

# TEN Women

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Ami Vitale

*Here are ten inspirational women from the community conservancies of northern Kenya - working to build peace, conserve wildlife and reduce inequality. We're calling this #10Women for SDG10 - the tenth UN Sustainable Development Goal that is all about empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of everyone, regardless of gender or ethnicity. Their outstanding work is supported by NRT's many valuable partners, principally USAID, DANIDA and The Nature Conservancy.*



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**“There’s nothing you can do without having peace first, including empowering women.”**

– HELEN HALAKE



Vice Chair of Jaldesa  
Community Conservancy

Sophie Harrison

## Helen Halake

Meet Helen Halake, vice chair of Jaldesa Community Conservancy in Marsabit. She devotes countless hours to promoting peace between Jaldesa and the surrounding communities, who historically haven’t always seen eye to eye. She says that this harmony with their neighbours is the biggest impact her community have felt from conservancies. “There’s nothing you can do without having peace first,” she says “including empowering women. Women cannot come together to start business groups in conservancies if there is no peace. They are an important group in the peace process, they have a lot of influence over the men that fight!”

Her commitment to promoting peace started back in 2006, when Helen gathered together a few friends, some water and food and started to walk. “I walked for two weeks through Rendille, Gabbra and Borana territory,” she says. “We had tea with them, we sang peace songs with them, we danced together. The Government heard what we were doing and supported us with food and water. Since then I can say we’ve worked really hard to keep peace, and people are feeling this benefit.”

**“These days, we rarely ask the men for anything. They say: these women are now supporting themselves!”**

– JOSEPHINE ALIYARO



Star Beader, Salamis Women's Group, Melako Conservancy

Sophie Harrison

## Josephine Aliyaro

Josephine has been beading with her friends for 10 years. “Our financial problems brought us together in 2008,” she recalls, “at that time, we had to ask our husbands for an amount as small as Ksh. 5 to buy pencils for our children. We decided to each contribute an amount of money to the group, which we would then lend each other when there was an urgent need - this became our bank.”

This entrepreneurial spirit has served the group well. They were one of the first women's groups to partner with the NRT Trading BeadWORKS business, which has enabled them to sell beaded jewellery and accessories to international markets. In 2017, Melako Conservancy emerged top in the BeadWORKS revenue chart, thanks in no small part to Josephine and her team.

At a practical level, their income has enabled the women to pay school fees and hospital bills, put food on the table, and reduce reliance on livestock. But it has also had a far greater impact on their entire community. Salamis donates 40% of their annual revenue to Melako Conservancy's operational budget, in recognition of the institutional support offered to their business by the Conservancy. This has hugely increased their engagement in conservancy affairs, and the women now contribute actively in conservancy meetings and have a say in conservancy decisions. “When money gets into the conservancy, we know it has gotten into the community and we are happy to see the work of our hands benefiting our community,” says Josephine.

**“Our society is now changing and starting to see the value of women’s leadership. At first they would ask - how can a woman lead us? By my second term, I was elected unopposed because my work spoke for itself.”**

– PAULINE LONGOJINE

## Pauline Longojine



Peace ambassador and former  
Sera Conservancy Board member

Sophie Harrison

Pauline was elected to the Sera Community Conservancy board in 2011, where she served for the maximum two terms. She ran an unopposed Chair of the Board in her second term, becoming one of the first women in an NRT member conservancy to take that role. It was under her leadership that Sera became the first community-run black rhino sanctuary in east Africa, setting new standards and best practices for endangered species conservation in Kenya. “The introduction of rhino in Sera is something I will always be proud of,” she says. “Our children are employed by the rhino sanctuary, the whole community will continue to grow from tourism revenue.”

Pauline is now a peace ambassador, and has played an instrumental role in launching NRT’s multi-ethnic women’s peace forum - which equips women with skills for building peace and detecting and preventing conflict. “In the beginning, women were afraid to speak to their sons and husbands,” says Pauline, “but we challenged them to think of the future they wanted for their community. Now they come back and tell us that their sons are listening to them and thinking twice before going out to raid.”

Driving her work now is a firm belief that women can and should play a leading role in mitigating ethnic conflict, and this starts by creating safe spaces for dialogue and starting conversations. “There are certain things that the morans (young men) will open up and tell me, that they would not tell the men - when they are with me, they know that they are with a mother, and will not be judged.”

**“I didn’t think I would manage, but I decided to try and I am glad I did. Now my children, especially my daughters, can look up to me and see that when challenges come, we should not shy away from them.”**

– CLEMENTINA



Rangers, Kalama Community Conservancy

Ami Vitale

## Clementina & Josephine

In 2015, Clementina’s husband, a Kalama Conservancy ranger, tragically lost his life during a stock theft recovery operation. He was the sole breadwinner for their family of five, and his loss left Clementina trying to manage grief alongside the daunting prospect of providing for her children. Keen to try and help, the Kalama management called a community meeting. They wanted to offer the widow a sustainable solution – one that could put food on the table every night and see her kids through school. They decided to offer Clementina a job: the position of a community ranger.



