of animals for their country. We believe that this will help positively change behaviours for the long-term and promote sustainable community engagement. In addition, the teachers are usually very keen on working with us and teaching the students about such issues. Their engagement is crucial in achieving our goal of educating the younger generations about their environment and its wildlife.

- Presentation day: The campaign concludes with a presentation during the school assembly, in front of all the students. The Grade 7 learners perform three short role plays based on real-life situations, such as how to react if a lion enters a village or how to protect the environment. Using role play allows students to actively engage with the topic and present practical examples that their peers can easily understand and remember. This interactive approach helps spread conservation messages throughout the school and encourages students to share what they have learned with others.



- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Through our engagement with all of the schools, we want to improve our teaching based on individual needs. We monitor and evaluate our program regularly, give out surveys, and analyse the data that we gather for the next lesson. We establish the student's prior knowledge and fill gaps where needed, especially regarding the protection of wild animals. If we find that most of the students are not aware of a particular practice or issue, we make sure to tackle this in the next lesson.



B – THE ECO CLUB (OFF-SITE)

The Eco Club is a voluntary after-school club, which takes place twice a week for a period of 6 weeks in local secondary schools for Grade 9 students. The Eco Club teaches the children about wildlife crime, poaching, the environment, and how they can play a crucial role in making South Africa a better place. This programme enables a thorough development of the students' environmental awareness as we follow and monitor them for a full 6-week cycle. Furthermore, the lessons are designed to further develop the knowledge that they have already gained in our Environmental Education Programme.

The Eco Club happens over a 6-week period per term, which takes place three or four times a year. In addition, we have 30 kids per session; thus, in one year, we manage to directly reach 120 students. Furthermore, we predict that our students will raise awareness amongst their families and community, which is why we predict our indirect impact to be around 480 people. Our goal is to empower our students to share their knowledge with their community, to learn to think critically about the environmental issues that their country is facing, and find appropriate solutions to mediate such issues.

Timeline		
Week 1	Lesson 1	Introduction
	Lesson 2	Geography of Africa
Week 2	Lesson 3	The environment
	Lesson 4	The Ecosystem
Week 3	Lesson 5	Saving our Planet
	Lesson 6	Waste Management

Week 4	Lesson 7	School Clean Up
	Lesson 8	Wildlife Crime
Week 5	Lesson 9	The Big Debate
	Lesson 10	Make South Africa a better place
Week 6	Lesson 11	Review
	Lesson 12	Ceremony

This programme aims at developing the students' knowledge and understanding of wildlife crime through:

- Learning by doing: We highly encourage students to take part in open-discussion debates to express their feelings and ideas regarding the highly sensitive topic of wildlife crime and trafficking present in their country. The Eco Club provides a safe space for students to look for possible solutions to such issues, but also provides a platform for change. Indeed, we empower our students to share the knowledge that they gain through the lessons with their community. We want the Eco Club to be a place where the students can speak freely and be listened to, and where their story is being heard. We allow a lot of time for discussions and the exchange of ideas.

- Lesson content: We teach the students about Wildlife Crime and explain to them what happens when an animal is poached. We want to raise awareness about such issues and provide the students with pictures and videos, but also reasons why such practices are taking place. As we teach the lesson halfway through our teaching cycle, we are able to really deepen the students' understanding of such practices as they are already aware of the main environmental issues regarding the ecosystem and their country. We organise debates and encourage the students to think for themselves. Furthermore, we reinforce the importance of animals for South Africa throughout the week. This is included in every lesson that we teach the students as a recurring topic. Indeed, when we talk about what constitutes a healthy environment or how to have a balanced ecosystem, we explain that animals play a central role in this, which is why they are important and have to be protected. Our lesson was created with the help of WWF and EWT, as we wanted to be aligned with their set of guidelines. Our lesson content is available upon request.



