# FLAWED PLANS FOR RELOCATION OF THE MAASAI FROM THE NGORONGORO CONSERVATION AREA





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Despite protests of the Maasai living in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), the Tanzanian government continues to constrict their livelihoods and limit basic social services while advancing eviction and resettlement plans without their free, prior, informed consent. The government is pushing the narrative that "volunteers" from the NCA are ready to relocate and benefit from new housing and social services in other areas. A review of the resettlement plans identifies serious issues with the resettlement process, feasibility of the selection sites, and major discrepancies between government promises and the actual situation on the ground.



#### **GOVERNMENT MOVES TO DRIVE THE MAASAI OUT OF THE NCA**

In June 2021, the Oakland Institute published *The Looming Threat of Eviction*, sounding the alarm on the Tanzanian government's plans to remove the Maasai from the NCA. This perpetuates a long history of displacing and destroying the livelihoods of Indigenous pastoralists under the guise of "conservation," though these new resettlement plans appear to be less about conservation than about boosting tourism revenues.<sup>1</sup>

On April 16, 2021, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) released eviction notices to 45 people and ordered over 100 buildings to be destroyed on the basis they lacked proper permits. The condemned buildings included homes, public schools, medical dispensaries, religious centers, and administrative offices. The occupants and owners of the buildings were given 30 days to comply and destroy the buildings. The notice additionally identified over 150 "immigrants" within the NCA as a first step towards their future removal.

This announcement resulted in widespread outrage among NCA residents, which led to the NCAA suspending the relocation and demolition orders on April 20, 2021, "until further notice." The threat of relocation on an unprecedented scale within the NCA, however, looms over the communities. The government claims there are no plans of forced evictions or destruction of houses within the NCA. But ongoing developments undermine these reassurances.

On February 9, 2022, Tanzanian Parliament debated policy changes to expedite the removal of the Maasai from the NCA. During debates, the majority of MPs sided strongly in favor of the eviction, while only three MPs—all Maasai representatives—opposed the move and defended the land rights of the Maasai.<sup>5</sup> Given the imbalance of power, the parliament is in a position to change the legal framework that initially granted the Maasai the right to live in the NCA. One MP even



suggested using military force if Maasai are not willing to leave. Further debate on changing the NCA legal framework is expected in the coming months.6

On March 31, 2022, the local government ordered that TSh195,500,000 [~US\$84,000] in COVID-19 relief funds, initially marked for public schools within the NCA, to be transferred to the Handeni district in Tanga region—one relocation site being prepared for NCA residents.<sup>7</sup> Reports indicate that several schools, health centers, and water projects in the NCA will also no longer receive funding for improvements or expansion to meet the needs of residents, with no explanation from the government.8 Transferring funds away from essential services in the NCA further exacerbates poor education and health for Maasai communities.

Between extensive livelihood restrictions driving a hunger crisis and cutting funding and issuing demolition notices for essential services including schools and hospitals, the Tanzanian government remains determined at driving the Maasai out of the NCA. While denying plans for mass evictions in the NCA, the government's strategy to deprive residents of basic services and the ability to graze livestock, leaves many Maasai with few options for survival in the land they have stewarded for generations.

JAMHURI YA MUUNGANO WA TANZANIA OFISI YA RAIS TAWALA ZA MIKOA NA SERIKALI ZA MITAA HALMASHAURI YA WILAYA YA NGORONGORO



Kumb. Na. NGOR/DC/F.1/ 02/VOLIII/ 69

Tarehe: 31/03/2022

Wakuu wa Shule, wakut wa Shale, Shule ya Sekondari Embaraway Shule ya Sekondari Nainokanoka Shule ya Sekondari ya Wasichana Ngorongoro Halmashauri (W) Ngorongoro,

LOLIONDO - NGORONGORO

YAH: KUHAMISHA FEDHA ZA MIRADI YA UVIKO 19 JUMLA YA SHS. 195,500,000/- KWENDA HALMASHAURI YA WILAYA YA HANDENI

Tafadhali rejea kichwa cha habari hapo juu

Nimepokea barua kutoka kwa katibu Mkuu TAMISEMI yenye kumbu Na BD.291/298/03/281 ya Tarehe 14/3/2022 inayohusu mada tajwa hapo juu kuhusu fedha za Miradi ya UVIKO 19 zilizoingizwa katika Akaunti zenu kwa ajili ya ujenzi wa vyumba vya madarasa kuwa Fedha hizo zihamishiwe katika Halmashauri ya Wilaya ya Handeni.