Sophie Harrison

Bravely, Clementina took the job, having never been formally employed in her life. She now works alongside five other female rangers, including Josephine (above), who are her support network as well as her colleagues. Josephine is a radio operator; as much a ‘first response’ position as the rangers on the ground. “I am at the heart of what is happening in our community” she says, “if anything happens, I am the first to know and record it.” She says that like Clementina, her job has also pushed her out of her comfort zone. “There are certain things I can do now that I could not do when I first came. I can operate a radio, relay information and interact freely with people from different places.” Josephine commends her friend’s courage, stating “our work can be very hard sometimes and it especially hurts when we lose one of our fellow rangers in the field. But we know that it is worth doing, because we can take care of our families and contribute to a better life for our community.”

**“Some of us used to sell charcoal, but we have learned about climate change. Burning charcoal creates a lot of smoke, which is bad for our health and the atmosphere. It also means we’re cutting down trees which are important for soil and rain. Our businesses don’t rely on harmful environmental practices like this.”**

– JOYCE DAFARDAY



**Joyce Dafarday**

Chairlady of Songa Conservancy  
Women's Group

Sophie Harrison

In the semi-arid lands surrounding the densely forested Marsabit National Park, it can be tough to make a living. That is why the savvy businesswomen of Songa Conservancy have formed a group that has diversified into 3 businesses: beekeeping, tree seedlings and bead craft, with support from the French Development Agency (AFD), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and the Kenya Forest Service (KFS). Together, they have decided that profits from these businesses should be put into a savings and credit cooperative, through which their members can access loans.

The group own 25 beehives, and have undergone a 5-day training course to learn about managing bees and harvesting honey. While they wait for their first honey crop, they are busy with their tree nursery. Here, they grow trees for agroforestry, as well as fruit trees and indigenous seedlings. These are bought and planted by local farmers and schools.

Their businesses are not only providing a stable and growing income, but a chance for the women to get together and support one another. “A problem shared is a problem halved!” says Joyce!



Sophie Harrison

**“I hated seeing what the fighting did to our community - we could not do any business, there were many orphans and widows and our children did not even have teachers in their schools. I joined the board because I desperately wanted a better future for my community”**

– HABIBA TADICHA



## Habiba Tadicha

Board Chair, Biliqo Bulesa  
Community Conservancy

Habiba grew up in the area now known as Biliqo Bulesa. Conflict has plagued her community, and their neighbours, for years - and its drivers are complex and deep rooted. But while sporadic conflict still occurs, things have come a long way since the establishment of the community conservancy in 2007. “When I saw our young men fighting I knew that in addition to bringing them together for peace meetings we needed to offer them other ways to support themselves and their families- I believe that when you have something to lose, you are more likely to see the value of peace,” Habiba says. Her board has since sought support to start a micro-loan programme that lends both men and women money to start small businesses such as livestock selling and shop-keeping. In addition, the community now benefits from annual education bursaries, a brand-new teacher’s quarters and support for their livestock market - all through the conservancy.

Another cause close to Habiba’s heart is women’s participation in community affairs, and she has made it her mission to ensure that women not only attend but speak up in community meetings. “Women and children suffer the most due to conflict, so why should we not speak?” she asks. “I’m glad they’re now listening. Recently, we heard that there was a peace meeting bringing together women from different ethnic groups in northern Kenya and before I could even start to rally the women, they came to me saying that we had to attend. We are now more peaceful than before and we have come up with effective ways to conserve and use our land, our lives are improving and we’re headed in a good direction,” she says.



**"I'm passionate about raising conservation awareness in my community."**

– FIRDHAUS ATHMAN



**Firdhaus Athman**

Ranger, Pate Marine Community Conservancy

Dwigan Adiono

Firdhaus recently accompanied peers from Pate on an exchange trip to Madagascar, supported by The Nature Conservancy. This was aimed at increasing linkages and knowledge on locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) and other community-based management practices. Here, she witnessed how temporary fishing closures in reef areas enabled octopus fishers to catch larger octopus – and far more of them – when the reef was reopened.

Inspired by what she learned in Madagascar, Firdhaus has become a driving force behind the establishment of women's marine associations back in Pate. She hopes to encourage more women to get involved in Pate's marine conservation efforts, and explore opportunities for sustainable fisheries businesses like octopus fishing.

"Thanks to Pate, people are now taking better care of their marine resources."

