



ANNUAL REPORT

For The Year Ended
31 December 2024

Harmony in Coexistence Humans and Wildlife Share a Water Source

A moment where birds, antelopes, warthogs, camels, and people gather peacefully at an open water source—proof that balance between nature and humanity is achievable.

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Leadership Message

Dear Distinguished Stakeholders,

In many parts of Somalia, conservation is often imagined as something that must be imported – expertise, systems, and solutions designed elsewhere and applied locally. Our experience in 2024 reaffirmed the opposite. The strongest conservation outcomes emerged where local custodians already held knowledge, responsibility, and long-term interest in protecting their landscapes. Our role has been to strengthen that stewardship, not replace it.

Over the past year, Species Saviour Initiative worked alongside communities across Puntland’s dryland mountains, rangelands, and coastal ecosystems. Together we treated thousands of threatened frankincense trees, expanded site-based stewardship agreements, trained local protectors to monitor wildlife crime, and reached remote settlements through mobile environmental education. These actions were not isolated activities – they formed a connected system where ecological recovery, community authority, livelihoods, and policy engagement reinforced one another.

We also learned that conservation succeeds when people see it as security, not sacrifice. When custodians have tools, recognition, and shared responsibility, forests regenerate, wildlife survives, and communities lead solutions themselves. This belief now guides our model: community-led, evidence-driven, and designed to scale responsibly.

We remain deeply grateful to our partners, volunteers, elders, and supporters whose trust makes this work possible. The progress captured in this report reflects collective stewardship – a reminder that protecting nature in Somalia is inseparable from supporting the people who live with it every day.

With determination,

Abdirisak Ibrahim

Founder & Lead Steward,
Species Saviour Initiative - SSI
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About Us

Species Saviour Initiative (SSI) is an Indigenous-led, non-profit conservation organization delivering scalable, community-governed Nature-based Solutions across some of the Horn of Africa's most vulnerable ecosystems. We operate at the intersection of biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihoods, addressing the root drivers of ecosystem degradation through locally anchored and institutionally grounded systems.

SSI's work is grounded in a core, evidence-based principle: long-term conservation outcomes are strongest where Indigenous and local communities hold legitimate stewardship authority over land and natural resources. Rather than replacing local governance, SSI strengthens and formalizes it—aligning Traditional Ecological Knowledge with contemporary conservation science, monitoring, and finance mechanisms.

Our model integrates four mutually reinforcing pillars: community governance and stewardship systems, ecosystem restoration and biodiversity recovery, regenerative livelihoods and conservation finance, and advocacy and systems change. Together, these pillars deliver Nature-based Solutions that restore ecosystem function, reduce land degradation, and strengthen community resilience, while generating measurable biodiversity and climate co-benefits.

SSI works at a landscape scale, using strategically selected flagship species as entry points to protect and restore connected systems of dryland forests, montane refugia, rangelands, and coastal ecosystems. This approach supports ecological connectivity, cost-effective conservation, and adaptive management. Indicator species, landscape-level metrics, and community-based monitoring provide evidence of recovery and inform continuous learning.

As an organization, SSI combines deep local legitimacy with a systems-oriented model designed for replication. Our work demonstrates how community governance, when aligned with ecological restoration and sustainable economic incentives, can deliver durable conservation outcomes. As we grow, SSI is committed to scaling this proven approach across Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa, contributing to global biodiversity, climate adaptation, and Nature-based Solutions priorities.



Vision

A future where resilient ecosystems and thriving communities are sustained through community-governed Nature-based Solutions, and where Indigenous leadership is recognized as a cornerstone of effective global conservation

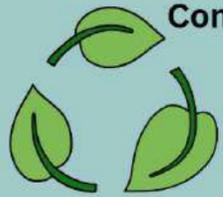
Mission

To deliver Indigenous-led Nature-based Solutions that halt biodiversity loss, restore degraded ecosystems, and build long-term resilience by strengthening community stewardship and aligning livelihoods with ecological recovery

Our Conservation Model

Our model integrates four mutually reinforcing pillars

Together, these pillars deliver Nature-based Solutions that restore ecosystem function, reduce land degradation, and strengthen community resilience, while generating measurable biodiversity and climate co-benefits.



Community-Led Governance & Stewardship

We strengthen Indigenous and local governance systems by working through custodian committees, community leaders, and user groups. This pillar ensures that decision-making power remains with rights-holders and that conservation rules are legitimate, respected, and enforced from within the community.

Pillar



Habitat & Species Revival

We restore degraded ecosystems and stabilize threatened species through targeted, science-informed interventions grounded in traditional knowledge. This includes treating diseased trees, regenerating native vegetation, protecting key habitats, and monitoring ecological recovery.

Pillar



Regenerous Livelihoods

We align conservation with economic security by supporting sustainable harvesting, fair market access, and stewardship-based incentives. Livelihoods are not treated as separate from conservation—they are structured to reinforce it.

Pillar



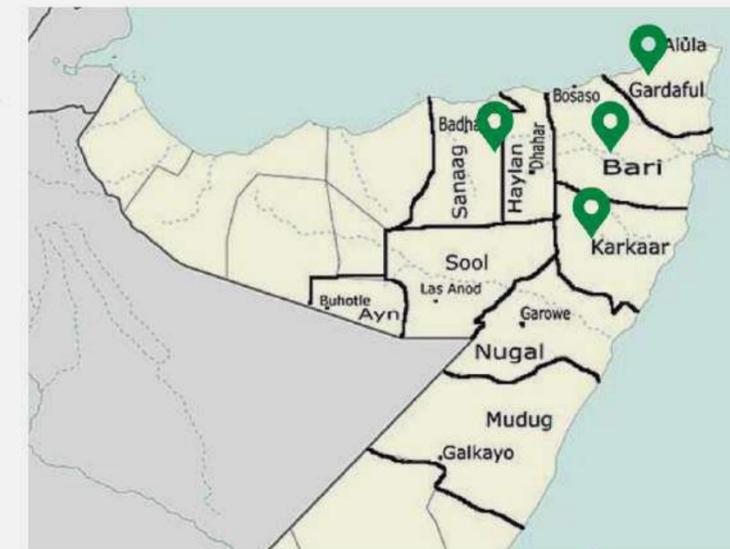
Advocacy, Policy & Systems Change

We link field-level success to national and regional systems by contributing data, community experience, and practical models to policy processes, enforcement efforts, and climate and biodiversity strategies.

Pillar

Geographic & Landscape Reach

- Active across Bari, Sanaag, Karkaar & Gardafu regions
- Interventions in frankincense mountain forests, rangeland & rural settlements
- Work conducted in both new and previously engaged conservation sites
- Community partnerships spanning multiple high-risk biodiversity landscape



Map of Puntland State of Somalia ↑



Somalia



Saving species is possible

2024 Impact at a Glance

Ecosystems & Species Protection

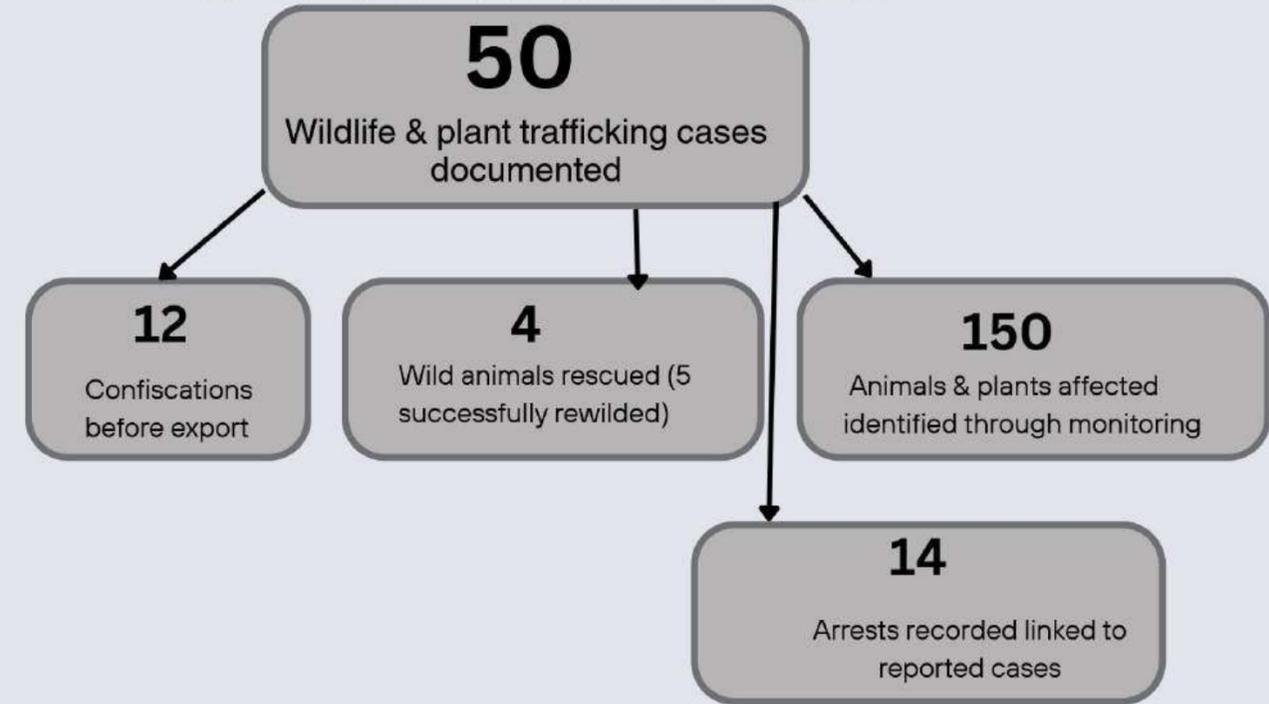
 **3,085** Boswellia trees treated for parasitic infestation

 **99%** Recovery rate after treatment intervention

 **3** Additional frankincense sites secured through custodian partnerships, protecting **500+** Sites Boswellia trees under formal stewardship

Wildlife & Plant Crime Response

Community-based detection and response



Public Awareness & Behavior Change *Community actions triggered*

8,500+
People reached via mobile outdoor cinema

~80%
Pledged sustainable practices

9000
Total people reached

Our impact is delivered through four interconnected pillars — the next pages show how each one translated 2024 actions into measurable results.

