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Thornybush COMMUNITY

Q3 | 2026

Thornybush *Community* Impact Update

As we close out Q3, Thornybush Community reflects on the progress made and the impact delivered across our programmes between July and September 2026.

JULY



Kids in Conservation (KIC), 2nd Excursion

Starting off in July, the KIC programme continued to provide children with practical exposure to conservation and the natural environment through educational excursions. The group visited the Hoedspruit Reptile Centre, where the children had an opportunity to learn more about reptiles and their role within ecosystems.

The excursion formed part of the programme's continued efforts to move conservation learning beyond theory and give children first-hand experiences that build curiosity, knowledge and appreciation for biodiversity.



Hoedspruit Farmers Market

Thornybush Community continued to support local enterprises through participation in the Hoedspruit Farmers Market. The market provided an opportunity for Bongani Mathonsi to showcase his artwork and Thulani Mabaso to sell fresh produce from Nduna Mabaso Farms, with Thornybush Community merchandise also on display. This initiative supports Enterprise Development by creating market access and increasing visibility for local entrepreneurs. It also allows entrepreneurs to connect with potential customers and build valuable networks. Through direct customer engagement, they can test their products, gain confidence and develop their sales skills.



Scouts Camp, 1st Camp

The first Scouts Camp of 2026 was held at Jackalberry Lodge, headquarters of Thornybush Nature Reserve, in partnership with Conservation South Africa. The week-long camp brought together two Scout groups for practical conservation and personal development activities, building leadership, teamwork, confidence and responsibility. A key focus was positive male development, encouraging participants to become respectful, accountable and responsible young men. The programme combined environmental awareness with essential life skills and youth development.



Nduna Mabaso Farm Operations and Community Development Nursery

Thornybush Community continued to support Nduna Mabaso Farm Operations and Community Development, in Cottondale, through investment in a nursery, seedlings and planting crates. This support strengthens agricultural production and expands the farm's capacity, benefiting 32 individuals through livelihood opportunities. The investment forms part of a long-term Enterprise Development approach focused on local production, food security and sustainable income generation.



Driver's Licence Support Programme, Uthla

The Driver's Licence Support Programme reached an important milestone, with four beneficiaries from Uthla, supported by Dumezulu Driving School, progressing from learner's licences to obtaining their driver's licences. This achievement strengthens their mobility and potential employability, improving access to economic and employment opportunities.



Mandela Week of Service

Mandela Week of Service provided an opportunity for Thornybush employees across its lodges and offices to contribute their time and skills to community programmes in the week surrounding Mandela Day.

Mandela Week of Service activities included renovating Good Life Crèche, donating school supplies, planting fruit trees at two primary schools, packing food parcels with FoodForward SA, sorting waste at Hlayisani Nature Buy Back Centre and making blankets with lodge guests and employees.



Teams also prepared exam preparation stationery kits for Grade 12 learners at Mhlangana High School and donated groceries and curtains to the Ekurhuleni Centre for Orphans and Vulnerable Children. These initiatives supported education, early childhood development, food security, waste management and community wellbeing. The week highlighted the value of employee and guest participation in extending Thornybush's social impact beyond financial contributions.



Exam Preparation Stationery Kits, Mhlangana High School

Closing off Mandela Month, 87 stationery kits prepared by Thornybush lodge guests and employees were donated to Grade 12 learners at Mhlangana High School.

The initiative provided practical educational support to learners preparing for their preliminary and final examinations, ensuring that they received essential stationery as they entered this important stage of their schooling.

AUGUST



Hoedspruit Farmer's Market

Thornybush Community returned to the Hoedspruit Farmers Market, providing supported enterprises with an opportunity to showcase their products and connect with potential customers. Participants included Nduna Mabaso Farm Operations and Community Development with fresh produce, Bongani Mathonsi with artwork, Keysman Nkuna with lemons, alongside Thornybush Community merchandise. Continued participation supports market access, programme revenue generation and opportunities for local enterprises to grow their customer base.



