



# THE NORTHERN RANGELANDS TRUST

Quarterly update, May-August 2018



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JACKIE CHERONO,  
Ruko Conservancy driver



Mariella Furrer

For the past two years, 30-year-old Jackie Cherono has worked as a driver at Ruko Community Conservancy in Baringo County in Kenya's North-Rift Valley region. Her natural skill and dexterity behind the wheel along with her pleasant and easy-going manner belie the often grueling nature of her job.

In spite of the long hours, and the harsh conditions she sometimes finds herself in, Jackie says she's living her dream. She recalls building metal toy cars as a child growing up in Baringo, and wondering how it felt to drive a real car. "I didn't see any women around me driving but that feeling of wanting to drive never left my mind."

Although her parents wanted her to study teaching after high school, the determined young lady had other plans and opted to work odd jobs to put herself through driving school in Nakuru, miles from home. Soon after, Jackie was hired to drive the Ruko Community Conservancy Land Cruiser, having emerged the best interview candidate out of 13, the rest of which were men.

The area surrounding Ruko Conservancy is home to two pastoralist communities, the Il Chamus and the Pokot. Conflict between the two has spanned decades and often centres around cattle rustling. As such, Jackie's job often involves driving patrol rangers to deal with disagreements, which often puts her in life-threatening situations. She says she has learnt to persevere. To her, conservation and peace now go hand in hand. "When I take rangers to the field or when I drive my colleagues to peace meetings, I am very happy. Because of our work, morans (young men) are now speaking to other morans about peace and stealing each other's cattle has now reduced greatly."

In a patriarchal society, female drivers are few and far between. But Jackie has been pleasantly surprised by the positive reaction to her role. "Everyone, including my family, is very happy and they all like to see me driving my Land Cruiser. Many young girls around Ruko are now saying they want to be drivers like Jackie."

She strongly believes that community conservation in Ruko has been highly beneficial for women in the area, particularly for women entrepreneurs. "Instead of just sitting at home waiting for the men, the women are now beading and earning a bit of money to support themselves".

"I don't believe there are jobs for men or for women," she says, "and when I speak to young girls, I tell them to follow what is in their hearts and minds."

# Overview

## MISSION

To develop resilient community conservancies that transform lives, secure peace and conserve natural resources.

## WITO

Kuendeleza maadili ya hifadhi za jamii ambayo hubadilisha maisha, kulinda amani na kuhifadhi rasilimali za asili.