**“I became a conservancy manager at the age of 25. It was a huge job for a young girl, but I was drawn to the challenge. Today, I see the Il Chamus morans inviting Pokot morans to their age-group graduation ceremonies. In my team, Il Chamus rangers and Pokot rangers work and live together! A few years ago, all this was unthinkable.”**

– REBECCA KOCHULEM



## Rebecca Kochulem

NRT West Community  
Development Officer

Rebecca Kochulem was the first manager of Ruko Community Conservancy, and has now handed over the wheel to another female manager at Ruko, as she becomes the NRT West Community Development Officer.

In 2007, the Il Chamus and Pokot communities were recovering from another period of intense conflict. Ruko was established to try and bring together these two groups and provide a platform for peace dialogue, with Rebecca at the helm. “For the first two years, every single day was a working day” Rebecca recalls. “It was very important for us to include everyone in our decision-making: elders, women, young people and local authorities.” 11 years later, Ruko is making strides, starting with the re-introduction of 8 endangered Rothschild giraffe to the conservancy in 2012. “The Rothschild giraffe is the pride of Baringo, and has provided a valuable tourism opportunity for us - we now welcome at least 500 tourists a year to Ruko” says Rebecca.

The conservancy has also given out micro-loans to 130 women and young men to start businesses, in addition to providing over 300 education bursaries and improving access to healthcare.

Most importantly, there is greater trust and co-operation between the Il Chamus and Pokot - resulting in the return of stolen cattle, and peaceful resolutions to long standing rifts. “Today, I see the Il Chamus morans (young men) inviting Pokot morans to their age-group graduation ceremonies,” Rebecca shares. “In my team, Il Chamus rangers and Pokot rangers work and live together! A few years ago, all this was unthinkable.”

**“These days, we’re making women the main target of our conservation message because they nurture and raise the children. Imagine a generation of children whose mothers teach them about conservation!”**

– MALIKA MARO



## Malika Maro

Manager, Ndera Community Conservancy

Ivy Wairimu

Malika Maro may have studied journalism, but today, she is the manager of Ndera Community Conservancy in Tana River County; a role she feels she was born for. As well as driving conservation and development operations here, Malika is a champion for business. Many households in the conservancy rely on mango farming as a main source of income, and are blessed with permanent water from the Tana River. But access to markets for these remote farmers is a big challenge. “It was tough to see mango farmers getting taken advantage of by brokers; selling their crop for cheap or risk it rotting,” says Malika. This is why Ndera recently piloted MangoWORKS - an enterprise programme from NRT Trading that buys mangos from farmers and links up with buyers.

Ndera has also disbursed over 150 micro-loans over the past two years to entrepreneurs, an initiative that has been particularly popular with women. “Women were the first to embrace the loans,” Malika says, “their businesses are some of the most profitable- and they are prompt in paying back their loans.” For Malika, boosting business in Ndera has two benefits. The first is that it is helping to reduce poverty and empower women. The second, is that it is helping people to link improved livelihoods with conservation. This is important - Ndera’s riverine forests are home to around 200 bird species, as well as the endangered Tana River red colobus monkey and Tana River mangabey. And according to Malika, women have a crucial role to play in their future. “These days, we’re making women the main target of our conservation message because they nurture and raise the children,” she says. “Imagine a generation of children whose mothers teach them about conservation!”

**“Helping women entrepreneurs across community conservancies has been personally empowering for me. As a woman from a pastoralist community, now more than ever, I believe in our ability to succeed.”**

- BEATRICE LEMPAIRA



BeadWORKS Production  
Manager

Jeff Waweru

## Beatrice Lempaira

For the past 4 years, Beatrice has worked with approximately 1,020 women in 9 community conservancies, partnering with them to turn their traditional skills into a sustainable income for them and their families through NRT Trading's BeadWORKS business. Before this, she worked as a manager for Naibunga Community Conservancy, near her home area. When the chance to work for BeadWORKS came up, Beatrice knew she had to take it. For her, this was a bigger platform to directly impact women- an area she had grown passionate about. "I love the north, and I love our culture" she says, "but I began to ask myself how it could be more beneficial for our women." For Beatrice, BeadWORKS goes beyond just the production and sale of beaded items. Her goal has always been to help women acquire business skills they can use in other aspects of their lives. "We want them to know what it means to handle orders and customers on a larger scale, conduct quality control and everything that pertains to a successful business"

Seeing the women evolve into proactive entrepreneurs over time has been the most rewarding aspect of the job for her. "In the beginning, we had to follow up with them up constantly" she says. "Now, they create their own production networks and schedules- they may not be formally educated, but their aptitude for organisation is astounding." BeadWORKS has also been a catalyst for social change. Over and above having extra money for daily needs, the women feel they have a higher social standing in society and are empowered to have a say in what goes in their households and conservancies. "I have seen women buy land through saving their BeadWORKS income," Beatrice says. "These days, I even have men coming up to me and asking how their wives can join BeadWORKS!"