- Sharing of information: The learning does not stop in the classroom. We want our students to engage with the wider community and become ambassadors of change. DAKTARI's work is to provide knowledge to the students, but also to develop a sense of responsibility for the future of their country and its natural heritage. We are aiming at providing the children with the tools and skills to be able to confidently share their knowledge



and learnings. This is achieved through our Eco Club ambassadors, who are elected by the students to raise awareness about what they have learned. We go through leadership training and get them prepared to teach younger students about such issues through our Outreach Campaigns. We prepare them to teach their part during the campaigns and are assisting the volunteers. This is a great way to empower them in raising awareness. It also helps to build their confidence in public speaking, which is a crucial skill to master for future job prospects.

- **Community engagement:** The Eco Club also directly engages with the wider community through an end-of-session ceremony. The ceremony takes place after the 6-week cycle, and parents and community members are invited. This is a great opportunity for the students to present some of their work related to poaching, wildlife crime, and how to combat such issues. The ceremony is a key moment of our program as we manage to directly engage with the parents and raise awareness in a nice and friendly environment.



Monitoring and Evaluation – Eco Club

At the beginning of each six-week cycle, students complete a baseline survey assessing their knowledge of environmental protection, wildlife crime, pollution, and responsible citizenship. The same survey is conducted at the end of the programme to measure learning progression.

Results shown are based on the percentages of right answers given by the children, Year to date 2019 - 2025			
Question subject matter	**Correct answers at the start**	**Correct answers at the end**	**Progression**
The importance of protecting animals	74.01%	94.25%	20%
Poaching Awareness	78%	118.25%	40%
Geographical Awareness	54%	129.17%	100%
Environmental Awareness	82.94%	91.47%	9%
Awareness of Pollution	108.93%	180.46%	72%
AVERAGE PROGRESSION			48%

Based on our most recent data, the Eco Club demonstrates an average overall progression rate of 48% between the first and final assessments. This measurable improvement reflects strengthened knowledge, awareness, and critical thinking skills among participants.

Since 2019, 504 learners have completed the Eco Club programme, extending DAKTARI's impact beyond the one-week on-site education experience.

Beyond direct learning outcomes, the Eco Club aims to create environmental ambassadors who share their knowledge within their families and communities. Using a conservative estimate that

each learner reaches at least two additional people (for example, one caregiver and one sibling or friend), the programme has indirectly reached approximately **1,000 additional community members** since 2019.

C - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

1 - EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (OFF-SITE)

As part of its community outreach initiatives, DAKTARI has expanded its work to support **Early Childhood Development** (ECD) in the villages where it already runs environmental education programmes. By working with local crèches, the organisation aims to strengthen children's development at a critical stage, helping them build the cognitive, language, motor, and social skills needed for school readiness and long-term educational success.

To implement this initiative, DAKTARI partnered with The Reach Trust to introduce the **Finding Thabo** programme, a play-based educational tool designed for children aged 3 to 6. Through illustrated search activities inspired by the "Where's Wally?" concept, the programme stimulates multiple areas of early development and is specifically designed for low-resource learning environments.

The programme launched as a **pilot project in 2026** in three crèches located in villages where DAKTARI is already active: The Oaks, Finale, and Mulalani. Each crèche receives a full set of educational resources, and DAKTARI staff members train practitioners on how to use them effectively in their classrooms. The pilot currently reaches **110 children aged 4 to 5 years old**.

In addition to providing resources and training, DAKTARI conducts follow-up visits to support practitioners and monitor the programme's impact. Teachers track children's development through a mobile application and participate in pre- and post-training surveys to assess changes in confidence and teaching practices. This approach ensures that the programme strengthens both **children's early learning and the professional capacity of local educators**.





2 - YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (ON-SITE)

Limpopo Province continues to face high unemployment, currently estimated at approximately 28–30%. However, this figure rises significantly among young people, with youth unemployment in South Africa exceeding 45% and reaching over 58% for those aged 15–24 . In rural communities, limited access to education, work experience, and employment opportunities further increases vulnerability among youth.

This lack of opportunity can have direct consequences for conservation. In areas surrounding protected reserves, unemployment and poverty can contribute to activities such as poaching and illegal wildlife trade, as individuals seek alternative sources of income.

DAKTARI addresses this challenge by providing structured training, practical work experience, and career guidance through its Youth Development Programmes. By equipping young people with employable skills and realistic career pathways, we not only improve their economic prospects but also contribute to long-term environmental protection.