**35**  
member conservancies



**42,000**  
square kilometres



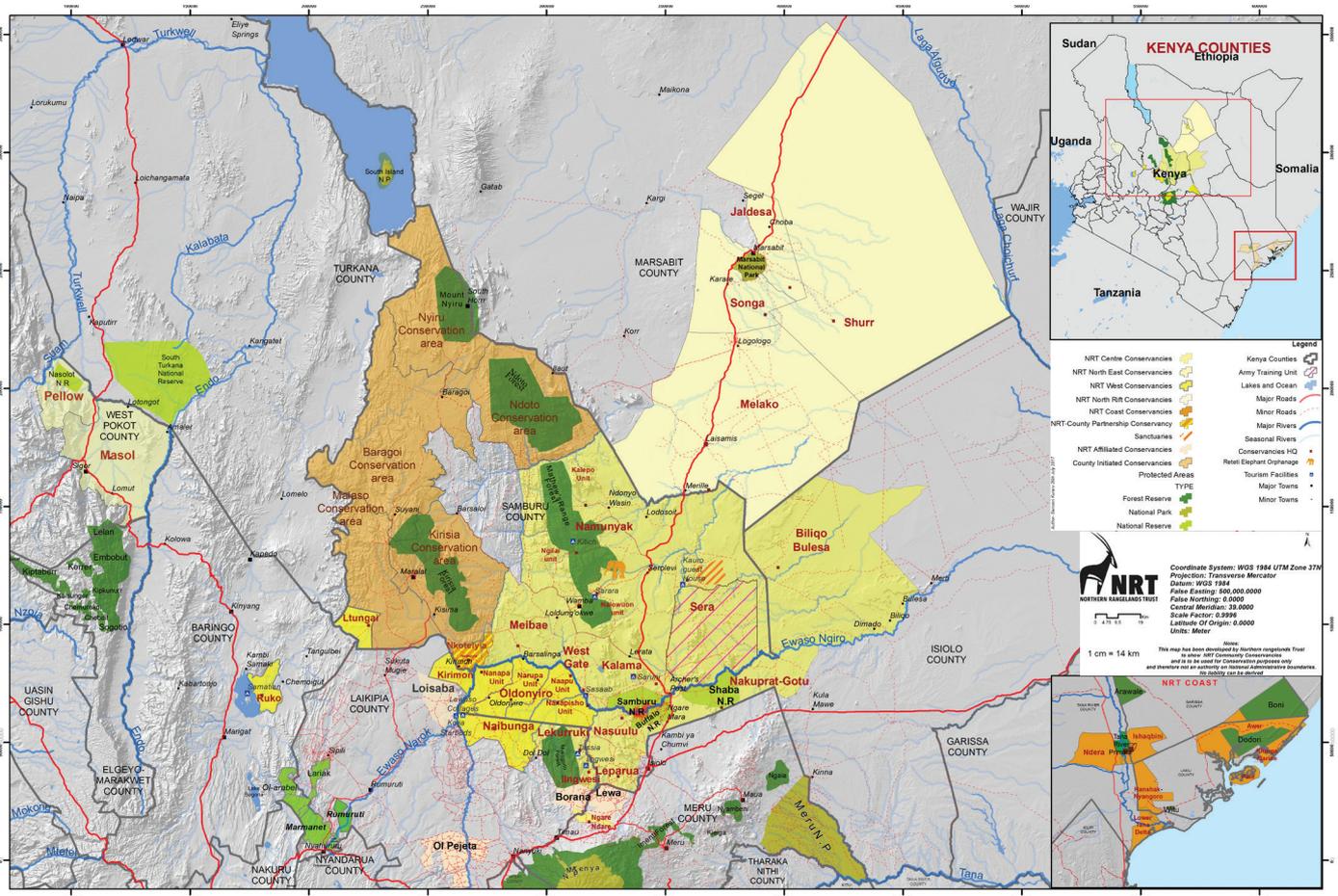
**50,000**  
Beneficiaries of conservancy livelihoods projects since 2012



**952**  
permanent conservancy employees



**77% - 34%**  
Drop in the proportion of illegally killed elephants from 2012 - 2017



ROYAL DANISH EMBASSY  
Danida



## News in brief



### State of Conservancies Report 2017 and a Fresh New Website!

We're thrilled to have launched our new website and our annual State of Conservancies Report this August.

Both of these feature a fresh, clean look that will enable us to share who we are, what we do and why we do it in a way that we hope is engaging and accessible.

You can browse through the new website at our same URL [www.nrt-kenya.org](http://www.nrt-kenya.org) and download our the 2017 State of Conservancies Report in the resources section of our website.

### Guidance from our Board and Council of Elders

On the 17th and 18th of August we hosted our annual Board Meeting and Council of Elders gathering. This was an excellent opportunity for us to take stock of our successes and learnings over the past year, and determine our direction for the next five. The Board is chaired by Hon. Mohamed Elmi and the Council of Elders, which is comprised of the elected chairpersons of all the member conservancies, is chaired by David Lekoomet of Kalama Conservancy.



### Community Conservation Takes Over the Airwaves

This quarter we embarked on radio project to support conservancies in raising their members' awareness about peace, livelihoods, governance and wildlife initiatives. A weekly live talk show, co-hosted by some of our programme leads and conservancy managers, has featured on the Marsabit-based Sifa FM and Isiolo-based Shahidi FM. We aim to reach an audience of approximately 400,000 people from the Borana, Gabra, Samburu, Rendille and Turkana communities through these shows, which have been well received.

We look forward to rolling out the programme in the NRT West and Coast regions, and are greatly encourage by the participation and feedback thus far.

## Tree House Opened in Namunyak Conservancy

On the 28th of June, the Namunyak community opened the 'Tree House' - a community-owned tourist lodge situated in the expansive Sarara Valley.

Capitalising on the growing wildlife numbers in the Conservancy, and the breathtaking scenery provided by the Matthews mountain range, the lodge is expected to generate at least Ksh. 10 million for the community in its first year of operation.