Community Capacity & Stewardship *Site stewardship strengthened*

110
Custodians trained

90
informants trained

200
volunteers engaged

Our 2024 Impact by Pillar

Delivering Community-Led Nature-Based Solutions Across Landscapes



Community Governance & Stewardship Systems

Strengthening Local Authority to Deliver Durable Conservation

Conservation outcomes are strongest where communities hold real stewardship authority over their landscapes. SSI's governance pillar works to strengthen, formalize, and support community conservation institutions so they can manage ecosystems effectively and equitably. In 2024, we invested in custodian committees across frankincense and dryland forests, community conservation groups, and local guardian networks — building governance capacity, technical skills, and operational structure. This included stewardship, site governance support, guardian training, and community monitoring systems. Our approach recognizes customary governance not as informal tradition, but as a functioning management system that can be strengthened with tools, training, and institutional linkage. By reinforcing local decision-making structures, conservation becomes embedded in everyday governance — not dependent on external enforcement alone. This pillar builds the institutional backbone that allows ecological and livelihood interventions to endure and scale responsibly

2024 Stewardship System Strengthening Results

Across Puntland's frankincense and mountain landscapes, SSI supported community custodians through governance support, technical training, and field collaboration.

- Active collaboration with 95 custodian committees across multiple frankincense landscapes in Bari, Sanaag, and Gardafu regions of Puntland, Somalia
- Structured stewardship support implemented in priority conservation sites
- 110 custodians, harvesters, and site stewards trained in tree health management and parasitic plant control
- Community custodians equipped with field tools and safety kits to carry out conservation interventions
- Local stewardship protocols reinforced through field-based practice and applied learning

Community-Embedded Monitoring as a Governance Tool

In 2024, SSI piloted a locally embedded community-based monitoring and reporting model as part of strengthening community stewardship systems. The initiative was designed not primarily as an enforcement mechanism, but as a governance innovation — reinforcing community responsibility, transparency, and early warning within conservation landscapes.

Selected from ecological hotspot areas, 90 community members were trained in basic environmental observation, safe documentation practices, and anonymous reporting protocols. These individuals were chosen based on their proximity to high-risk zones and their trust within local communities.

The model emphasizes

- **Early detection rather than reactive enforcement**
- **Anonymous reporting to protect community safety**
- **Direct coordination channels with relevant authorities**
- **Shared responsibility between custodians and institutions**

By embedding monitoring capacity within communities themselves, SSI strengthened stewardship authority and practical governance structures. The approach reinforces that conservation rules are most effective when communities are not only beneficiaries, but active guardians of their ecosystems.

The operational outcomes and field-level conservation results of this monitoring model are presented under Pillar 3

From Informal Trust to Structured Stewardship

Since its establishment in 2020, SSI has worked closely with Indigenous frankincense-harvesting communities across the Sanaag, Gardafu, and Bari regions of Puntland. Central to this collaboration are Custodian Committees – traditional governance bodies selected by clan landowners to regulate access, enforce harvesting rules, resolve disputes, and safeguard ancestral frankincense sites under customary law. To date, SSI has partnered with custodians across 95 frankincense sites in the Golis mountain ranges. As our geographic scope expands, additional sites continue to voluntarily join the collaboration. In 2024, three additional *Boswellia* sites entered into supported stewardship arrangements with SSI.

Our engagement with custodians focuses on strengthening ecological management while reinforcing traditional authority. Together, we monitor tree health, address threats such as parasitic infestation and unsustainable harvesting, provide practical training and field tools, support community-led conflict resolution, and improve basic documentation of stewardship practices. SSI's role is technical and facilitative – custodians remain the primary decision-makers over their ancestral lands.

Transitioning Toward Structured Stewardship

SSI's early field partnerships were grounded in trust and customary systems. In 2024, building on lessons from prior years, we initiated a gradual transition toward more structured stewardship collaboration frameworks – designed to:

- **Protect community decision authority**
- **Clarify conservation roles**
- **Enable external technical support**
- **Prepare for certification and market-linked stewardship incentives**
- **Support future policy recognition and conservation finance**

This transition remains under development. It reflects organizational learning and model maturation – not a replacement of traditional systems, but a reinforcement of them. The objective is to ensure that Indigenous stewardship remains central while becoming institutionally resilient and capable of engaging with broader conservation and policy systems.



Governance strengthening was measured not only by structures created – but by participation depth and decision ownership.

Expanding Community Stewardship in the Calmiskat Mountains

In 2024, SSI entered into a partnership in site conservation with local custodians in Ufeyn District, Bari Region. This arrangement covers three wild frankincense sites in the Calmiskat Mountains of the Golis Range, together spanning 10 hectares and hosting approximately 500 *Boswellia sacra* trees and many other threatened species. These sites, where SSI has been active since 2021, form part of an ecologically rich landscape that supports rare and unique biodiversity. It is making our current frankincense sites we are partnering from 92 to 95 in total. Alongside frankincense, the area hosts species such as *Dracaena ombet* and *Adenium obesum*, both emblematic of Somalia's arid mountain flora.

The sites also provide important habitat for endemic and threatened birds, including the Warsangeli linnet, making them critical for regional bird conservation. By safeguarding these habitats, the initiative not only ensures the survival of frankincense trees but also contributes to the protection of broader mountain ecosystems, which stabilize soils, regulate local climates, and preserve the unique natural heritage of the Golis Range.

The custodians—families and clans who have traditionally owned and cared for these lands—remain the primary managers and decision-makers of the sites. SSI's role is to support their stewardship by providing ecological knowledge, promoting sustainable harvesting practices, and amplifying the value of traditional governance systems. This includes offering trainings on combating parasitic plants, invasive species, and pests when needed; supplying regenerative saplings for enrichment planting; and conducting ecological monitoring to track tree health, population dynamics, and habitat conditions. Through this partnership, SSI will also contribute to conservation awareness, and linkages to wider networks, while the custodians continue to exercise their ancestral responsibility for protecting the trees and the land.

The expectation of this arrangement is to enhance the resilience of frankincense habitats through shared responsibility: custodians maintain authority and traditional practices, while SSI helps strengthen these efforts with scientific insights, monitoring, and advocacy. Together, this model demonstrates how community-led governance and conservation partnerships can safeguard Somalia's flagship species for future generations.



Volunteerism as a Local Conservation Asset

Volunteer engagement strengthens both conservation delivery and community economic resilience by building skills, leadership, and stewardship ownership.

2024 volunteer results:

- 200 active conservation volunteers
- Increase from 150 in prior year
- 74 women volunteers, strengthening inclusive participation

Volunteers supported:

- parasite removal operations
- outreach delivery
- wildlife crime monitoring
- habitat protection activities
- awareness campaigns



Advocacy, Policy & Systems Change

Turning Field Evidence into Policy Influence and Institutional Change

SSI's Advocacy, Policy & Systems Change pillar connects field-based conservation practice with governance systems, public institutions, and policy processes. Our approach is evidence-driven and community-rooted: we translate frontline conservation realities into actionable insights that inform authorities, strengthen enforcement, and improve conservation governance frameworks.

In 2024, SSI advanced this pillar through field intelligence systems, government collaboration, reporting mechanisms, and policy-relevant knowledge production.

Alignment with Climate & Biodiversity Frameworks

SSI's 2024 work contributed field insights relevant to Somalia's emerging climate and biodiversity frameworks through consultation and technical engagement with environmental authorities. →

- **National climate adaptation planning**
- **Nature-based Solutions approaches**
- **Community stewardship governance**
- **Biodiversity protection priorities**

Legal Awareness & Rights Education at Community Level

Strengthening Rule of Law Through Community Knowledge

Effective conservation governance depends not only on enforcement capacity, but on community understanding of environmental laws and rights. In 2024, SSI integrated legal awareness components into field trainings and community engagements across frankincense landscapes and wildlife crime hotspots. Through structured discussions during custodian meetings, surveillance trainings, and outreach sessions, community members were introduced to:

- **Existing wildlife protection and environmental regulations**
- **Legal implications of trafficking and illegal harvesting**
- **Reporting mechanisms and citizen responsibilities**
- **Rights and protections for community reporters**

These sessions reached custodians, harvesters, community monitors, and local volunteers participating in conservation activities.