➢Job Hunting Programme

In addition to the six-month Internship Programme, DAKTARI runs a one-week Job Hunting Programme for unemployed youth aged 18–25 who have completed school but are struggling to access employment.

This intensive programme focuses on practical employability skills. Participants learn how to search for job opportunities, create and manage an email address, write a professional CV and motivation letter, and prepare for interviews. They also receive guidance on understanding the job market, identifying realistic opportunities based on their current skills, and developing confidence in professional communication.

By providing structured support and practical tools, the Job Hunting Programme helps young adults take their first concrete steps toward employment and financial independence.

➢Internship Programme

DAKTARI maintains a close relationship with the nearby community of The Oaks village and is committed to addressing youth unemployment through practical skills development. In Limpopo Province, where DAKTARI operates, unemployment remains critically high at approximately 49%, limiting opportunities for young people to build stable futures.

We believe that creating access to decent work not only reduces poverty but also strengthens environmental protection. When young people have sustainable income opportunities, communities are less vulnerable to activities such as poaching and illegal resource exploitation.

Through our six-month local Internship Programme, DAKTARI provides structured training to unemployed youth with little or no prior work experience. Each cycle welcomes six young adults who live and work at DAKTARI, gaining hands-on experience in hospitality, operational support, and teamwork.

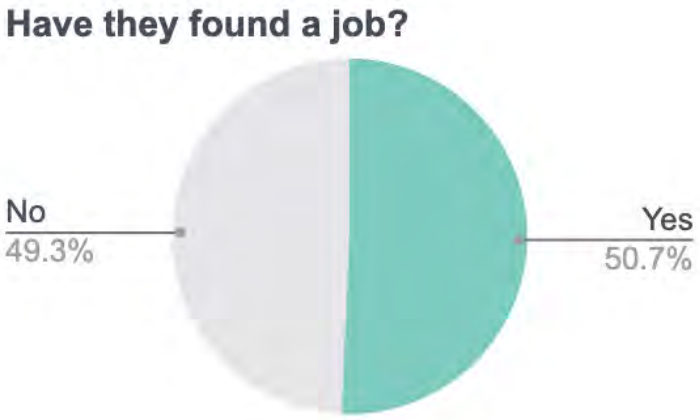
Interns are supervised by experienced staff members and receive guidance in CV development, professional communication, and workplace etiquette. They are supported with a weekly stipend to encourage commitment and stability during the training period.

DAKTARI maintains follow-up contact with former interns to track employment outcomes. Over the past seven years, the programme has achieved a **50.70 % employment success rate**, with more than half of participants securing employment after completing the internship.

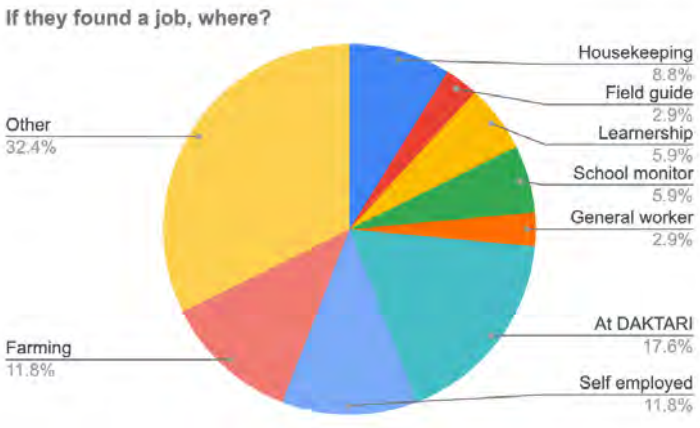
This result demonstrates that structured mentorship, practical work experience, and targeted career guidance significantly improve employment prospects for unemployed youth in rural Limpopo. We remain committed to strengthening this rate further by expanding our employer network and enhancing our professional development support.







50.7% of participants have secured employment following completion of the programme, reflecting the positive impact of DAKTARI's practical training and career support.



This diagram illustrates the employment sectors in which former interns are currently working. The largest proportion (32.4%) falls under the category "Other," reflecting employment in a variety of sectors not individually listed.