Speaking at the launch, the Deputy Governor of Samburu County Julius Leseeto said "the initiative is one of a kind and it is seeking to empower the Samburu community. It is an opportunity for our people to tap into the tourism industry. We are glad that this facility is home grown and it is employing locals."



## Loijipu Returns to the Wild

After being hand-reared at the Reteti Elephant Sanctuary, two-year-old black rhino calf Loijipu was released back into the wild at Sera Community Conservancy in June. He joins his mother, who abandoned him at birth, and 11 other black rhinos translocated to Sera, the first community-owned black rhino sanctuary in East Africa, back in 2016. A recent birth now brings the total population of black rhinos in Sera to 14.

The Sera Community Conservancy was proud to welcome the young rhino home. Conservancy manager Reuben Lendiria noted that this was a testament to the success of community conservation and a boost to wildlife numbers and tourism in the conservancy. Loijipu remains under close observation as he adjusts to his new life in the wild.



## New Teacher's Quarters at Merille Primary School

Merille Primary School, supported by Melako Community Conservancy, now has brand new teacher's quarters. This is part of a larger initiative dubbed the 'Northern Kenya Teacher's Development Project' made possible by collaboration between NRT, ICEP, DANIDA and the Medicor Foundation.

It is hoped that by providing infrastructural support to schools such as Merille - identified as being in 'hardship areas' with low rates of teacher retention - the academic enrolment, curricula adherence and performance will improve greatly.

The Marsabit County Governor, Honourable Mohamud Ali thanked NRT for its support towards the school at the official opening of the quarters in June.



## Livestock Consolation Fund

Two community members from areas surrounding the Namunyak Conservancy have been compensated for elephant-related attacks to livestock, as part of the new Livestock Consolation Fund.

Developed by Namunyak Conservancy in close collaboration with NRT and other stakeholders, the fund is part of a larger plan to address the critical human-wildlife conflict issue in the area and provide incentives for improved human-wildlife co-existence. In turn, it is hoped that the development of a fair and structured compensation system for elephant related livestock loss will reduce elephant deaths as a result of retaliatory attacks.

Burton Lenanyokie, NRT's Community Development Officer, says the programme has been received positively by the Namunyak community but will require continuous community engagement in order to address the challenge effectively and in the long term.



## Rumbles from Reteti

**To Save Elephants, It Takes a Village:** an excerpt from Conservation International's interview with Katie Rowe, co-founder of the Reteti Elephant Sanctuary in the Namunyak Community Conservancy, one of the first NRT member conservancies.

**What makes the Reteti Elephant Sanctuary unique?**

*Reteti is a community-owned effort – with all employees coming from the local Samburu community – to save a critical species. But Reteti isn't just about saving elephants; it's about breaking down stereotypes and redefining wildlife management. For instance, Reteti provides new employment opportunities for women and those who haven't gone to school. Most of our keepers, or caretakers, were not able to attend school, and thought that their only future was as a pastoralist driving livestock. Now they can get a job at Reteti, where their intimate knowledge of nature is an asset.*

**Reteti recently celebrated its first anniversary in September. What has the sanctuary accomplished?**

*We've rescued 30 elephants since we started. But our successes are also measured in change in behavior. Not so long ago, elephants were seen as giant pests for collapsing sandy watering holes where cattle drink. Now, the community is so proud of this project. When I see community members, people ask me how each elephant is doing by name. Since there's such strong involvement, the community really wants to see these elephants do well. When we've lost elephants, everyone feels the heartbreak; when a calf has made it through a tough time, everyone celebrates.*

**What has driven the change of heart?**

*Employment alone has a huge impact; the income from one job at Reteti ripples out to family members. Through talking to staff, we've gained an understanding of just how many people rely on their salary. For instance, our elephant keepers have explained to us that they are paying for their brother's children's school fees, or that they need to send money to their parents and their brothers and sisters, who then share it among their kids.*

*Reteti is also helping to protect the remote Mathews Mountain Range by raising awareness of how critical elephants are as a keystone species and showing people that they can coexist peacefully with wildlife. The Samburu have been living with wildlife for centuries, sometimes contentiously, and Reteti is our final hope that people and elephants can share a landscape together. Reteti demonstrates what is possible in that people can live the lives that they want and also have a healthy environment; it doesn't need to be one or the other.*



## Waves from the Coast

While mainland conservancy rangers wear boots and ride Land Cruisers, reef rangers wear flippers and ride boats to carry out their work! 16 rangers from Pate and Kiunga conservancies have now completed the final part of their monitoring training, thanks to support from The Nature Conservancy and FFI. They are now qualified to conduct monitoring surveys on coral reefs and fisheries, collecting and analysing data that will help their conservancies adapt and implement management plans to protect their natural resources.