Chef Assistant Training Launch

Thornybush Community introduced the Chef Assistant Training Programme under its Skills Development pillar, in partnership with Welverdiend Chef Academy and ShaiTlou Chef Community Training. The programme currently supports 10 unemployed youth from rural communities in the Bushbuckridge and Sabi Sands areas through practical training in basic cooking, food preparation and baking.

It aims to strengthen employability and create pathways into the hospitality and tourism sector, as well as potential self-employment opportunities.



Global Conservation Corps (GCC) Careers in Conservation Exhibition

Thornybush Community participated in the GCC Careers in Conservation Exhibition, together with other GKEPF partners, continuing its involvement in an initiative that exposes young people to careers within the conservation sector. This year, Thornybush Community accompanied 60 Grade 9 and Grade 11 learners from Manyangana High School.

The initiative gave learners an opportunity to engage with the broader conservation and tourism sector and learn about potential career pathways. Exposure to conservation professionals and training institutions can help young people better understand the education, skills and qualifications required to enter the sector.



Nyakaza Farm Growth Support

Thornybush Community continued its support of Nyakaza Farm, a new agricultural enterprise under our Enterprise Development social impact pillar. The farm, led by Dolphin Msuma, received uniform and the installation of a new fence. Nyakaza Farm is part of Thornybush Community's 2026 expansion of enterprise support. The farm's longer-term objective is to increase agricultural production, strengthen food security, create sustainable employment opportunities and develop access to local markets.



Monako Day Care Fridge Donation

Thornybush Community donated a fridge to Monako Day Care Centre in Acornhoek, received from Go2Africa through Thornybush Game Lodge. Monako Day Care Centre is a new early childhood development centre under our Educational Support social impact pillar. The donation provides essential equipment to support the centre's daily operations and the care of the 30 children it serves. This initiative demonstrates how partnerships within the tourism industry can translate into practical support for communities.



Gogos in Conservation, 4th Camp

Another Gogos in Conservation camp took place, bringing together gogos from Welverdiend through the Elephants Alive Ndlopfu Gogos programme. Over 3 days, participants had opportunities for learning, exploration and connection with nature. The programme creates a space where community elders can engage directly with conservation while also bringing traditional ecological knowledge and lived experience into conversations about the environment.



Sabi Sands Trail Run

The Thornybush Community team participated in the Sabi Sand Trail Run 2026. Hosted by Sabi Sands Nature Reserve and Sabi Sands Pfunanani Trust, the event brought together runners, neighbouring communities, tourism stakeholders and conservation partners. Participation provided an opportunity for Thornybush Community to stand alongside partners in promoting the connection between conservation, community participation and sustainable development.



Timbavati Foundation Winning for Wildlife Sports Tournament 2026

Thornybush Community joined Sabi Sabi Collection, GKEPF and Tintswalo Safari Lodge, in partnership with the Timbavati Foundation, for the 2026 Winning for Wildlife Sports Tournament at Acorns to Oaks Sports Field in Acornhoek.

The tournament was held in honour of conservation hero Anton Mzimba and brought together local high schools for football and netball. The event combined sport with conservation awareness, creating an opportunity to promote teamwork, leadership and environmental awareness among young people.



Driver's License Support Programme, Sigagule

The second group of 5 beneficiaries, Tsakani Abigail Mabilane, Satisfy Mbetse, Beauty Kgomotso Chiloane, Respect Blessing Nyathi and Ntombi Leona Mashaba successfully passed their learner's licence tests as part of the programme, marking an important step towards obtaining their driver's licences. This achievement supports the programme's goal of strengthening mobility, employability and access to economic opportunities.