The second largest category is employment at DAKTARI itself (17.6%), demonstrating internal growth and continuity within the organisation.

Notably, 11.8% of former interns are self-employed, indicating that the programme also supports entrepreneurial initiative. An additional 11.8% are engaged in farming activities, while others have secured positions in hospitality, education support, field guiding, and general work.

Through hands-on work experience, life skills development, and structured job-search guidance, DAKTARI empowers young people to pursue diverse employment pathways and contribute meaningfully to their communities and the broader eco-tourism and local economy sectors.

3 - VILLAGE TOURS AND CULTURAL TOURS (OFF-SITE)

As part of our community outreach efforts, DAKTARI supports the development of community-based ecotourism initiatives that promote local employment and cultural exchange. In addition to our local volunteer programme, we encourage self-employment opportunities within the village through tourism-related activities.

One of these initiatives includes partnering with a local host, Maakosha, who leads **culture tours and village visits** for international visitors and volunteers. During these tours, guests walk through the village and gain insight into daily life, local traditions, and community structures. The experience also includes visits to the **local school and crèche**, allowing visitors to better understand the educational environment and the challenges faced by children and teachers in rural communities. Seeing the facilities firsthand helps guests gain a deeper understanding of the realities of education in the area and the importance of community development initiatives.

To deepen this cultural immersion, Maakosha also welcomes visitors to stay at her home through a **homestay experience**. During this stay, guests share meals with the family, participate in daily household activities, and gain a better understanding of rural life and community traditions. Visitors wake up early to follow Maakosha's daily routine and accompany her to the local market, where she sells homemade food. This provides visitors with a unique opportunity to witness everyday economic activities while supporting a local entrepreneur.

Thanks to these tourism activities, Maakosha currently earns **an average of approximately R2,000 in additional income per month**, directly supporting her family and demonstrating the economic potential of community-based tourism.

Through these initiatives, DAKTARI aims to progressively support the development of the village as a **community-based tourism destination**. By creating opportunities linked to ecotourism—such as cultural tours, homestays, and guiding—residents are able to generate income while sharing their culture and strengthening the local economy. This approach contributes to sustainable development by linking conservation, cultural exchange, and employment opportunities for the community.



THE WILDLIFE ORPHANAGE PROGRAMME

The wildlife sanctuary began with two animals — a blind donkey and a bushbuck. Today, more than 30 non-releasable animals call DAKTARI home, including those first two residents.

Over the years, the sanctuary has grown to include a diverse range of species such as mongooses, meerkats, ostriches, bush babies, rock hyraxes, warthogs, porcupines, small antelope species, as well as larger predators, including a lion, a cheetah, and a caracal. These animals cannot return to the wild due to injury, permanent habituation, or other vulnerabilities. At DAKTARI, they live in secure, enriched environments where their welfare is prioritised.

The sanctuary forms an essential part of our educational approach. Each animal serves as an ambassador for its species, allowing children to learn through direct observation and guided interaction. For many learners, this is their first opportunity to see wildlife up close in a safe and respectful setting.

Animal welfare is central to DAKTARI's operations. All animals receive species-appropriate nutrition, environmental enrichment, and ongoing veterinary care. We are proud to have the continued support of wildlife veterinarian Dr Peter Rogers, who has been involved with DAKTARI since its creation and has provided professional oversight for more than 20 years. His extensive experience in wildlife medicine ensures that the highest standards of care are maintained.

It is also an important learning opportunity for the children to observe a wildlife veterinarian in action. During his visits, Dr Peter Rogers takes the time to explain procedures and treatments, helping learners understand animal health, responsible care, and the scientific aspects of wildlife conservation.

In addition to observing sanctuary animals, learners participate in guided game drives on the reserve where DAKTARI is located, allowing them to see wild animals in their natural habitat. When funding permits, sponsored visits to Big 5 reserves are also organised. Despite living within 60 km of the Kruger National Park, most children have never had the opportunity to visit a protected area due to financial constraints.

Limpopo Province continues to face significant poaching pressure. By combining direct wildlife encounters with structured conservation education, DAKTARI aims to transform fear into knowledge and knowledge into responsible action.

