

supports nine locally-managed marine areas. The Government of Kenya estimates that 90% of rural Kenyan households rely on firewood fuel for cooking, putting immense pressure on forested areas and increasing health risks for women and girls. Through a partnership with the U.S. Department of Interior, 600 biogas digesters are being distributed to communities across the conservancies to address this challenge. In 2021, over 200 women and 150 men in Ndera Conservancy planted over 5000 indigenous tree seedlings in two degraded riverine forests which are home to critically endangered Tana River Red Colobus and Tana Mangabey monkeys. The new trees create a path to their survival.

The Next Big Thing - Carbon Credits

The Northern Kenya Rangelands Carbon Project is the one of few large, landscape level carbon removal ventures currently in the market. It is anticipated to remove and store 50 million tons of carbon dioxide over 30 years—the equivalent of the annual emissions from over 10,000,000 cars.

The sale of this sequestered carbon from community rangelands in conservancies will create much-needed income for the communities and enhance conservation efforts. In addition the land will be undisturbed and secure the habitat of four endemic endangered species—the eastern black rhino, Grevy’s zebra, reticulated giraffe, and beisa oryx, in addition to mitigating the impact of climate change.

Although started in 2009, in 2021 the process was finalized with all participating conservancies signing an implementation agreement signifying their commitment to the project. An extensive sensitization and awareness campaign was undertaken before the agreements were signed. NRT administers the project, and 14 of 43 community conservancies - over 175,000 people - are involved and will benefit.


In February 2022, each of the 14 conservancies received their first disbursement of \$345,000. Forty percent will enhance sustainability of community conservancy operations and the remaining 60% will meet community needs through the carbon community fund. This \$5.1 million disbursement is expected to be an annual - and likely transformative - income for these communities.

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Elephant poaching in the region is at its lowest since 2003, and there were zero elephants poached in Kenya for ivory in 2020 in member conservancies in the North.

2.6%

Across Kenya, elephant populations have been growing by 2.6 percent and are currently at 36,280 compared to 32,214 in 2014.