Results in 2024

- Legal awareness integrated into multiple field engagements across priority districts
- Strengthened understanding of environmental crime penalties among trained participants
- Increased willingness to report violations through newly established reporting channels
- Improved coordination between communities and district-level authorities

By strengthening legal literacy at the community level, SSI contributed to building a culture of compliance and accountability – reducing reliance on reactive enforcement and reinforcing prevention through informed stewardship.

Contribution to National Climate & Biodiversity

Framework Discussions

Elevating Community-Based Conservation in National Policy Dialogue

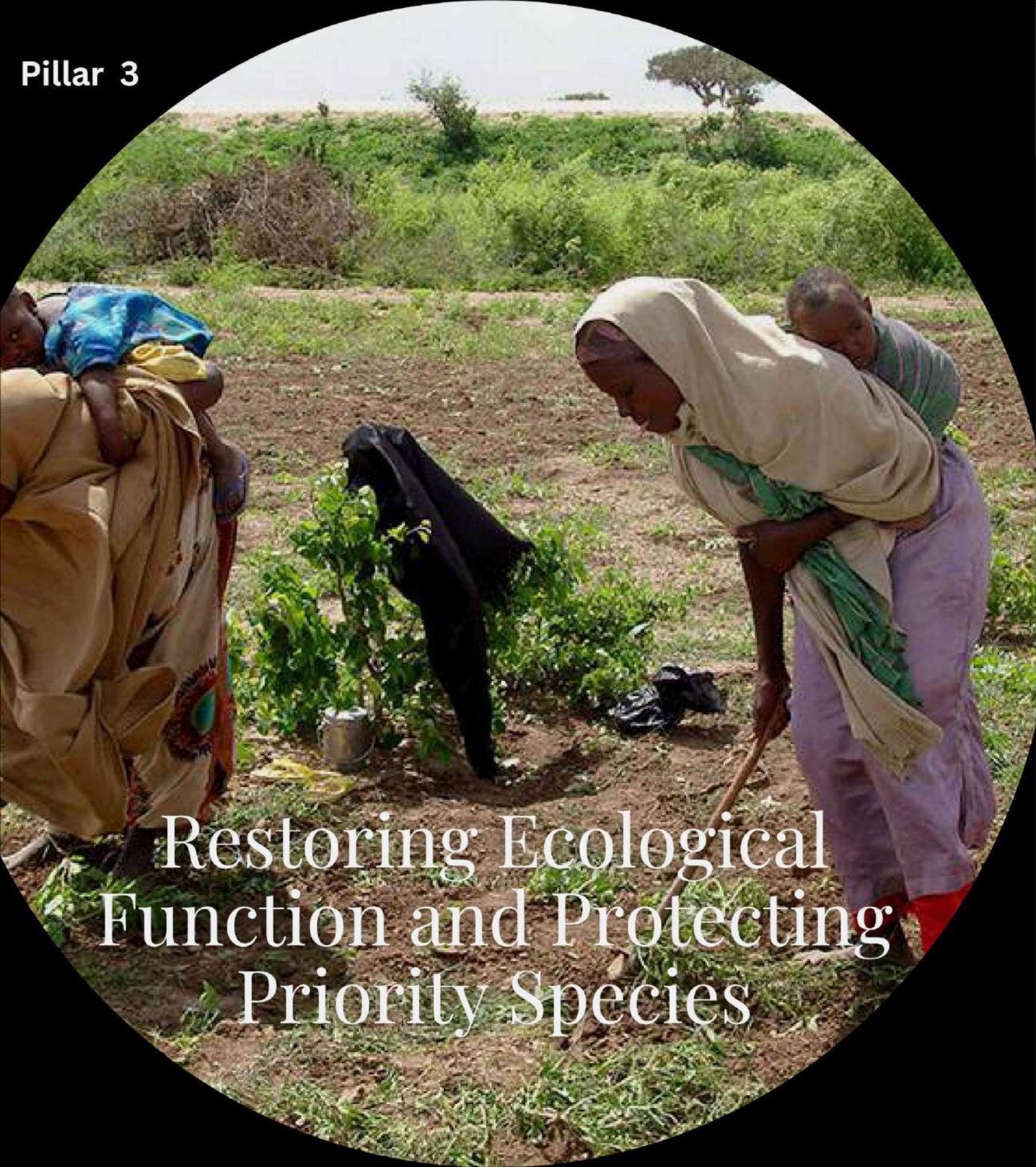
Somalia finalized key climate and biodiversity frameworks in 2025, including updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0) and the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP 2025–2030). Throughout 2024, SSI contributed field-based insights to broader environmental planning discussions through consultations and technical engagement with relevant authorities. Drawing from on-the-ground experience in dryland forest restoration, wildlife monitoring, and community governance, SSI shared:

- Data on frankincense ecosystem degradation and restoration needs
- Evidence of community-led conservation governance models
- Observations on human–wildlife conflict trends in rangelands
- Lessons from community-based monitoring and early warning systems

Results in 2024

- Community-based conservation experiences positioned as viable climate adaptation solutions
- Field evidence contributed to dialogue on dryland ecosystem resilience
- Strengthened working relationships with environmental authorities
- Increased visibility of Indigenous stewardship models within national planning conversations

By connecting local practice with national policy dialogue, SSI reinforced the role of community-led Nature-based Solutions in achieving Somalia’s climate adaptation and biodiversity targets.



Restoring Ecological Function and Protecting Priority Species

Ecosystem Restoration & Biodiversity Recovery

Regenerating Ecological Function at Landscape Scale

Healthy ecosystems are the foundation of biodiversity, climate resilience, and community wellbeing — yet in many dryland landscapes, degradation is advancing faster than recovery. SSI's Ecosystem Restoration & Biodiversity Recovery pillar focuses on reversing this trend through targeted, field-based ecological interventions anchored in local stewardship. In 2024, our work combined assisted regeneration, species health treatment, habitat protection, and community monitoring across priority dryland forest and mountain ecosystems. Rather than treating restoration as a one-time activity, we apply a systems approach — strengthening ecological processes, reducing preventable threats, and building local technical capacity to maintain gains. Our interventions prioritize high-value native species and critical habitats that support wider biodiversity networks. The result is measurable ecological recovery combined with durable local ownership — ensuring that restoration outcomes are not temporary, but self-reinforcing over time.

Ecosystem Health Interventions

During 2024, SSI implemented practical, site-level ecological interventions across priority frankincense and mountain landscapes. These actions focused on removing direct biological threats, improving tree health, and strengthening habitat resilience.

Communities Restore Tree Health Using Traditional Knowledge

The success of this intervention was driven by close collaboration with local communities, custodians of frankincense sites, and harvesters. Working hand in hand with these stakeholders, SSI developed practical guidelines and procedures for removing Qobdhac (*Loranthus*), refining traditional techniques that have been practiced for generations. Through this initiative, SSI trained 110 participants—including harvesters, custodians, and traders—from frankincense-producing communities directly linked to the affected sites.

The training focused on safe and effective methods of removing parasitic plants without damaging the trees, ensuring that site custodians are equipped to manage future outbreaks. To complement the training, SSI supplied essential tools such as specialized knives, mountain hiking gear, gloves, and first aid kits. These resources enabled safe fieldwork and improved the efficiency of removal operations. Following the training, participants volunteered their time and skills to support the removal of parasites from affected trees, directly applying their new knowledge to safeguard the sites. This collaborative effort not only reduced the immediate threat of parasitic infestation but also strengthened local capacity for long-term tree health management. Post-training surveys showed a 95% improvement in participants' skills, highlighting the effectiveness of the program.

Through this collaborative approach, SSI has not only mitigated the immediate threat posed by *Loranthus* but also empowered local communities with the expertise to safeguard their frankincense trees for generations to come.



“Now we know how to treat the trees — we don’t wait for outsiders anymore.”

