



The Northern Rangelands Trust

CONSERVANCY LIVELIHOODS FUND



"Many failures in development derive from externally driven or top down solutions. Too often you see projects that have been established with little community consultation, so when there are problems there is no incentive or capacity to fix them. The success of the community conservancy model is largely down to the fact that communities are taking charge of their own development. What we're seeing with the Conservancy Livelihoods Fund is an end-to-end ownership of projects, from the democratic identification of problems and challenges, to the development, governance and maintenance of solutions."

- **MIKE HARRISON**, NRT Director of Sustainability,



THE CONSERVANCY LIVELIHOODS FUND

NRT

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES



62,000

beneficiaries in

26 conservancies

TO IDENTIFY PLAN & IMPLEMENT

1 community members submit project ideas & vote on them

2 conservancy manager submits proposal to NRT

3 if proposal meets criteria: NRT awards funding, technical support & advice

THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES



Education



Water



Tourism



Microfinance



Health



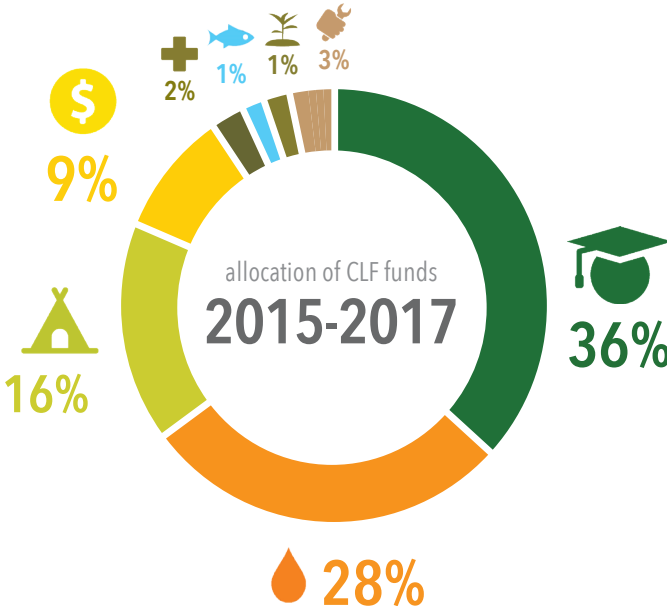
Fisheries



Rangelands



Other



KSH. 166 MILLION
invested in CLF since 2015

+ KSH. 19 MILLION
leveraged from other sources as match-funding



Breaking the Mould

When the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) was established in 2004, it primarily supported member conservancies with advice, training, and operational funding. The latter help put fuel in the tanks of conservancy vehicles, pay rangers' salaries and facilitate peace meetings. All of this brought indirect benefits to conservancy members; many reported feeling safer and had a sense of greater economic opportunity. But there was limited direct, tangible benefit to the livelihoods of conservancy members (other than for the few conservancies that generated tourism revenues), and this, after all, was the logic of community conservancies.

That is why in 2015 Mike Harrison - CEO of NRT at the time - created the Conservancy Livelihood Fund (CLF) with seed funding from USAID and DANIDA. This new model of funding sought to empower communities to identify, plan and implement their own development programmes through their conservancies.

The model is similar to any other grant proposal process. Conservancies can apply to NRT for CLF funding, with proposals that must reflect community priorities, have wide and equitably distributed benefits, and have been approved by respective boards and by communities through their annual general meetings. But it differs from a lot of other NGO funding in two main ways. The first is that it is only open to NRT member conservancies. Secondly,



Juan Pablo Morales

Empowering communities to identify, plan and implement their own development programmes

and most importantly, how it is spent it is entirely the community's choice. In the first year, 17 conservancies applied. There were of course teething problems. Seven proposals were rejected on the basis of a poor application process or poorly thought-through ideas. Since then, NRT has invested heavily in helping communities identify projects, building the proposal writing skills of conservancy managers, encouraging them to think about using the CLF to leverage matching funds from other donors, and monitoring the beneficiaries and impact of projects.

Now, when conservancies submit proposals, each is graded by an NRT awards panel, and managers are given feedback. If their submissions are rejected, NRT will work with managers to improve them. All proposals must be signed off by the respective conservancy board chairperson, to reflect community-wide approval, and extra points are awarded for projects that will be used to leverage funds or technical support from other sources. Ambitious conservancies can even apply for multi-year funding.