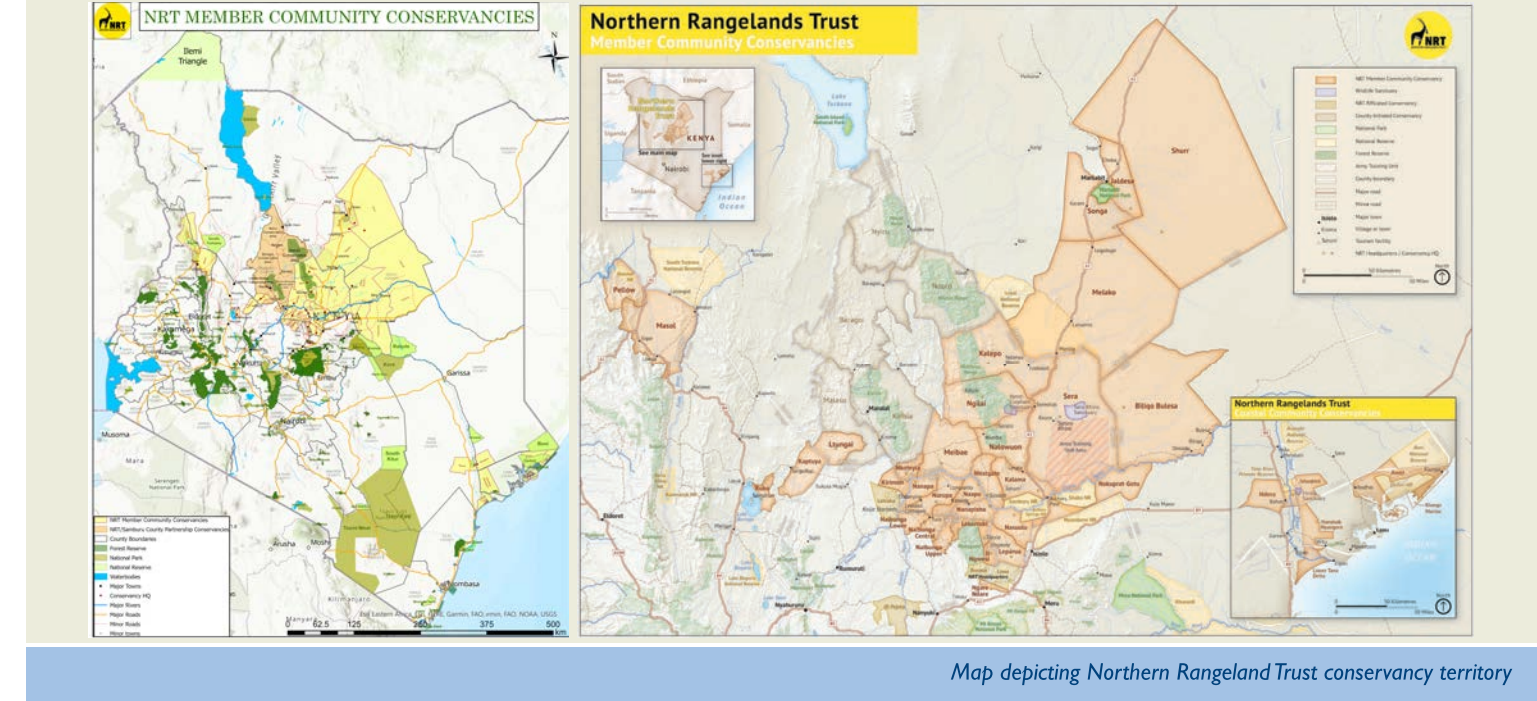


Securing Wildlife

In collaboration with KWS and the Kenya Police, USAID supports NRT’s community monitoring program to address the threats from poachers and cattle-rustlers. Through the USAID-supported Resilient Community Conservancies Program (RCCP), a six-year, \$23.9 million partnership, NRT equipped conservancy rangers with the skills to perform wildlife surveillance and security monitoring. In turn, that information provides credible data on poaching that feeds into national and international databases such as the Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Our joint efforts across Kenya and the region have been paying off.



SOURCE: Rhino Poaching Trends 2012 -2020 Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS)



Nearly 20 Year Partnership with Northern Rangelands Trust

Since 2004, USAID has invested close to \$32 million in northern and coastal Kenya through its partnership with Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT). That investment has led to the development of 43 independent and sustainable community-owned conservancies in Kenya. The communities are driving local development in conservation, economic empowerment, and peace and security.

USAID’s initial investment of \$300,000 in 2004 has become a community conservancy management model that now covers over 11% of Kenya’s land - 7% of which is within NRT, and has gained regional and global attention. Seventy percent of Kenya’s iconic wildlife live outside the national parks. The community conservancy model protects wildlife, expands economic opportunities, and enhances the ability of people and land to withstand climate variability and shocks.

In line with the Government of Kenya strategies and USAID’s support, Kenya’s conservancies will grow to 20% by 2030. These lands are critical given that 70% of Kenya’s magnificent mammals roam outside national parks and reserves. Almost 200 conservancies (43 within NRT) ensure that wildlife thrives and communities benefit from the natural resources across 15 million acres of land. Also, community conservancies in northern Kenya are a lynchpin in combating wildlife trafficking.

Wildlife is a critical asset for East Africa’s future growth and development. The total direct contribution to GDP of nature-based tourism to Kenya and Tanzania is estimated to be over US \$1.2 billion. Kenya draws 2 million visitors a year, over half are Americans.



Over 15 million acres
of land protected



Almost 200 conservancies
(43 within NRT) ensure that wildlife
thrives and communities benefit from the
natural resources across Kenya



Over 11% of Kenya’s
land is currently under
conservancy management -
7% of which is within NRT



Partnerships Lead to More Investment

Although USG was the first - and remains the largest donor to NRT - NRT currently has 46 donor partners that average an annual contribution of over \$25 million, including multiple USG agencies such as the U.S. State Department, Department of Interior-International Technical Assistance Program, and the U.S. Forest Service.

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Community conservancies are the main focus of USAID/KEA's Environment portfolio in Kenya and they remain a lynchpin in both combating wildlife trafficking and protecting decades of biodiversity conservation gains. USAID has also formed other innovative partnerships with Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association, the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association and others. In 2020/21, more than 80% of USAID biodiversity funding in Kenya in 2020/21 went to local organizations. The inclusion of local and indigenous communities is our priority.



📍 2021 FUNDING



\$14 million
in private sector investments leveraged with USAID support.



\$5.9 million
Total funding of community conservancies by the Government of Kenya

NRT also collaborates with the national wildlife protection agencies, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), 11 County Governments, private investors, and other partners to improve the lives and livelihoods of more than 620,000 residents from 18 different ethnic groups in some of Kenya's major wildlife migration corridors.

Community conservancies are the pathway to recover from the impacts of COVID and remain a lynchpin in both combating wildlife trafficking and protecting three decades of biodiversity conservation gains. USAID-supported partners, including NRT, successfully lobbied the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife to set up a \$8 million Wildlife Fund to support conservancies during the pandemic.