Over the years NRT, the Kenya Wildlife Service and other partners have adapted conservancy ranger training to suit the challenges and demands of the inland conservancies - hot, dry landscapes, difficult terrain, techniques for recording wildlife spoor and tracks in the dust. But at the coast, marine rangers have a very different environment to work with.

While rangers in mainland conservancies focus on collecting data on elephants, Grevy's zebra and other key species, coastal conservancies require information on corals, mangroves and fisheries in order to develop effective management plans. That is why rangers in Pate and Kiunga conservancies have been undergoing a three-part training specifically designed for this purpose.

16 reef rangers are now fully equipped to conduct underwater coral reef monitoring and data analysis.

"We carried out surveys in seven sites around Pate Island, some of which have been set aside as Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) which are protected areas closed to fishing," said Dr. Juliet King one of the trainers on marine conservation. Dr. King has been working closely with TNC's Marine Scientist Dr. George Maina, who has provided technical support to the NRT-Coast marine programme for the past four years.

## Reef Rangers Lead Marine Monitoring



Mike Pflanz | TNC

The rangers are now able to carry out these surveys independently; and will conduct them twice a year to monitor recovery and condition of fish, corals and macro-invertebrates. The data will be handed to Community Conservancy boards and community members during meetings, to help inform strategies.

"Our rangers are not only equipped with security and anti-poaching skills they can now conduct scientific monitoring, an additional skill that is crucial for conservation of precious marine ecosystems," said Kiunga Community Conservancy manager Mohamed Sharif.

Independent monitoring will start in Kiunga later this year in key reef areas selected by the rangers and community members. This will be a key component of fisheries management in Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs).

## Stories from the Field

“ Unlike other institutions, Northern Rangelands Trust is different. They bring money to the village and they train you on how to save and manage it. ”

Dade Roba,  
Business owner & SACCO member,  
Biliqo-Bulesa Community Conservancy

It is evening at Dade Roba's maize mill in Biliqo Bulesa Conservancy. Dade and her son Omar, still in his school uniform, are processing a three kilogram bag of maize.

Omar mans the engine while Dade pours the maize into a tray that feeds it to the heart of the mill.

“This is my livelihood,” she says proudly, smiling at her son. She's got reason to smile today – Dade has just been granted Ksh.25,000 as a business loan from Biliqo Bulesa Conservancy – but her journey to this point has been far from easy.

Dade is a mother of nine children, and the sole breadwinner after the death of her husband.

“[When my husband died] I had to find a way to sustain my family. I decided to set up a posho (maize) mill because no one else in the area had a similar business, yet there was demand,” she says. Her business model is to charge maize farmers a fee for milling and marketing their crop. So when drought hits, as it did in 2017, her business suffers.

“When the rains are good, I can easily take home Ksh.1,500 shillings a day,” she says. “But last year this dropped to just Ksh.100. Our community farm along the Ewaso River, which is seasonal, so when there is no rain, there are no crops, which means no business for me.”

## Building Business in Biliqo



Realising the importance of supporting local businesses, and linking economic prosperity to conservation, the community of Biliqo Bulesa voted to apply to NRT for microloan funding through the Conservancy Livelihood Fund. Dade was one of 108 people (102 of which were women) to receive the loans, which are overseen by NRT Trading. Recipients are given training in saving, financial literacy and business development, and are encouraged to join a Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO).

“Unlike other institutions, Northern Rangelands Trust is different. They bring money to the village and they train you on how to save and manage it,” Dade says as she kills the mill engine, and begins to pack the finely milled flour into sacks. She then sends Omar to deliver it to the client in the village.

“With the money I have received I will be able to empower my business. Given that there is a shortage of maize here, I can send for maize from Isiolo or Archers Post, which I will later resell at a profit. Were it not for this money I will still be waiting for the next crop. With this loan, I've got a business that can ensure I have income to feed and educate my children.”