To date, the CLF has awarded **US\$1.6m for 66 projects across 29 conservancies**, with a total of **62,000 direct beneficiaries** and many more indirect beneficiaries whose lives are improved by the overall success of their conservancies. CLF projects have also been used to **leverage US\$ 190,000 in match-funding from county governments and other NGOs**.



Water

Access to water is one of the most significant social challenges for the majority of the pastoralist communities in the northern rangelands. Without it - livestock perishes, households suffer, and schools, hospitals and businesses cease to function effectively. With little of it - conflicts break out over remaining sources and competition with wildlife can end in tragedy on both sides. With too much of it - degraded rangelands erode further.

The priority that communities place on conserving and managing water is clearly reflected in the CLF awards. Since its inception in 2015, **28% of CLF funds have gone towards water projects** - including sand dams, water catchments, pumps, boreholes, tanks and pipes - in 13 conservancies. Now, some conservancies are starting to think about capitalising on existing water projects to reduce human/wildlife conflict, or developing new ones that could meet both the needs of households and a tourist lodge or campsite. In Il Ngwesi for example, CLF funding is being used to upgrade a community water supply, with additional branch pipes to provide running water to the community-owned tourist lodge, and another branch pipe to supply the newly built health clinic, which would thus attract local government nursing staff and medical supplies.



In Namunyak the community chose to allocate CLF funding to develop a new mountain spring to supply a settlement and a ranger security outpost that were without running water, with a branch pipe to supply water to a potential tourist campsite in the particularly scenic Donyo Wasin basin, to make it an attractive investment for a tourism operator.

But good ideas still rely on good governance and management to see them through. In 2017, Kalama Conservancy used CLF funding to install a pipe from their headquarters to a wildlife water pan a few kilometres away, and then on to Saruni Lodge. Saruni - which brings in significant revenue to Kalama Conservancy - currently has to supply water to the lodge by truck twice a day. The idea was that investing in a water pan would attract wildlife for tourists, discourage animals from finding water near human settlements, and provide running water to Saruni as a good business partner. But with problems on the Kalama board and no clear management lead, the water pan still remains empty, Saruni still trucks in water to the lodge, and no benefits are yet felt at village or household level. This will be addressed at the next Kalama annual general meeting, the main arbiter for accountability, in order to rebuild momentum.



WATER: A BILIQO-BULESA STORY

“Ndio, maji ni maisha - yes, water is life.”

– HABIBA TADICHA, Chairlady Biliqo Bulesa Conservancy.

The Merti Plateau sits embossed into the harsh landscape on the eastern edge of Biliqo Bulesa Conservancy, Isiolo County. While the dry season ravages the plains beneath it, the Plateau boasts good grazing long after the last rains have fallen. Until recently, herders have been unable to spend more than half a day grazing here, having to make the trek back down to the Ewaso River every evening to water their livestock.

In 2017, Biliqo Conservancy applied for a two-year CLF grant (KES 3 million a year) to install a seven kilometre pipeline from the village of Dima Adho to Didewaride at the foot of the Merti Plateau.

“By giving people controlled access to the Merti Plateau, the pipeline will reduce pressure on other dry season grazing areas like Kom, which has seen a lot of conflict in the past,” says Habiba.



The pipeline will expand on an existing water point in Dima Adho built by the conservancy with USAID funding in 2010. The water point is entirely managed by the community. The monthly fee charged to users of the taps covers all repairs, management and maintenance. "This is a community project that never ever requires NRT support", says Latif Boru, NRT's technical lead on governance. "The conservancy manages all the repairs and governance really well, and I'm confident they'll do the same for the Didewaride water point."

The proposal to CLF included funding for a kiosk and two troughs at the water point, as well as a salary for a permanent security guard. A water committee comprised of Biliqo board members has been set up to govern the point. They will determine when in the season the taps will open, and for how long. They will also manage access. Residents of Biliqo Conservancy will pay KES 200 per 100 head of livestock per month for water use, while people from outside the conservancy will pay 250.

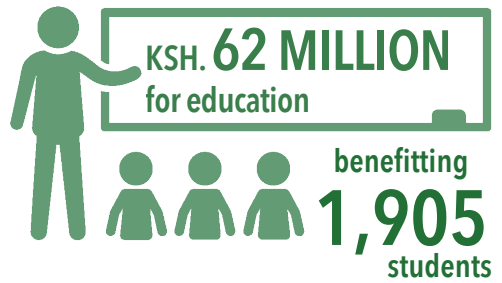
"This pipeline and other conservancy projects are building community support for the conservancy, and also helping to change attitudes towards wildlife as people see the benefits" says Habiba.