Hivyo kwa Barua hii Nawaelekeza kuhamisha fedha hizo kwenda katika Halmashauri ya Wilaya ya Handeni katika Akaunti ya - Handeni District Council Miscellaneous Deposit Na 41410000535 benki ya NMB. Kazi hiyo ifanyike kabla ya Tarehe 05/04/2022 bila kukosa. Mchanganuo wa fedha hizo baada ya kutoa matumizi ya madawati ni kama ifuatavyo:-

1. Shule ya Sekondari Nainokanoka

Shs. 80,000,000/-

2. Shule ya Sekondari Embaraway

Nawatakia Utekelezaji Mwema.

Shs. 66,000,000/-

3. Shule ya Sekondari ya Wasichana Ngorongoro Shs. 49,500,000/-

Dr Jumaa Mhina

Mkurugenzi Mtendaji (W) NGORONGORO

Letter transferring TSh195,500,000 [~US\$84,000] in COVID-19 project funds from Ngorongoro district to Handeni district, signed by Ngorongoro District Executive Director Dr. Jumaa Mhina on March 31, 2022.





#### **Relocation Plans & Government Promises**

While no finalized official resettlement plans have been made public, proposed plans have outlined drastic relocation efforts. The Tanzanian government's "Proposed Resettlement for Villages within the NCA" plan estimated that 52,000 people from about 6,000 households in the NCA would be attracted to voluntarily resettle outside of the NCA. The government has announced that housing construction is underway in two resettlement areas—the Msomera village in Handeni district and Kitwai A and B villages in Simanjiro district. To

Citing growing population in the NCA, the Tanzanian government intends to "construct 101 three-bedroom houses, with 336 plots for social services such as schools, health centers and water systems," in Msomera. It claims that "any relocation will be smooth and in compliance with the law of the land... People will be granted title deeds, houses as well as the land for grazing." Reports indicate that TSh1.2 billion [US\$515,907] of public funding has been allocated for the first stage of housing construction in Msomera for resettlement volunteers. 12

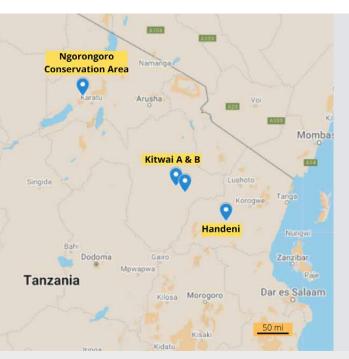
In April 2022, newly appointed Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, Dr. Pindi Chana, visited the Msomera village to view the houses under construction for the resettlement of "volunteers." Dr. Chana expressed satisfaction with the houses being constructed, stating: "Currently the population of Ngorongoro has grown significantly, the Government has decided to create a better living environment outside the park. In this village we have built modern houses, road infrastructure, schools, hospitals and water services so that those who will move to this area voluntarily live a good life like other Tanzanians." <sup>13</sup>

According to the government, those relocating to the area will be provided with a "safe and secure place to live with their



livestock." Alongside the 100 houses under construction in Msomera, additional social services including 10 secondary school classrooms and 6 primary school classrooms will be provided.

The Tanzanian government is pushing the narrative that "volunteers" from the NCA are ready to relocate to these new areas and benefit from new housing and social services. However, a fact-finding mission conducted in March-April 2022 reveals discrepancies between government promises and the situation on the ground. Working with partners in Tanzania, the Oakland Institute has reviewed resettlement plans and identified several serious issues with the resettlement process and feasibility of the selection sites.