Warsame Jama,
Frankincense harvester

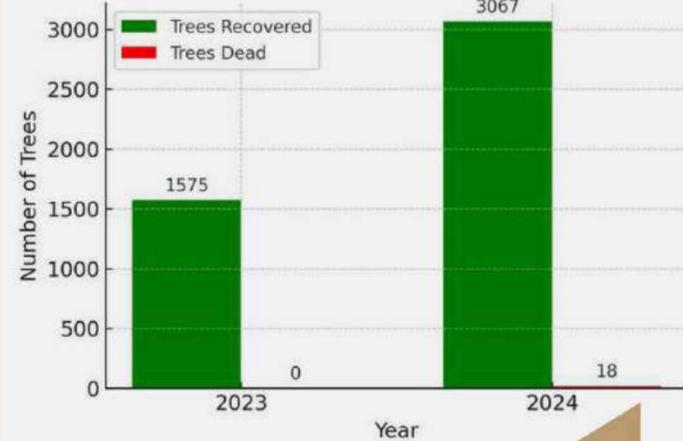


Combating 'Qobdhac'

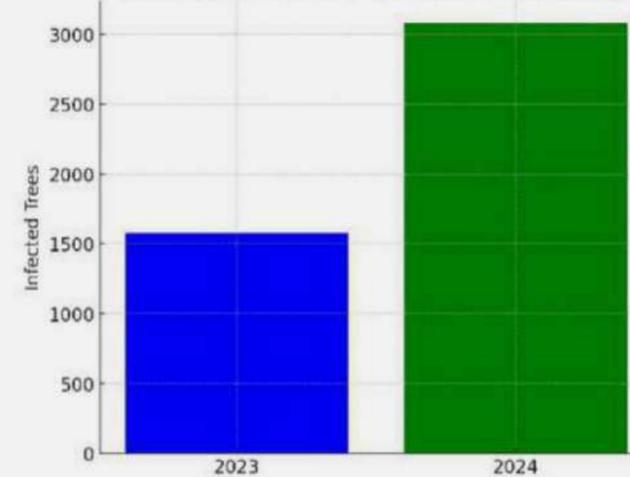
A Parasitic Plant Colonizes Frankincense Trees

A parasitic plant locally known as "Qobdhac" or "Qadow" (Loranthus spp.), associated with Boswellia sacra and Boswellia frereana, was identified during our study from 2021 to 2023. This parasitic plant poses a serious threat to Boswellia trees. Loranthus belongs to the family Loranthaceae and is a genus of parasitic plants that thrive on the branches of woody trees. These species have been observed in the Golis Mountain Ranges for many years, where frankincense trees grow, as confirmed by local communities. Traditional knowledge suggests that Loranthus can significantly weaken Boswellia trees. By drawing nutrients and water from their hosts, it not only reduces the tree's overall health but also impairs resin production, making the trees more susceptible to diseases.

Comparison of Trees Recovered and Trees Dead per Year



Number of Infected Trees (2023 vs. 2024)



Recognizing the urgent need for intervention, SSI launched a targeted effort in mid-2023 to combat the spread of this parasitic plant. The initiative involved carefully removing Loranthus from infected trees and providing intensive care to aid their recovery. By late 2023, SSI had removed the parasite from 1,575 infected Boswellia trees across ten sites in the Gardafu, Bari, and Sanag regions of Puntland, with nearly **55%** of the trees in the observed sites affected.

In 2024, a total of **3,085** Boswellia sacra and frereana trees were identified as infected across **15 sites** within the same regions. Of these, **3,067 (99%)** successfully recovered after treatment, while 18 trees, mostly older and in poor health, could not be revived. This highlights the ongoing threat posed by the parasite.

The infection rate of Loranthus varied from 1 to 5 parasites per Boswellia tree in the observed sites. The parasite was predominantly found on tertiary small branchlets arising from secondary branches, while main and secondary branches remained unaffected. The impact of Loranthus on Boswellia tree growth and frankincense production requires further investigation.

3,067 TREES RESTORED



99%
RECOVERY OF THE TREATED Boswellia trees with restored health and improved resilience against diseases

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION



ENSURED SUSTAINABILITY OF **15** SITES OF FRANKINCENSE PRODUCTION by saving the Boswellia trees from dying

ECONOMIC IMPACT



~15,000

livelihoods Safeguarded

For rural community members dependent on frankincense harvesting and trade.



Jamac Guled, Frankincense Harvester,
Qalanqalle Frankincense Field

Mr. Jama is a frankincense harvester in Middigale District, Sanaag region, embracing the trunk of a treated frankincense tree. Their gesture demonstrates profound empathy and serves as an inspiration for others to appreciate and protect these vital trees. Frankincense trees are not only ecologically significant but also form the backbone of our community's economy

“The majority of the affected trees have recovered well and are now thriving. This tree is a great example. Parasitic plants like these are dangerous; they attach to the tree and siphon off essential nutrients and water, weakening the tree's overall health. Over time, this can make the tree more susceptible to diseases and significantly reduce its resin production capacity. In severe cases, the parasitic plants can even stunt the tree's growth or cause it to die. I'm grateful to the Species Saviour team for their unwavering dedication to saving these trees.”

Jamac Guled, Frankincense
Harvester,
Qalanqalle Frankincense Field



Abdirisak Abdulkadir Ibrahim
Species Saviour Initiative - (SSI) Team

“Kissing the trunk of a frankincense tree and inhaling the delicate, woody resinous scent of its blossoms envelops me in a serene and uplifting ambiance. It reconnects me with the wonders of the natural world and reaffirms my commitment to its protection. I wish for its speedy recovery, knowing how crucial its well-being is to all of us.”

Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade

Community-Based Monitoring & Reporting

SSI expanded species protection actions in 2024 through detection, response, and rescue operations linked to wildlife crime and conflict incidents.

Documented 2024 species protection outcomes:

50 Wildlife trafficking incidents documented

150 Individual wild species affected

62 Species confiscated

14 Arrests recorded linked to reported cases

While mortality remains a challenge in trafficking cases, the establishment of rescue and rewilding response capacity represents an important operational advance.

in 2024, SSI piloted a locally embedded, community-based monitoring and reporting model designed to strengthen conservation governance from the ground up. This initiative integrates community vigilance, structured data collection, and direct coordination with authorities to improve early detection and response to wildlife and plant crime. Through this model, community monitors documented 50 verified wildlife and plant trafficking cases, identifying 150 animals and high-risk plant specimens affected. The system supported the confiscation of 50 uprooted saplings prior to export, disrupting cross-border trafficking attempts. In addition, 12 wild animals were rescued, with 5 successfully rehabilitated and rewilded in coordination with local authorities and custodians. Reported cases contributed to 14 arrests, demonstrating tangible enforcement outcomes linked to community reporting. Many trafficking routes were traced to coastal corridors, where wildlife and plant commodities were concealed and transported toward markets in the Middle East.

By combining local ecological knowledge with systematic monitoring and secure reporting protocols, SSI is building a transparent, community-anchored conservation accountability system—one that not only protects biodiversity but also strengthens trust and collaboration between communities and state institutions

Community Reporting Stops Wildlife Trafficking

Community Reporting Stops Wildlife Trafficking

On January 3, 2024, our rescue team received an urgent call from a member of our 'Ilaaliye' network—a dedicated community informant in Galkayo town. They reported that wildlife traders were attempting to smuggle three cheetah cubs, stolen from their mother, and were actively selling them. One of our informants spotted the cubs on Facebook and immediately alerted us. Acting swiftly, our team relayed the information to local police, who posed as buyers to lure the smugglers into a sting operation. This led to the successful recovery of the cubs. The sight of these terrified, vulnerable cubs ignited a collective resolve among the community to stand against wildlife trafficking. Although the smugglers managed to escape, the community's determination remained unshaken.

The cubs, less than a week old, included one female. They had been smuggled from Adaadda to Galkayo. Adaadda, a vast rangeland straddling the unmarked Somalia-Ethiopia border, is home to thriving cheetah populations. Within hours, our rescue team traveled 70 km west of Garowe to Adaadda, where they, along with local police, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the community for their unwavering commitment to protecting these endangered species. The tears of relief and joy in the eyes of those who had fought so bravely to safeguard the cubs spoke volumes about their deep connection to wildlife.

The cheetah cubs were transported to Garowe, where, due to the absence of a dedicated rescue center, an agreement was reached with the Puntland State Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to temporarily shelter them. In close collaboration with the ministry's team, the cubs received medical attention and care. Tragically, one of the cubs was unable to recover from the incident and passed away after one week. The heart-wrenching moment when the rescue team delivered the news left a profound sorrow in the hearts of all who had fought so hard for their survival. The other cubs also succumbed to health issues five months later, due to the lack of a suitable environment and proper treatment necessary for its growth. This is not the first time we have faced such losses; in 2022, another rescued cub died from disease-related complications, reminding us of the harsh realities of wildlife conservation.

Wildlife trafficking poses a significant threat in Puntland, Somalia, with cheetah cubs frequently targeted and trafficked to nearby Arabian Peninsula countries, where they are sold as luxury pets. This illicit trade extends beyond cheetahs to include a range of other species, such as antelope, exotic birds, and reptiles. The escalating trafficking activities endanger the region's wildlife populations and tear at the very fabric of our natural heritage. The Species Saviour Initiative is committed to combating wildlife trafficking through a systematic approach aimed at reducing the illegal trade and safeguarding biodiversity.



Stolen from the wild, saved just in time - these vulnerable cheetah cubs were intercepted before being smuggled out of Somalia.

This successful rescue operation underscores the critical importance of community-based efforts and highlights the urgent need for collaborative action to protect vulnerable wildlife species from exploitation and trafficking. The dedication of the ilaaliye members, coupled with the heartfelt support of local communities, fuels our mission. Together, we strive to create a future where wildlife can thrive freely in their natural habitats, and where stories of hope and resilience continue to inspire generations to come.

