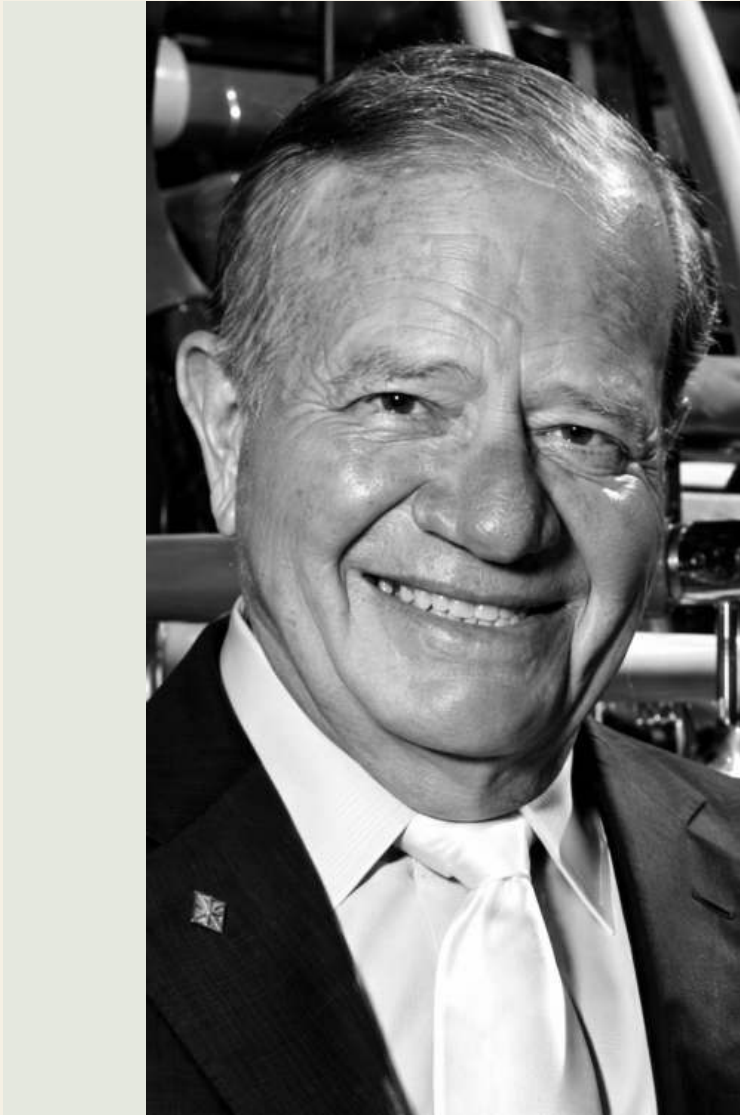


WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS NEVER END WHEN BIGGER CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD

*A personal reflection on
partnership, purpose
and carrying forward
an unfinished mission.*



GODFREY HARRIS | A LIFE OF PURPOSE

Godfrey Harris, former Managing Director of the Ivory Education Institute.

Passion-driven African wildlife conservation partnerships can begin unexpectedly. When one partner dies, the survivor must carry their shared mission forward. Accepting that challenge and inviting others to sustain the work is a duty never to be ignored. That is the story of my partnership with wildlife conservationist and advocate for the cultural and artistic value of ivory, Godfrey Harris, which began about nine years ago.

BY EMMANUEL KORO

A shared conviction



Godfrey Harris (right) and Emmanuel Koro (left) after holding an ivory meeting with officers from Zambia's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management in Livingstone, in 2023

I met Godfrey in 2017 at a meeting in Centurion, a residential area in Gauteng, South Africa's richest province. The gathering sought to establish the Southern African Coalition for Sustainable Use.

During introductions, I described myself as a Johannesburg-based international award-winning environmental journalist reporting on conservation and development issues affecting Africa's rural communities, people whose experiences, sacrifices and concerns are too often overlooked in international wildlife debates. "My highest educational qualification is a Rhodes University Master's degree in Journalism and Media Studies, for which I obtained a first-class thesis pass," I said. "The thesis title is Evaluating the Coverage of Environment: A Comparative Study of Observations of Academics and Journalists."

My words caught Godfrey's attention. After the meeting, he requested my contact details. The following week, he wrote asking whether we could work together voluntarily to communicate ivory's cultural and artistic value and wildlife conservation.

He also wanted us to highlight the concerns of private ivory owners, Southern African countries supporting large elephant populations and rural communities that continue sharing their land with elephants despite the immense human and economic costs of coexistence.

Purpose must outlive us

“Partnerships may begin unexpectedly and end too soon, but their purpose must endure when bigger challenges still lie ahead.”

His untimely death on 6 January 2026 left a painful void and an unfinished mission. It also presented me with a challenge: to continue the work we began and invite others who believe in fair, people-centred conservation to join me.

Continuing alone will not be easy, but abandoning the mission would betray the trust, time and hope invested in it. Godfrey's example reminds us that worthwhile conservation work must outlive individuals. Partnerships may begin unexpectedly and end too soon, but their purpose must endure when bigger challenges still lie ahead. Those left behind must choose courage over surrender, collective action over silence, and lasting commitment over retreat.

Godfrey's wish, expressed in his self-written eulogy in June 2025, was that his tombstone carry the words: "At least I tried."

Our partnership grew from a shared conviction that African voices - particularly those of communities living alongside wildlife - deserved to be heard. Godfrey's remarkable energy and commitment inspired me. I had imagined that people naturally slowed down at his age, but he demonstrated that passion has no retirement date.

We also can at least try to work together to make the work of the Ivory Education Institute continue to serve the needs of everyone who cares about elephant conservation, including the artistic and cultural value of ivory.

LESSON LEARNT

What we do for wildlife benevolently today or tomorrow will teach others to continue the good work when we are gone.

Environmentally yours,

Emmanuel Koro

Managing Director, Ivory Education Institute

A non-profit organisation

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