#### Overview of Resettlement Sites<sup>16</sup>

#### MSOMERA, HANDENI DISTRICT

- Registered in 1992 under the Village Land Act
- Current population: 6,500 people
- Estimated 719,247 livestock (goats, cows, sheep, donkeys)
- Distance from NCA: ~390 km (~586 km by road)<sup>17</sup>

#### KITWAI (A & B VILLAGES), SIMANJIRO DISTRICT

- Registered under the Village Land Act in 1974 (Kitwai A) and in 1977 (Kitwai B)
- Current population: 4,181 people (Kitwai A) and 5,300 people (Kitwai B)
- Kitwai A & B total livestock estimate: 52,650 (goats, cows, sheep, donkeys)
- Distance from NCA: ~273 km (394 km by road)<sup>18</sup>



#### **CONCERNS AROUND THE RESETTLEMENT SITES**

### Failure to Consult Communities in Msomera and Kitwai

According to the Msomera community members, the government failed to comprehensively consult with them before deciding to relocate Ngorongoro residents into their village. Only after construction had already commenced, the government allegedly informed the Handeni District Council the houses being constructed would be for NCA residents who have "volunteered" for resettlement. Similarly, in Kitwai B, the village ward and district councilors had no knowledge that their village had been chosen as a resettlement site. Crucially, no social or environmental impact assessments appear to have been conducted prior to choosing the relocation areas.

The government stated that residents of Msomera "expressed their readiness to receive their counterparts," and were "extending appreciation that their arrival will contribute to the improvement of infrastructure and social services including water, health and electricity." But it was after the construction had begun that Prime Minister Majaliwa called on local government officials to meet with residents of the village to raise awareness on the issue, 20 illustrating how locals are being told what is happening instead of being consulted and granting their approval of the plans. When a traditional leader in the village was interviewed about the plans, he said: "We didn't agree with the government plan to give our land to Ngorongoro people but we have no objection on that, as the government authority is too big, we can't fight [against them]."

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—TRADITIONAL LEADER, MSOMERA VILLAGE



Houses under construction in the Msomera village for NCA residents to relocate.



#### **Lack of Adequate Water and Grazing Land**

In both Msomera and Kitwai, lack of water is a very serious issue that already impacts communities living in these areas. In Msomera, there is only one water collection point powered by a generator to pump water for diverse demands, but there are shortages of water during dry seasons. Residents in Kitwai suffer from water shortages for both human and livestock use as portions of the supply contain too much salt for safe consumption. In Kitwai A and B, recent droughts have had a devastating impact on livestock—over 6,000 livestock perished in the 2021 drought.

The government began drilling for water on March 20, 2022 in Msomera's Orkung sub-village, about two kilometers from Msomera. Despite initial efforts, water has reportedly not yet been found or provided to the area. Jumaa Aweso, the Minister for Water, claims TSh300 million [US\$128,976] had been disbursed for a dam project capable of storing 700 million liters of water in Msomera. In May 2022, The Oakland Institute requested information from the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA) in charge of the project regarding the timeline on the dam and whether social or environmental impact assessments had been conducted. At the time of writing, no response had been received and details of the planned dam have not been independently verified.





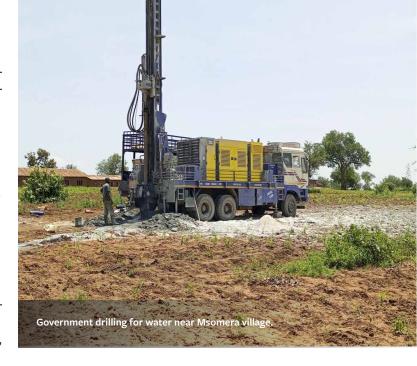
Given Msomera's dry climate, herders are often forced to take their livestock to the borders of nearby regions, including Bagamoyo district found in Pwani region. This raises concerns about the availability of adequate grazing land for an influx of residents in the area.