The relationship children build with the animals at DAKTARI often becomes the foundation for lasting compassion and environmental stewardship.



Annual Budget March 2026 to February 2027 (financial year South Africa)					
Description	Educational programme	Wildlife Orphanage	Outreach & Community Development	Running Cost	Total Expense/Income
Expenses					
Food	R601,666.67	R79,166.67	R79,166.67	R0.00	R760,000.00
Animal Food & Care	R0.00	R125,000.00	R0.00	R0.00	R125,000.00
Marketing	R0.00	R0.00	R0.00	R210,000.00	R210,000.00
General expenses	R60,720.83	R7,989.58	R15,189.58	R215,300.00	R299,200.00
Consumable	R55,437.21	R0.00	R4,662.79	R0.00	R60,100.00
Gas, generator and Solar	R236,689.92	R4,166.67	R31,143.41	R0.00	R272,000.00
Transport	R187,229.17	R24,635.42	R24,635.42	R0.00	R236,500.00
Stationery	R3,562.50	R468.75	R468.75	R0.00	R4,500.00
Rent	R57,000.00	R7,500.00	R7,500.00	R0.00	R72,000.00
Repair and Maintenance	R0.00	R0.00	R0.00	R162,500.00	R162,500.00
Accounting	R0.00	R0.00	R0.00	R85,000.00	R85,000.00
Bank Fee	R0.00	R0.00	R0.00	R15,000.00	R15,000.00
Insurances	R0.00	R0.00	R0.00	R78,000.00	R78,000.00
Salaries/cost employment	R0.00	R0.00	R0.00	R2,075,950.00	R2,075,950.00
Cost of Sale	R0.00	R0.00	R0.00	R504,000.00	R504,000.00
Total Expenses	R1,202,306.30	R248,927.08	R162,766.62	R3,345,750.00	R4,959,750.00
Income					
Volunteers					R1,800,000.00
Sales other					R552,000.00
Goal Fundraising					R2,427,550.00
Annual Budget					R4,779,550.00

Cost per kid (350 per year)	R2,932.45
For 1 month (40 Kids)	100192.19

Funding Request

We kindly invite you to support DAKTARI's fundraising goal across our core pillars: Environmental Education, Wildlife Sanctuary, Outreach, and Community Development.

Our provisional annual budget for March 2025 – February 2026 totals R4,623,400

and reflects the full operational cost of delivering our integrated programmes in a remote bush environment.

Programme Budget Overview

The Educational Programme, Wildlife Sanctuary, and Outreach activities include:

- Food – Meals for children, volunteers, and staff, as well as animal nutrition
- Animal Food & Care – Species-appropriate feeding, enrichment, and veterinary support
- General Expenses – Medical supplies, uniforms, and essential programme materials
- Consumables – Cleaning supplies, garden maintenance, and educational materials
- Transport – Fuel, maintenance, vehicle licensing, and tracking systems
- Gas, Generator & Solar – Energy provision in our off-grid bush location
- Rent – Lease of the game reserve property

DAKTARI operates within a rented game reserve to provide full nature immersion. While the remote location increases transport and solar energy costs, it is essential to delivering authentic environmental education and wildlife experiences.

Operational Budget

Operational costs ensure the stability and sustainability of the organisation and include:

- Marketing – Brochures, volunteer recruitment, agency commissions, and events
- General Administration – Cleaning, IT, legal compliance, subscriptions, communications, and travel
- Repair & Maintenance – Infrastructure, renovations, tools, and equipment
- Accounting & Compliance – Professional bookkeeping and financial oversight
- Insurance – Vehicles, materials, and public liability
- Salaries & Employment Costs – Core team and programme coordinators
- Cost of Sales – Excursions and educational items for sale

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT DAKTARI

We welcome support in two flexible ways:

Option A – General Contribution

Support DAKTARI's overall fundraising goal and allow us to allocate funds where they are most urgently needed across our Educational Programme, Wildlife Sanctuary, Outreach, and Youth Development initiatives.

Unrestricted funding enables us to respond to immediate priorities and maintain operational stability throughout the year.