Community-Led Interception of Plant Trafficking A Joint Success in 2024

On the evening of September 13, 2024, a community member anonymously reported suspicious activity involving uprooted juvenile trees near Garowe, Puntland. Acting on the tip-off, SSI immediately relayed the information to the Police Commissioner's Office, triggering a swift response by Puntland security forces. Authorities intercepted a Nissan UD lorry hidden approximately 3 km outside Garowe, loaded with 50 juvenile saplings from high-value species including *Acacia bussei*, *Boswellia sacra*, *B. frereana*, *Commiphora myrrha*, *Commiphora guidottii* Chiov., *Gymnocarpos gracilicaulis*, and *Ceratonia oreothauma* subsp. *somalensis*—species globally sought after for their resin, medicinal properties, and horticultural rarity.

The saplings were concealed in plastic bags and stashed in a remote area, awaiting transport. While three suspects fled, two individuals were arrested on-site, including a Somali national found near the vehicle.

In collaboration with SSI and local authorities, the seized plants were replanted across four ecologically suitable sites, turning a trafficking incident into an opportunity for habitat restoration.

This case—among the largest recorded in Puntland—reflects a rising threat to native flora, with similar trafficking attempts reported in 2022 and 2023. It also highlights the growing role of community vigilance and institutional response, with SSI providing key intelligence to disrupt environmental crimes and support long-term conservation.

"We realized these plants are part of our land's future — not something to be sold."

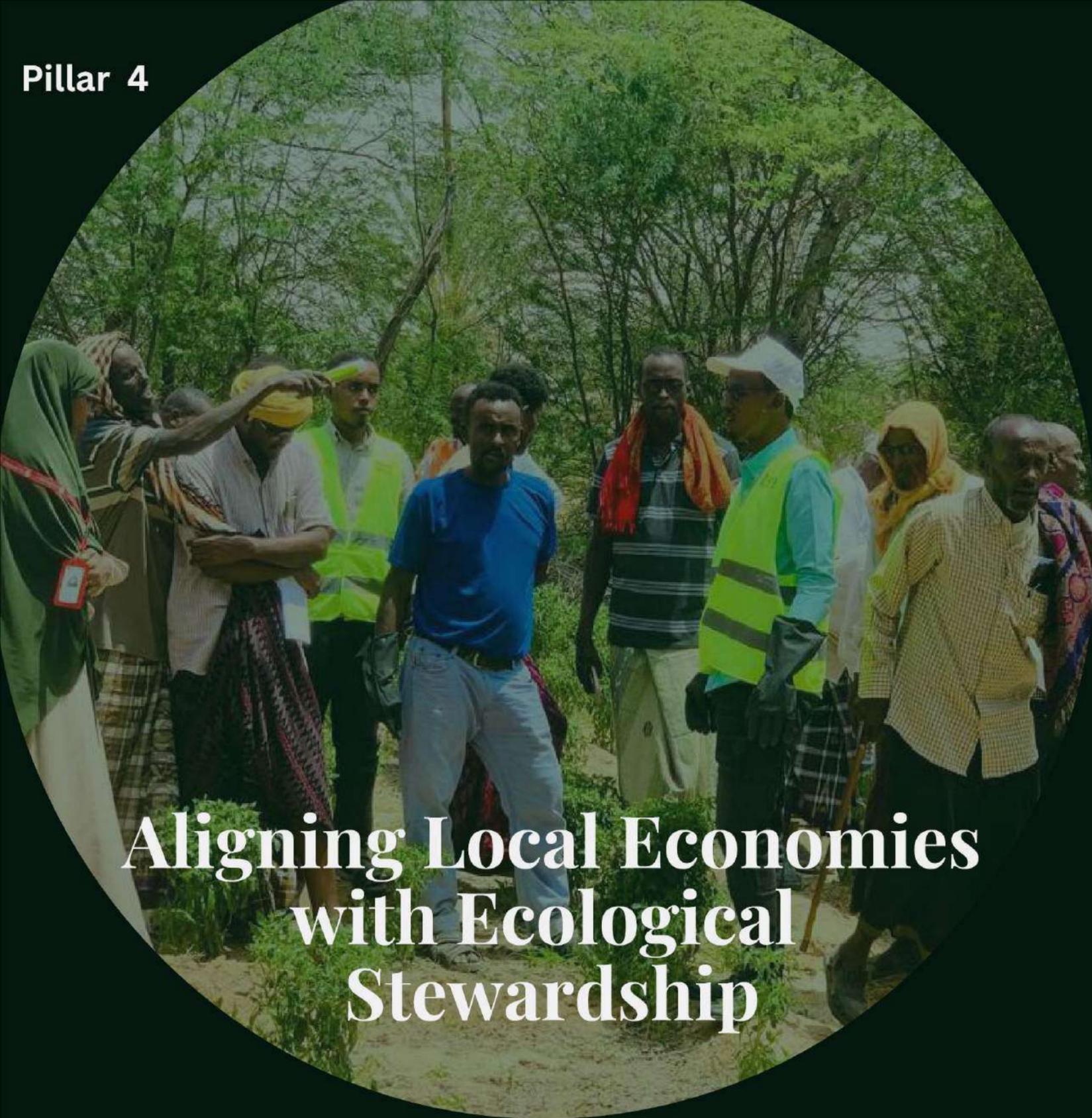
Hussien Ali, Elder

Success
Story

Dozens of endemic saplings packed in plastic bags—confiscated before being smuggled across borders.



A stark reminder of the growing threat to Somalia's native flora



Aligning Local Economies with Ecological Stewardship

Regenerous Livelihoods & Conservation Finance

SSI's Regenerous Livelihoods pillar focuses on aligning conservation outcomes with local economic resilience. In dryland and forest-dependent communities, biodiversity protection is sustainable only when stewardship strengthens — rather than weakens — household livelihoods. Our approach links ecosystem care with practical skills, value-chain improvements, and community capacity so that conservation becomes a rational and beneficial local choice.

In 2024, SSI advanced livelihood-linked conservation actions across frankincense and dryland landscapes through skills training, trader engagement, volunteer mobilization, and stewardship-support tools.

Community Agroecology & Sustainable Land-Use Awareness

To reduce pressure on natural forest resources and promote more sustainable land use, SSI integrated practical environmental land-use awareness into community outreach and training dialogues.

2024 livelihood-support themes included:

- Sustainable dryland land-use practices
- Soil and vegetation protection awareness
- Rangeland stewardship principles
- Reduced destructive cutting practices
- Regeneration awareness for native dryland species
- Household-level conservation practices discussed during outreach events

These sessions were delivered through:

- mobile awareness screenings
- community dialogues
- custodian meetings
- volunteer training sessions

The goal is to support nature-compatible production and land management behavior alongside conservation.



Farmer



Technical Skills for Resource-Dependent Livelihoods

SSI delivered practical, field-based trainings that directly support resource-dependent livelihoods by improving ecosystem management skills and reducing avoidable losses.

2024 capacity-building results:

- Tree health restoration techniques transferred to local site managers
- Specialized field toolkits distributed
- Safe climbing, cutting, and treatment practices taught
- 95% post-training skills improvement recorded
- Community teams independently applied techniques after training

These interventions protect both tree survival and future production capacity, directly supporting livelihood stability.