Education

Children's education is seen as the passport to poverty alleviation and a form of social security in many rural Kenyan households. It is the sector that has dominated CLF spending to date, with **37% of total funds spent on 30 education projects in 21 conservancies.**

Of the 39 grant proposals submitted to NRT in the first two years of the CLF, 24 were related to education. Of those, 19 were proposals for the construction of classrooms or dormitories. For many households, education infrastructure is one of the most tangible benefits of community conservancies. But without staff, water access, or enough money in households to pay school fees, conservancies are quickly realising that CLF funds would, in many cases, be more effectively spent on bursaries and teacher accommodation.





EDUCATION: A BILIQO-BULESA STORY

"I believe education is the key to peace. If a child has an education, he or she is not going to waste time fighting neighbours. I was educated, I'm not fighting like some of my age-mates who dropped out of school."

– HASSAN KALO, Deputy Principal Biliqo Secondary School.



Enter Biliqo Bulesa Secondary School from the dusty, barren landscape around it and you are immediately enveloped in an oasis of green. But the trees were not just planted for ambiance. Until recently, they acted as shade for makeshift classrooms and a dining hall.

In 2015, Biliqo Secondary School had just two rooms for three different year groups. Lessons had to be taught outside or in the staff room, and the four teachers often slept in the local village water kiosk due to a lack of nearby accommodation. Despite this, the school was ranked among the top 10 in Isiolo County out of 25. Students would come from as far as 50 kilometres away to attend, staying with nearby relatives when they could.

As the school struggled to cope with the influx of students and the poor teacher retention rate, the community decided to apply for CLF support to build two additional classrooms.



This was at the same time that ICEP funded teachers' accommodation nearby, complete with solar panels for electricity. On the back of this, the Ministry of Education agreed to supply four additional teachers.

Now, the school's 160 pupils are taught in separate classrooms by eight different teachers, and ranks top school in the county. This has built massive support locally and in the county for Biliqo Bulesa Conservancy, and empowered Lela and her conservancy board members to become much more bold in demanding better services from the county for their remote communities.

"The additional classrooms were most definitely a factor that enabled us to reach number one," says Hassan, who hopes to lobby the community to support a bid for CLF funded dormitories to expand Biliqo Secondary School into a mixed day and boarding institution.



Health

Health clinics and hospitals are sparsely distributed across northern Kenya, and the region has some of the lowest distributions of healthcare professionals in the country. Geographic, infrastructure and security challenges have made it extremely difficult for the Ministry of Health to recruit and retain health workers in this region. It is not uncommon for a pastoralist family to walk a whole day to reach the nearest healthcare facility.

This is a challenge that two conservancies have decided to meet with the CLF. Kalama and Lekurruki conservancies requested KSH 2 million each in 2015 for the construction of a health clinic and community dispensary respectively. Since its construction finished in 2016, Kalama Conservancy have used the project to leverage further support from the Tusk Trust, the Samburu County Government and the Ministry of Health, in a model example for how to maximise a CLF grant for greater impact.



HEALTH: A KALAMA STORY

“The community say ‘this is OUR clinic’ and they are very proud of it.”

– TABITHA KARENDI, Nurse at the Kalama Community Conservancy Clinic.

In January 2018, Nurse Tabitha Karendi saw 126 patients. They were mostly Samburu women with respiratory infections caused by dust and charcoal fires. Women who, according to the Tabitha, would likely not have sought any medical attention two years ago, before the Kalama clinic was built. Tabitha is employed by the Ministry of Health, which assigns doctors and nurses to hospitals, clinics and dispensaries all over Kenya. But in the community conservancy areas, these are often few and far between.

In 2015 the Kalama community held several meetings to discuss an ambitious plan. While other conservancies were focused on using CLF funding to build classrooms in existing schools, provide bursaries to needy students and install water points - they wanted to use CLF funding to build, staff and manage a fully operational medical centre.



While a CLF grant would cover the construction, it would not ensure consistent medical supplies or cover staff salaries. The Kalama board and manager approached the Ministry of Health, who agreed to supply a nurse if there was a clinic and accommodation. With this agreement, they approached Samburu County Government, who pledged to fund nurse's accommodation close to the site of the proposed clinic.

All of this was reflected in their CLF grant proposal, and funding was awarded accordingly. The Kalama community donated a suitable piece of land for the clinic, and helped to dig foundations, gather rubble and collect sand for the construction to save labour costs.