Delicate Peace Through Community Dialogues

Northern Kenya has a history tainted by ethnic strife and insecurity, which has stifled development, perpetuated poverty, and disrupted lives for many years. The situation is exacerbated by climate change, a burgeoning human

population competing for diminishing natural resources, a capricious political environment, and easy access to illegal weapons. USAID's People-to-People three-year, \$2 million activity implemented by NRT, supports peaceful coexistence between different ethnic groups (**Samburu, Turkana, Borana, Gabrah, Pokot and Somalis**) in northern Kenya by promoting a culture of peace and non-violent conflict resolution among communities.

The community-led, grassroots approach facilitates the engagement of peace ambassadors, elders, inter-faith religious leaders, youth, and women from the local communities. In 2021, NRT hosted **over 150 peace meetings and trainings attended by close to 8000 people**. NRT has trained over **1000 community rangers** who protect and support communities. In 2021, 59% of livestock reported stolen in 2021 was recovered by NRT's Peace and Security teams.

In 2021, The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), a national, nonpartisan, independent institute, founded in 1984 by Congress to prevent violent conflict internationally, chose **NRT's Peace Coordinator Josephine Ekiru as 2021 U.S. Institute of Peace Women Building Peace Award winner**.

NRT's innovative peace programs, almost always hosted with county governments and area chiefs, include activities such as peace caravans, peace councils, inter-tribal cultural festivals and numerous outreach efforts.

Community-led Priorities Drive Economic Development

USAID support to NRT has facilitated activities with local leaders to develop new economic opportunities. Part of the community conservancy model is to designate land for livestock rather than free-range grazing which creates land degradation. USAID support has **increased value to the livestock market chain**; trained and employed over 1,200 women through beadwork enterprises and for international exports; and opportunities for a wider range of tourist budgets. These create an estimated annual revenue stream of **\$2.9 million annually**. In addition, NRT's 5,290 Savings and Credit Co-operative (SACCO) members have distributed **\$1.7 million in microfinance funds to members**.



📍 NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2004



1043
Community scouts in the North have increased from 61 to 1043



25%
Proportion of illegally killed elephants has dropped from 50% to 25%



19
Number of endangered Black Rhinos on community-owned sanctuary has increased from 0 to 19



10
Number of Nubian Giraffes in community-owned sanctuary has increased from 0 to 10



95
Number of protected areas for nesting turtles has increased from 0 to 95



140
Number of hirola antelope in community-owned sanctuary has increased from 0 to 140

Investments into health, education, water and infrastructure projects for communities total over \$4.2 million and provide resources to thousands of marginalized households across the 43 member conservancies. In 2015, NRT developed a fund to enable conservancy members to benefit from conservation operations directly. Any NRT member conservancy is eligible to apply for the funds and priority is given to projects that connect livelihood impact to wildlife conservation, build long-term resilience against climate change, promote peace and sustainable enterprise, empower women and youth, and leverage funding from government and other partners. The fund has supported 162 projects across all member conservancies, which have benefited over 75,000 people.

The pandemic resulted in a huge decline in tourism which, in the past, has contributed an average of 10 percent to Kenya's GDP and 1.5 million jobs both directly and indirectly. In response, USAID refocused approximately \$15 million in funding towards essential services to address deficits in the operations costs of partner conservancies and community livelihood funds.

“KWS is keen to grow the numbers of Rothschild giraffe in the country. The management of Ruko Sanctuary in collaboration with the local community has done a commendable job in efforts to conserve this rare species.”

Dr. Isaac Lekolool, Senior Veterinary Officer for the Kenya Wildlife Service.

Restoring Ecosystems to Build Resilience

Climate change, persistent drought in the northern and changing pastoralism patterns continue to stress the ecosystems in the northern and coastal conservancies. NRT supports rangelands restoration through grazing plans, removal of invasive species, and training on rangelands management. Despite the drought, conservancies with good grazing plans experienced a lesser degree of drought-related stress. In the coast region, a strong community-driven approach to recovering mangroves and safeguarding riverine forests is yielding positive results. **Since 2018, 75,018 mangroves have been planted in the Pate, Kiunga, and Lower Tana Conservancies.**

Reversing degradation and building productive and resilient rangelands through more effective planning, management, and monitoring of natural resources is a key component of the resilience and biodiversity conservation strategy. **To date, over two million hectares are under rangeland restoration and management and NRT currently**