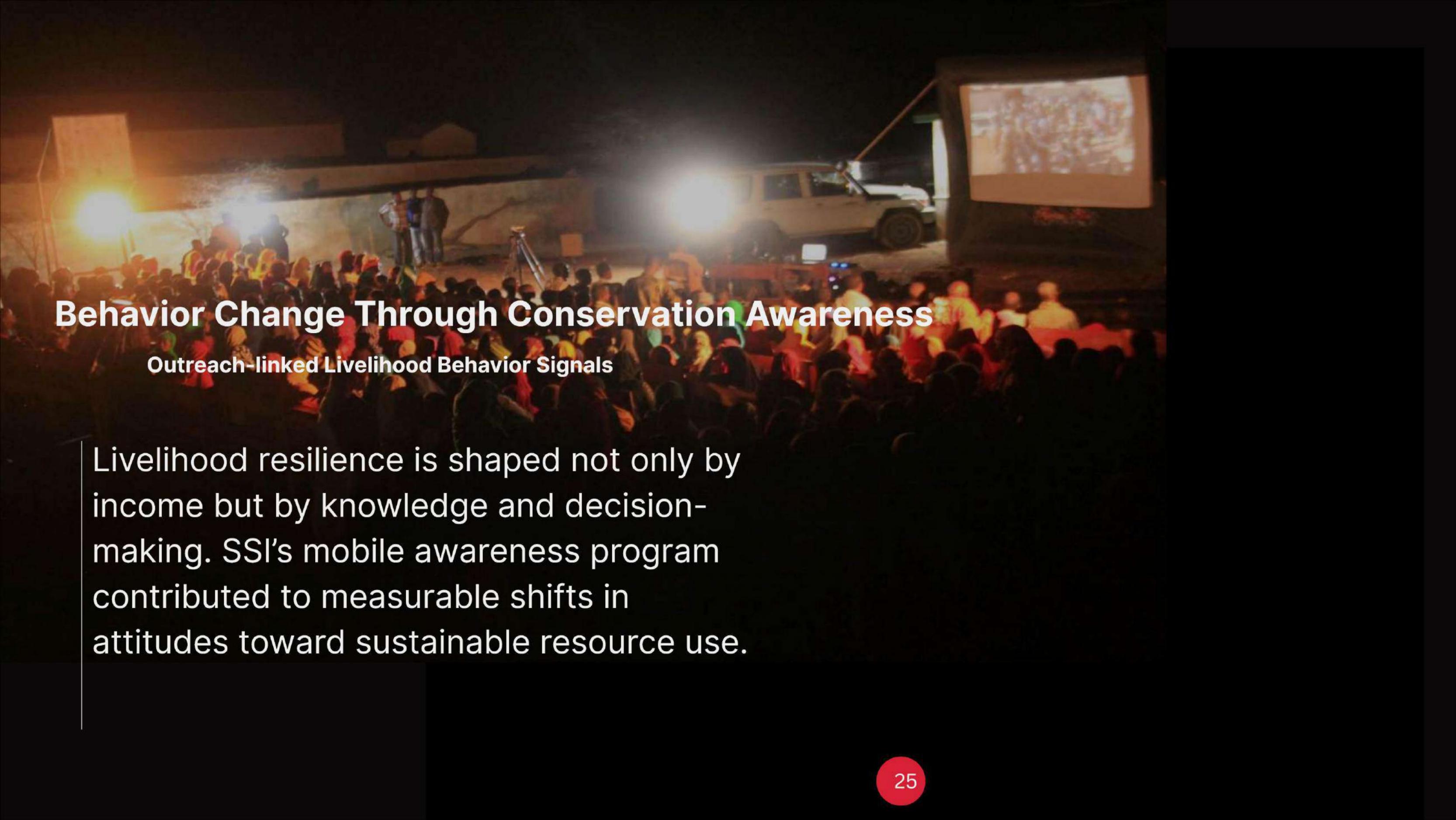
Stewardship-Linked Value Chain Engagement

In 2024, SSI strengthened collaboration with ethical frankincense traders and producer networks to support sustainability-oriented sourcing practices and shared responsibility for resource protection.

2024 progress included:

- Active engagement with 15 progressive frankincense trading companies
- Strengthened stewardship dialogue between traders and custodian committees
- Promotion of sustainable tapping limits and tree-health safeguards
- Reinforcement of stewardship contribution practices through trader partnerships
- Increased private-sector awareness of long-term supply risks from ecosystem degradation

These engagements help shift value chains toward long-term resource security rather than short-term extraction.



Behavior Change Through Conservation Awareness

Outreach-linked Livelihood Behavior Signals

Livelihood resilience is shaped not only by income but by knowledge and decision-making. SSI's mobile awareness program contributed to measurable shifts in attitudes toward sustainable resource use.

Reconnecting Communities with Nature Through Mobile Environmental Education

Why it matters

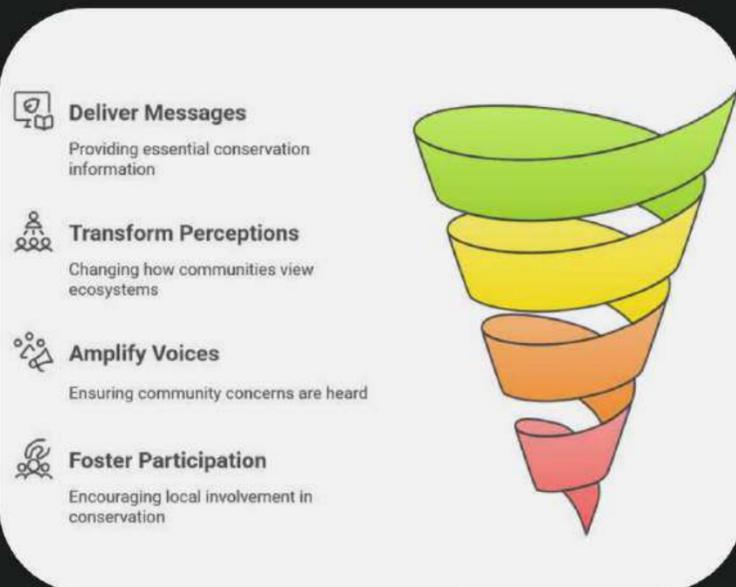
In much of rural Puntland—particularly across Gardafu, Bari, Karkaar, and Sanaag—decades of conflict, displacement, and limited public infrastructure have weakened community access to environmental information. In regions where many villages lack electricity, paved roads, or regular media access, awareness of biodiversity loss, climate change, and sustainable resource use remains limited. This gap is not simply informational—it affects how ecosystems are valued and protected. Without access to knowledge, harmful practices can persist, often unintentionally.

What we do

Launched in 2023, Nature on the Move is SSI’s mobile environmental outreach initiative designed to bring conservation education directly to remote communities. Using a specially equipped mobile audiovisual unit, we screen locally relevant conservation films in open public spaces and facilitate structured community dialogues. Since launch, screenings have been held across rural settlements in Puntland, prioritizing ecologically significant and underserved areas. Locations are selected based on biodiversity importance, community relevance, and access limitations.



Our Inflatable Outdoor Cinema Screen



The program focuses on practical and locally meaningful issues, including:

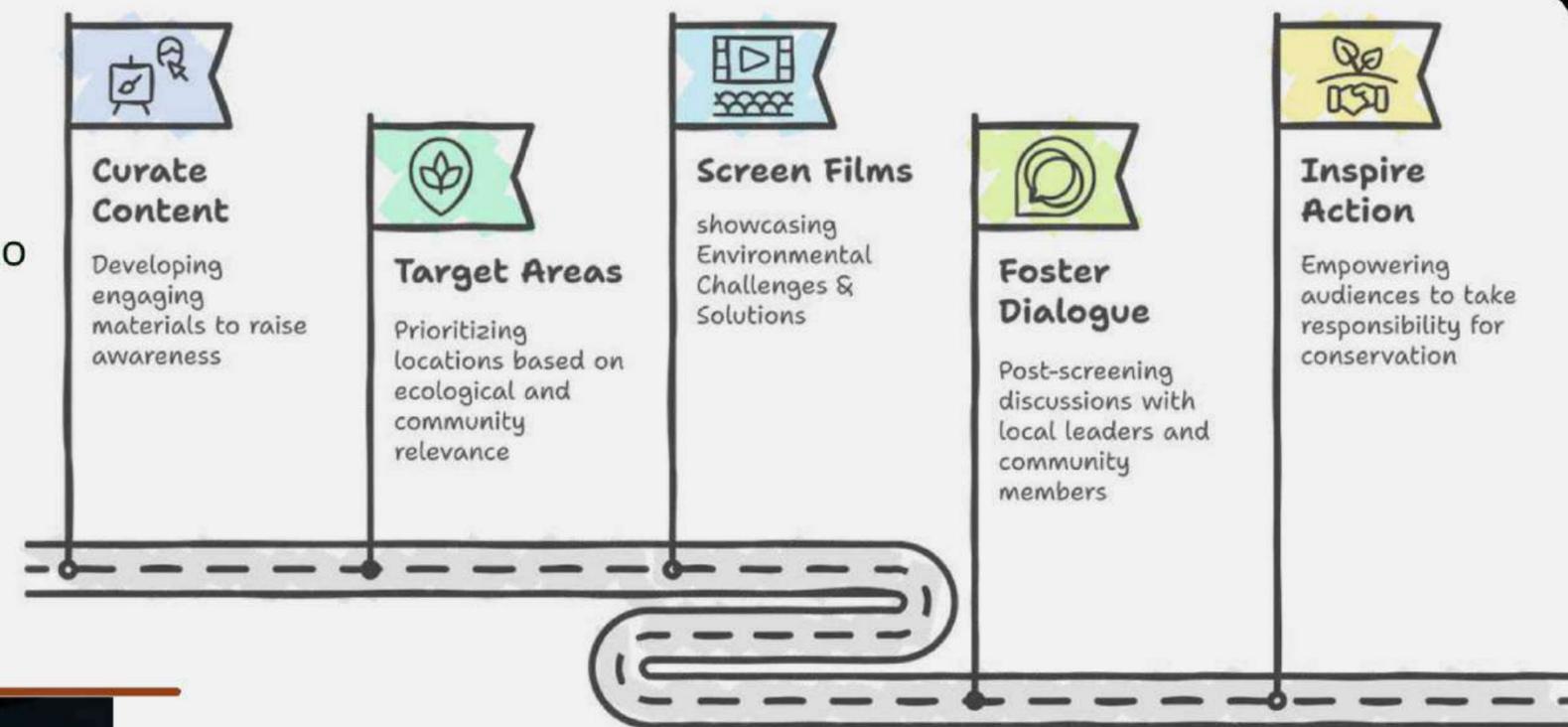
- Sustainable frankincense harvesting
- Biodiversity loss and habitat degradation
- Climate resilience in dryland ecosystems
- Illegal wildlife and plant trade



How it works

Each screening follows a deliberate engagement model

- **Context Setting** – Introduction to local environmental challenges.
- **Visual Storytelling** – Short films that translate complex ecological issues into accessible, emotionally resonant narratives.
- **Facilitated Dialogue** – Open discussions with elders, youth, women, and local authorities to reflect on solutions.
- **Collective Commitment** – Encouraging locally led action and stewardship.