SEPTEMBER



Hoedspruit Farmers Market

Thornybush Community continued its participation in the Hoedspruit Farmers Market, providing supported enterprises with opportunities to showcase their products and connect with customers. Participants included Nduna Mabaso Farm Operations and Community Development, Bongani Mathonsi and the Vugimamusi Project, featuring crafts made by gogos from Welverdiend. Beyond sales, the market supports enterprise growth through increased visibility, networking and access to potential new markets.



Wildshots Outreach Game Drive

10 young people from Allandale and Ludlow participated in the Wild Shots Outreach programme and visited Thornybush Game Lodge for a game drive. Through this partnership with Wild Shots Outreach, participants gain practical experience applying their wildlife photography training in a safari environment. The experience provides exposure to wildlife and potential career pathways in photography and conservation.



ECD Blanket Donations

Blankets made by Thornybush lodge guests and employees through the Community Hour initiative where donated to 3 ECD centres: Nourish RISE Creche in Sigagule, Good Life Creche in Welverdiend and Wisani Day Care in Dixie. The initiative provides children with warmth and comfort while demonstrating how volunteering can contribute to practical community support.



Madizi Secondary School Heritage Celebrations

Thornybush Community attended Madizi Secondary School's Heritage Celebration in Acornhoek, where learners celebrated their culture and traditions. Supporting initiatives like these reinforces our commitment to education and conservation, recognising that cultural heritage is an integral part of conservation and helps strengthen young people's connection to their communities and the natural environment.



Basics to Business Finance and Bookkeeping Training with forgood

Thornybush Community completed the Basics to Business Finance & Bookkeeping Training Programme in partnership with forgood volunteer and professional Bookkeeper, Dipuo Lebusho, supporting entrepreneurs from Hlayisani Nature Buy Back Centre and Unity Agrifarm Agricultural Cooperative. The training covered bookkeeping, basic accounting, tax compliance, financial management and computer literacy. Participants gained practical skills to improve financial administration, manage cash flow, maintain records and make informed business decisions, contributing to stronger and more sustainable community enterprises.



Kids in Conservation (KIC), 3rd Excursion

The KIC Club visited Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve, exploring the canyon's wildlife, plant life, biomes and habitats at the museum. The excursion also included hiking along the Peninsula Trail, sightseeing and recreational time at Swadini Waterfall. The experience strengthened learners' understanding of biodiversity, conservation and the importance of protecting natural spaces while building teamwork and confidence.



Mhala Police Station Section 2 Environmental Social Crime Awareness Campaign and Heritage Day Celebration

Thornybush Community attended the Mhala Police Station Section 2 Environmental Social Crime Awareness Campaign and Heritage Day Celebration at N'wamancingele Primary School, in Hluvukani. The event promoted environmental protection, conservation, community safety and cultural heritage through awareness and traditional activities. The event was supported by conservation, tourism and community partners, including GKEPF, Sabi Sand Nature Reserve, Timbavati Foundation, Nourish Eco Village, SANParks and other local organisations.



Scouts Camp, 2nd Camp

The second Scouts Camp of 2026 was held at Jackalberry Lodge, Thornybush Nature Reservce, in partnership with Conservation South Africa, combining conservation learning, teamwork and cultural activities. Scouts participated in animal tracking, game drives led by Thornybush guides and trackers, gratitude circles and campfire storytelling. In celebration of Heritage Month, they also embraced their cultural heritage through traditional attire, singing and Xibavana and Xibelana dances.



During this quarter, Thornybush Community continued to advance its four key social impact pillars: Educational Support, Enterprise Development, Conservation Awareness and Skills Development.

Through practical skills training, conservation experiences, market access for local entrepreneurs and volunteer initiatives involving Thornybush employees, guests and Community Champions, the quarter focused on expanding opportunities and strengthening community capacity. These efforts reflect Thornybush Community's continued commitment to supporting sustainable development and creating lasting impact in the communities surrounding Thornybush lodges.

We look forward to building on this progress in the months ahead.

Thank you for your continued support!
The journey *continues*...

GET IN TOUCH

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