The clinic now serves a catchment of around 5,000 people. Community health volunteers help to share medical information in villages, translate for the non-Samburu nurse and conduct outreach events. And where there are gaps in medical supplies from the Ministry of Health, Tusk Trust have agreed to donate the necessary.

The end-to-end ownership of this project has sustained momentum, built long lasting partnerships and built deeper community support for Kalama Conservancy as a result of its success.



Enterprise

Household income in NRT member conservancies largely depends around livestock, or in the case of the coastal conservancies, fishing. But a changing climate combined with a growing human (and therefore livestock) population has put pressure on the lands and waters upon which families depend, and these have become volatile livelihoods.

NRT Trading's mission is to identify, incubate, pilot and grow sustainable businesses within the NRT conservancies. A large part of this work is providing training and opportunities for households to diversify their income and reduce reliance on livestock, fisheries, charcoal or other natural resources. In 2016, NRT Trading piloted a micro-loans programme, providing financial literacy and business training to women and young warriors who were then eligible to apply for loans from NRT with no interest.



Not only was this successful in nurturing new businesses, such as shops and transport services, but it also contributed to peace efforts. Warriors occupied with running their own businesses were, by their own admission, far less likely to be involved in conflict.

The Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) programme is now active in 16 conservancies, with 837 members.

In 2016 and 2017, Lower Tana Delta, Meibae, Nasuulu, Ndera and Ruko conservancies spent KES 13.5 million of CLF funding on their own micro-finance initiatives. All of them were specifically targeted at providing opportunities for women and youth, and received technical support from NRT Trading.



ENTERPRISE: A MEIBAE STORY

“When the women get money, they bring it home. In the past, when the men got money, usually they would take it away!”

– JACKSON LEBULKASH, Vice Chair of Meibae Community Conservancy.

Elizabeth Lolkinyati lives in Meibae Conservancy and has four children. Like so many others in her community, her sole family income was livestock. While she worked hard to keep the household running - tending the goats, feeding and watching the children, fetching firewood and water - she had never been in paid work, nor had she completed secondary school. She couldn't rely on the fluctuating livestock market to ensure she would always have enough money to cover school fees or put food on the table, and found that her friends were in the same situation.



In 2017, the Meibae community applied for a CLF grant to start a microfinance scheme in a bid to boost the local economy and provide opportunities for women like Elizabeth to start small businesses. 80 women – nominated for their enthusiasm and entrepreneurial mind-sets – were selected from each conservancy zone and received finance and business training from NRT Trading. Each had to submit a business proposal, and successful applicants received loans of KES 25,000 each from the CLF-funded scheme.

Elizabeth has opened a small shop to sell goat hides and skins. From this, she makes enough profit to make monthly repayments on her loan, support her family and save – something she never did before the NRT Trading training. She and her peers in the group get together once a month (no men allowed) to check in on each other's repayments, assist anyone having difficulty meeting their deadlines, and share business lessons and ideas. All transactions and savings are conducted via mPesa (mobile phone money) – negating the need to visit a bank, open accounts and deal with cash. So far, none of the women have defaulted, and their repayments will cover business loans for 80 more women next year.



Other Stories

FORESTRY & ENERGY: NGARE NDARE

Ngare Ndare Forest has focused their CLF proposals on renewable energy, forestry and water projects. In 2016 and 2017 the conservancy submitted five successful proposals, and were awarded a total of KES 5 million between them. As a forest conservancy, the community are acutely aware of the delicate balance between the sustainable use of forest resources, and the degradation of a landscape they rely upon so heavily. Many households in Ngare Ndare own small pockets of land, where they keep livestock and practice subsistence agriculture. Charcoal has been the primary fuel here for years, but a growing awareness of its environmental impact is changing this.

Stanley Murithi and his wife Agnes are smallholder farmers who own a small plot on the edge of the forest. They are one of 36 households with a biogas unit, subsidised by Ngare Ndare through the CLF. They have one cow, which provides more than enough dung to feed the unit and fuel their kitchen stove. "Before the biogas, we used charcoal, firewood or commercial gas, which was expensive and, in the case of charcoal, actually illegal. It is also bad for the



Tatiana Karanja



Tatiana Karanja

forest. This biogas unit is very efficient, and is saving us money in the long term," said Stanley.

Even at a subsidised rate of KES 35,000, which Stanley and Agnes pay back in instalments, biogas units are expensive. That is why the conservancy are also channelling CLF money into providing energy-efficient cook stoves for households. While these still use charcoal, they only require a fraction of fuel that traditional stoves do.