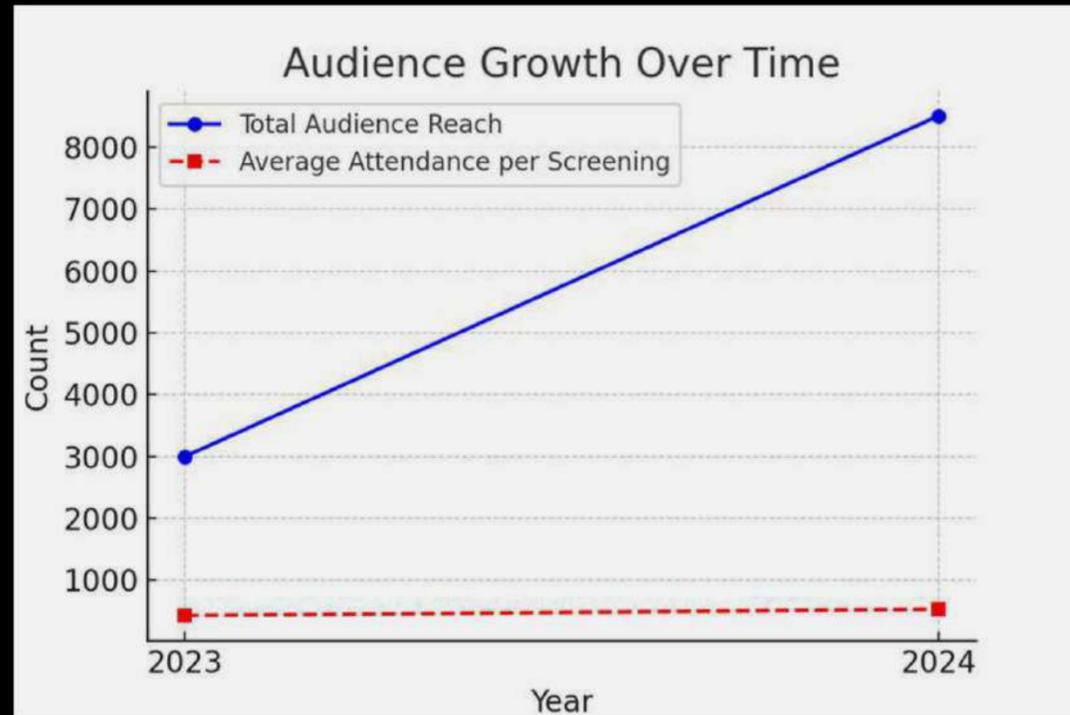


Execution Process

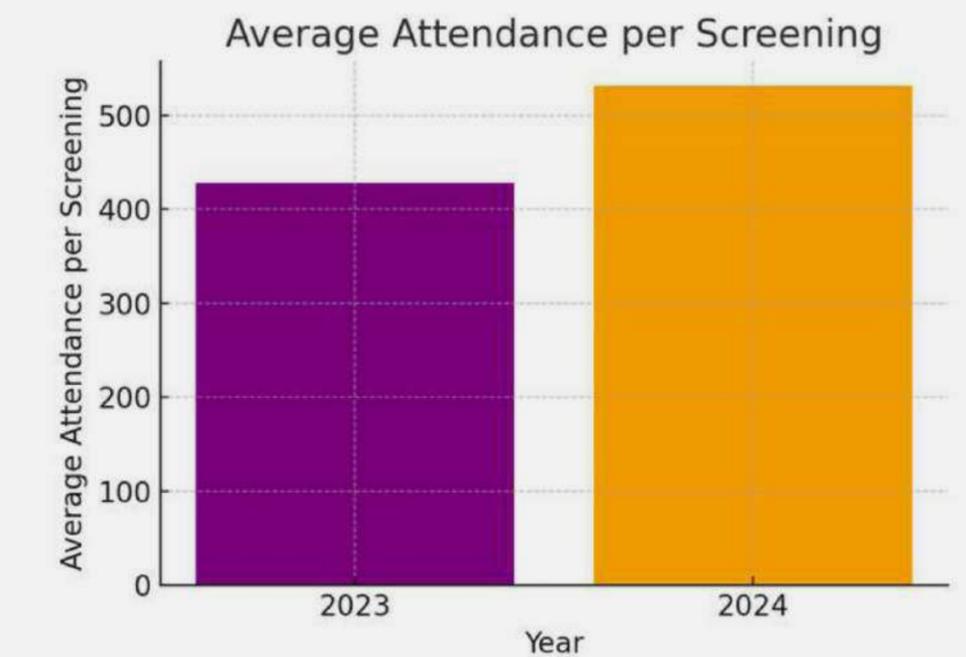
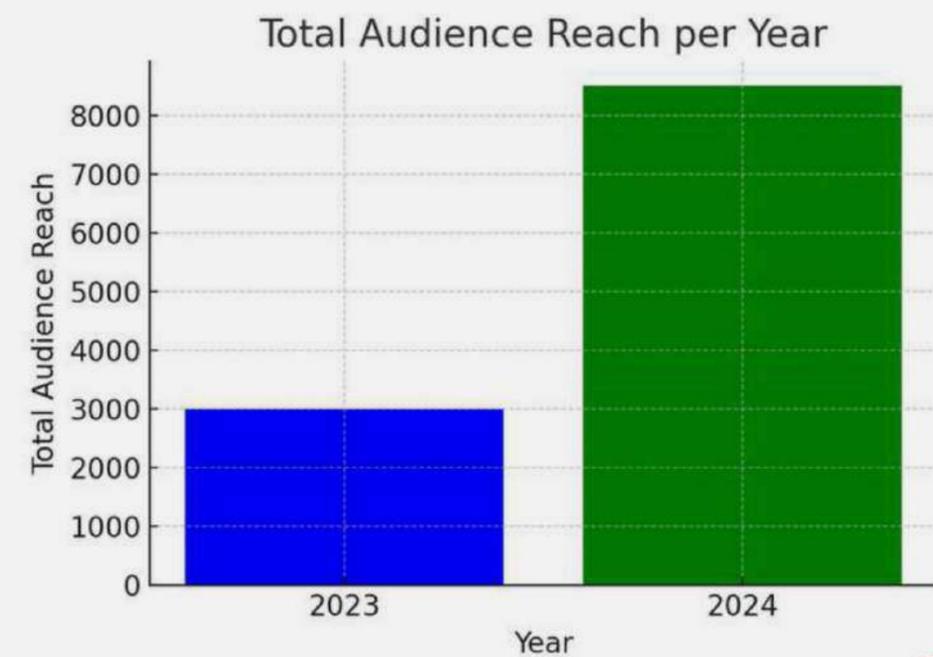
Reconnecting People with Nature through Mobile Awareness



In 2024, we hosted 16 film screenings across ecologically significant and high-impact rural settlements in Sanaag, Bari, Karkaar, and Gardafu. Prioritizing accessibility, these events were held in open public spaces from 7 PM to 11 PM, ensuring strong community participation. These open-air events attracted a remarkable 8,507 community members, significantly increasing our outreach from just 3,000 in 2023.

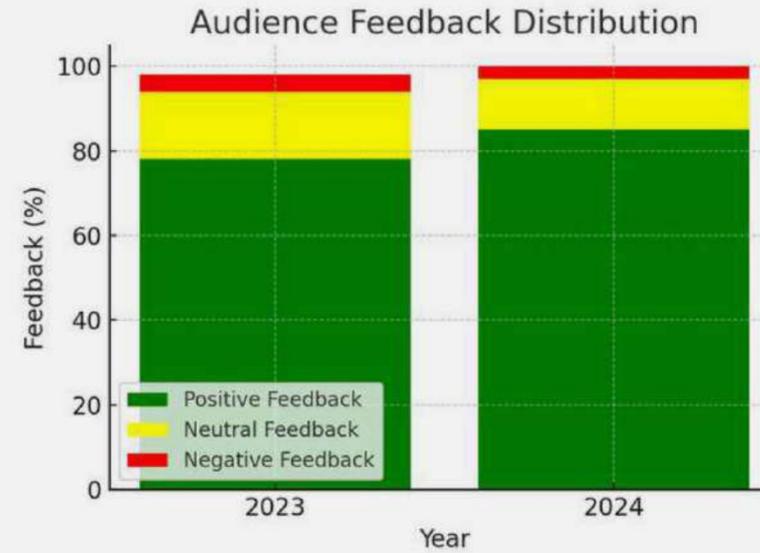


The Screenings not only raised awareness about wildlife conservation but also built a strong sense of community engagement and responsibility, ensuring that our message resonated long after the screenings ended.