Option B – Targeted Sponsorship Opportunities

Support a specific impact area:

- R2,932 – Sponsors one child for the full one-week Environmental Education Programme
- R100,192 – Sponsors one month of Environmental Education (approximately 32 children)
- R760,000 – Supports annual food provision for children, volunteers, and staff
- R125,000 – Supports annual animal food and care
- R236,550 – Covers annual transport costs required to run our programmes

We are also happy to tailor sponsorship packages aligned with your CSR objectives and reporting requirements.

Final Appeal

By supporting DAKTARI, you contribute directly to environmental education, youth empowerment, and responsible wildlife care in rural Limpopo.

Together, we can ensure that conservation is not only about protecting animals — but about equipping the next generation to protect them.

Value to Corporate Partners

Through partnership with DAKTARI, companies contribute to:

- SDG-aligned education and youth employability
- Measurable environmental awareness outcomes
- Community-based economic empowerment
- Ethical wildlife care and conservation education

We are committed to transparent reporting, impact measurement, and long-term collaboration.

Salaries and employment costs (R 1,947,400) cover programme coordinators, animal care staff, operational personnel, and youth development interns. A detailed breakdown is available upon request.

SOME SUCCESS STORIES

To remind us why we are doing this!

Willington



Willington was one of the first learners to attend DAKTARI's Environmental Education Programme, where he discovered his passion for animals and conservation.

Inspired by his experience, he later created an Eco Club at his school and maintained close contact with DAKTARI. His dedication led to a volunteer opportunity that developed into a full-time role as Animal Manager. During this time, he received hands-on training, completed wildlife-related courses, and was selected for the Kruger2Canyon Biosphere Environmental Monitors Programme. With donor support, he also obtained his driver's licence, further strengthening his employability.

After two years at DAKTARI, Willington was recruited by Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre as an Animal Curator and later joined HERD, working in elephant care.

His journey reflects how environmental education and mentorship can open real career pathways in conservation.

Patience



Patience first joined DAKTARI through the Job Hunting Programme, where she developed practical employment skills and demonstrated strong motivation and leadership potential. She subsequently applied for and secured a position as Programme Coordinator Assistant.

Her commitment and performance led to full-time employment with the Kruger to Canyon Biosphere as an Environmental Monitor, where she continued working in environmental education.

In 2019, Patience became a board member of DAKTARI and now manages the Youth Development Programme in collaboration with the local community.

Her journey highlights how targeted career guidance and structured support can create sustainable employment pathways and community leadership.

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Mabine and the bush baby



Mabine attended DAKTARI's Environmental Education Programme, where he encountered a bush baby for the first time. Like many of the children, he was fascinated by this small nocturnal primate and surprised to learn that bush babies also live in the surrounding villages. Due to fear and misunderstanding, these animals are sometimes harmed because of their large eyes and unusual appearance.

Two months after his visit, Mabine and his brother contacted DAKTARI one evening after discovering a sick bush baby in their village. Although it was already dark, they insisted that the animal needed help. When our team arrived, the boys were waiting outside with a torch and a cage, determined to protect the animal.

The bush baby was weak and dehydrated. After receiving fluids and proper care, it recovered and was successfully released two weeks later. Before we left the village that evening, the boys asked us to return the cage — "just in case we find another animal that needs help."

Mabine's story reflects the shift from fear to responsibility that DAKTARI strives to create. Knowledge transformed into action, and a young learner became a protector of wildlife within his own community.

Three Lucky genets

In a nearby village, a local pastor who supports underprivileged children discovered three baby genets in a puddle of water after a severe storm. The animals were cold, weak, and without their mother. Unsure how to help, he asked the children for advice.

One of the children recalled learning about DAKTARI through friends and suggested contacting us. The pastor immediately reached out and brought the three genets to our sanctuary.

With careful monitoring and dedicated care, the genets were successfully hand-raised and recovered. During this period, our dog Candy even produced milk, which supported their early recovery. Once strong enough, the animals were placed in appropriate care arrangements.

This story highlights the strong relationship of trust between DAKTARI and the surrounding communities. Families know they can contact us when wildlife is in distress, reflecting the growing awareness and responsibility fostered through our education programmes.







Thank you