Ngare Ndare are also using CLF funding to support community tree nurseries, and a one-for-one tree seedling programme. There are currently 15 community tree nurseries, growing a mix of indigenous and exotic seedlings for agroforestry, planting in degraded areas of forest and in local schools. In 2017 the community planted over 2,000 seedlings in five community schools, charging every student with the care of their own seedling.

"Our shambas (farms) were deserts" says Elizabeth Wambui, manager at a community tree nursery in Ngare Ndare. "Now, we are planting trees to help with soil erosion, use for sustainable firewood, and promote environmental health. We want our children to know the importance of trees."



RANGELANDS: NAIBUNG'A

It sounds like the plot of a horror movie; aliens have taken over vast swathes of land and are killing livestock, injuring wildlife and colonising land previously abundant with indigenous plants.

But this is happening in Laikipia. The *Opuntia stricta* cactus, native to the Americas, has spread across the rangelands over the last 50 years with devastating effects. Its sweet fruit is irresistible to livestock, who suffer internal organ damage when they ingest the fearsome thorns. Elephants also love the taste of *Opuntia*, and because it grows on degraded land close to settlements, human/ elephant conflict in Naibung'a is on the rise.

In 2009, Ol Jogi Conservancy, which borders Naibung'a, partnered with the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI) to explore ways to help. It was suggested that they use biological control, and after five years of trials the *Dactylopius opuntiae* insect was introduced to Laikipia. Commonly known as cochineal, it feeds and develops solely on *Opuntia stricta*, killing the plant before moving to the next.



The Naibung'a community saw such immense benefits from this initial introduction that in 2017 they voted in favour of using CLF funds to build greenhouses, where they could incubate cochineal and increase the current rate of Opuntia infection.

Seven greenhouses have now been established in Naibung'a, with two more due to be built. Three supervisors have now been employed to look after them. Each one contains 100 buckets of Opuntia leaves covered in developing cochineal, which are released into the Conservancy after three months. The Naibung'a manager is working to collect impact data, but the resident pastoralists are certainly feeling tangible benefits already. Hillsides and outcrops once covered with Opuntia are now bare and ready for grass growth, and where the cactus has been eradicated around settlements there are fewer conflicts with elephants.

Progress is slow but steady; this is a long-term project. But all signs indicate that conservancy members will continue to allocate CLF funding to this programme – not just for their own benefit, but for the benefit of their children, their livestock and the wildlife that will continue to share their pasture.

A group of children, mostly boys, are running along a dirt road in a dry, open landscape. They are wearing simple, colorful clothing. The scene is bright and sunny, with long shadows cast on the ground. The children appear to be in motion, running towards the camera or slightly to the side. The background shows sparse, dry vegetation and a clear sky.

The Future

The CLF has become a powerful tool in the development of community conservancies in northern Kenya. At the beginning people didn't understand how it worked and had simplistic views on how development solutions work. For example they highly value education, so when asked what projects they wanted they said classrooms. But classrooms don't give you education, nor does a clinic give you health. Through a learning process communities are starting to realise that instead of classrooms you need dormitories, teachers accommodation, or sanitary facilities to enable girls to stay in school full time. You need a government nurse, drug supplies and running water for a clinic. You need partnerships with a range of experts, funders, suppliers and mentors. There's a whole lot more they are being encouraged to think about.

Another change we're starting to see is the use of CLF projects to leverage wider economic opportunities for investment, business development and growth. More proposals are coming for funding savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs), and indeed NRT Trading has now established an NRT-wide SACCO with all the administration, legal registration, training and advice provided to high standards. More proposals are coming in for developing tourism facilities or attracting tourism investments, or for roads that can bring business into village markets.



NRT now has more capacity to better support conservancies in the CLF process. Mentoring for managers in writing proposals, allocating technical leads to take charge of different project sectors. We want to see if we can bring staff from County Governments onto the CLF panel that evaluates proposals, so that they can see what's going on and how they can add value.

Sustainability remains a major challenge. Key elements of the strategy here are to encourage matching funds from other donors or county government, develop new technical partnerships, and improve proposal writing and project management skills in managers – a better understand of how to think about aims and objectives, get community approval, manage and monitor plans). Some conservancy managers and boards are getting very good at this because of this experience, writing proposals and getting grant funding from other sources independent of NRT. Even if we don't get any more funding for CLF after 2020, we've built the skills, networks and ideas for conservancies to continue to raise funds for their conservation and community development aspirations.



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