Audience Feedback Analysis 2023–2024

The audience feedback analysis for 2023 and 2024 indicates a consistently high level of positive reception to our initiatives. In both years, the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction, with positive feedback increasing slightly in 2024. Neutral feedback showed a minor decline, suggesting improved audience engagement and understanding. Negative feedback remained minimal and unchanged, reflecting the effectiveness of our approach. These findings highlight the growing impact of our outreach efforts and the continued success of our engagement strategies.



Consistent Positive Engagement:



Our Team at Work

“For the first time, our entire community gathered to watch and learn together. The films opened our eyes to important issues we had never discussed before. It made us feel connected to the world beyond our village, and now we understand how we can protect our land and heritage.”

Said. Mohamed Gure

Resident of Marodi-ur Settlement, Bari Region



Our Team at Work

Community Action in Practice



Youth Turn Awareness Into Action

After attending a conservation film screening in Bargal, a group of young boys encountered a stranded sea turtle along the coast. Remembering what they learned, they carefully returned it to the ocean.

The moment reflected a shift from awareness to personal responsibility — especially among youth who had not previously seen wildlife protection as part of daily life.

Small actions like these signal long-term cultural change toward stewardship

“We learned the animals also belong here with us.”

Film Screenings Inspire Community-Municipality Action

In a remarkable display of community spirit and environmental stewardship, residents of Bosaso, Puntland, Somalia, joined forces for a single-day beach clean-up campaign, successfully removing 2 tons of waste from the town’s coastline. This intensive effort, sparked by our environmental awareness film screenings conducted in Bosaso on 16th March 2024, targeted the pervasive issue of plastic pollution—particularly plastic bottles, bags, and discarded fishing gear—that had long marred the beauty and ecological health of Bosaso’s beaches.



Local residents gathered for a beach cleaning event in Bosaso, Somalia.

The screenings, which highlighted the devastating impacts of marine litter and the urgency of collective action, galvanized local volunteers, students, and civic leaders to take immediate steps. Equipped with gloves, rakes, and reusable collection bags provided by the Bosaso Municipality, teams fanned out across the shoreline, filling sacks with debris while municipal trucks transported the waste to designated disposal sites. By day’s end, the staggering haul of 2 tons stood as a testament to the power of community mobilization and the ripple effect of awareness-raising initiatives. Beyond the tangible cleanup, the event fostered a renewed sense of pride and responsibility among participants, underscoring the critical link between education, action, and environmental preservation. The success of this one-day blitz has already inspired plans for recurring clean-ups and broader advocacy, positioning Bosaso as a beacon of grassroots environmental activism in Somalia.

Key Highlights:

- **Catalyst:** Film screenings on March 16, 2024, ignited community action.
- **Collaboration:** Seamless partnership between residents and municipal authorities.
- **Legacy:** A model for future initiatives to combat plastic pollution in coastal regions.

These stories exemplify how targeted education and community unity can transform awareness into impactful, tangible change.

How the Pillars Work Together

SSI's conservation model is built on four mutually reinforcing pillars that operate as one integrated system rather than separate programs. Each pillar addresses a different layer of the conservation challenge – from ecological recovery in the field, to community stewardship authority, to practical livelihood capacity, to policy and systems support. Our field experience shows that conservation outcomes are strongest and most durable when these elements are designed together. Ecological restoration without local governance fails to last. Community stewardship without livelihood capacity is difficult to sustain. Local action without institutional support cannot scale.



By intentionally linking habitat recovery, community governance, regenerative livelihoods, and systems change, SSI delivers a community-led Nature-based Solutions model that is practical, culturally grounded, and scalable. This integrated approach allows conservation to move beyond short-term projects toward long-term stewardship systems owned and sustained by local custodians

Partnerships & Collaboration

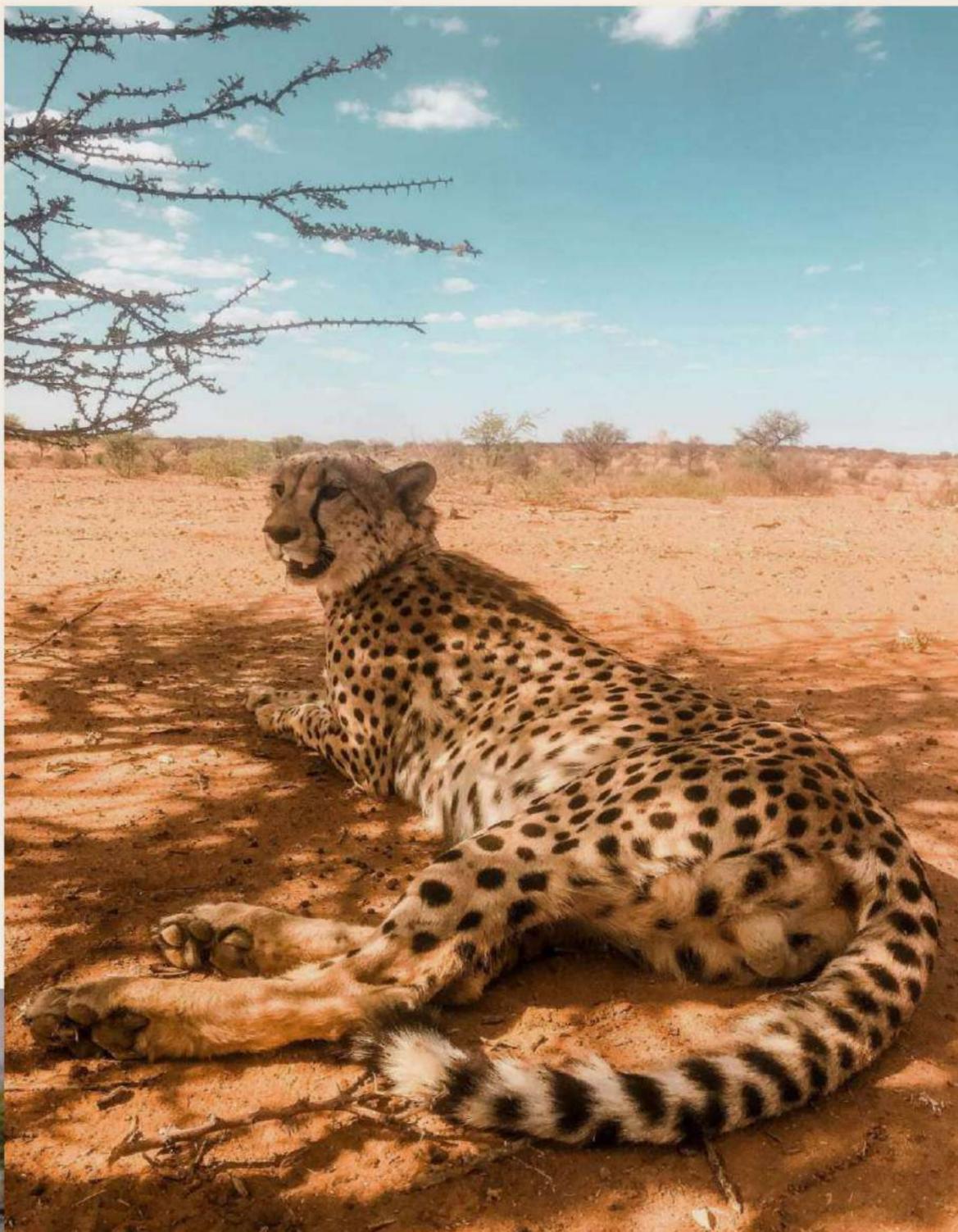
Our partnership model centers community authority and builds outward to science, markets, and policy

Conservation outcomes in fragile dryland ecosystems cannot be achieved by a single organization alone. SSI's approach is built on partnerships – with indigenous custodians, local communities, traders, researchers, and government authorities – each contributing a distinct role in protecting species and sustaining landscapes. In 2024, our work continued to deepen trust-based and operational partnerships across Puntland's frankincense and biodiversity landscapes. These collaborations strengthened community stewardship systems, enabled field interventions, improved reporting of environmental crimes, and supported applied conservation research. We prioritize partnerships that respect local governance, elevate traditional ecological knowledge, and translate it into scalable conservation practice. Moving forward, SSI is actively expanding its technical and certification partnerships to support nature-based enterprise models and conservation standards development.

Our Partners Include...



Looking Ahead



Building on the field foundations strengthened in 2024, SSI will focus in 2025 on scaling structured stewardship partnerships, strengthening conservation standards, and developing nature-based economic models that reward ecosystem protection. Our next phase prioritizes formal partnership agreements with 95 custodian committees in frankincense growing regions, expanded forest health monitoring, and improved sustainable harvesting systems for frankincense landscapes.

We will also advance certification and sustainability premium models that link ethical markets to community stewardship outcomes. Technical collaboration with international

Thank You very much

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