Additionally, several invasive species of plants unpalatable to livestock have been identified in grazing lands adjacent to Kitwai A and B. By suppressing the growth of native plants these invasive species reduce the available food sources for livestock, while posing an additional risk if consumed.

#### **Concerns Over Promised Social Services**

The government's "Proposed Resettlement for Villages within the NCA" plan specified that: "an incentive scheme including provision of [decent] houses in areas, where people will settle, establishment of social facilities for education, health, water supply and electricity will also be a continuous process starting from 2020. The plan explicitly states: "people will not move to new settlements until residential houses and social services have been provided."

Promises of social services—including additional education, health, water and electricity have not yet materialized in the Msomera or Kitwai relocation sites and do not appear to be on schedule to accommodate the number of resettlement "volunteers." While Minister Chana stated the regional government



in collaboration with other stakeholders are in the process of "ensuring that energy services, water, education, health, communication and roads are strengthened in the village bordering other villages of Mzeri, Kibaya, Wagi and Misima,"<sup>22</sup> these have not yet emerged. As it currently stands, the relocation sites are located far from basic services including hospitals and veterinary services. The timeline for completion of these social services remains unclear.



#### **Risk of Conflict**

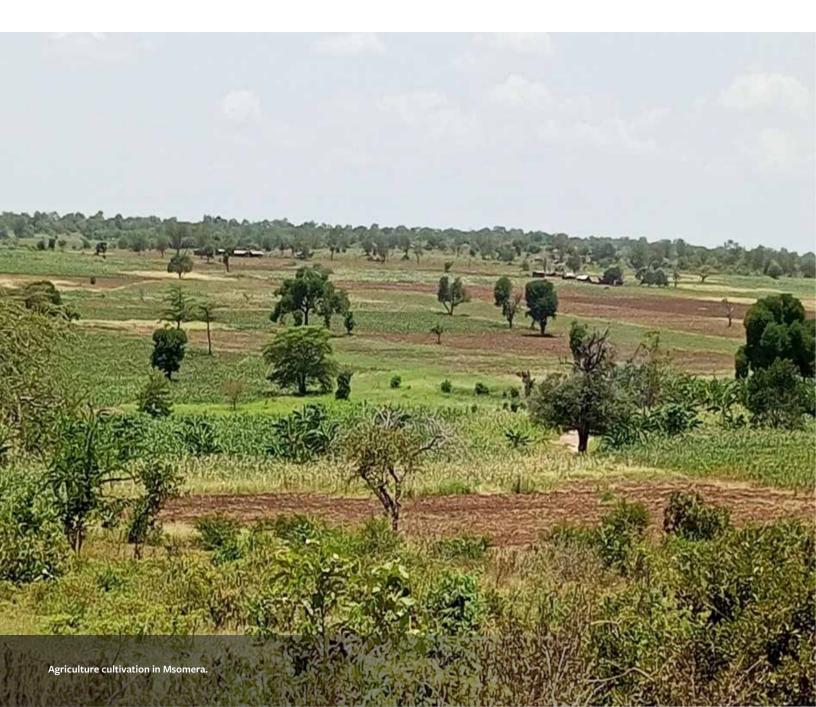
The risk of conflict cannot be overlooked given the fact that local communities present in the relocation sites were not consulted prior to the decision and the areas suffer from inadequate water and grazing land. Increased competition over scarce water and grazing resources has the potential to escalate into violence during increasingly frequent drought periods. Villages surrounding Kitwai B have

reportedly already experienced instances of conflict between pastoralists searching for grazing land. Increasing the number of people in the area will not improve the situation, especially given the absence of consultation and consent from populations currently living in the resettlement areas. There are also potential conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists.

#### **Incomplete Resettlement Plans**

According to the government's "Proposed Resettlement for Villages within the NCA" plan, 52,000 people from about 6,000 households in the NCA would be attracted to voluntarily resettle outside of the area. With only 100 houses under construction, the plan for the overwhelming majority of remaining "volunteers" remains largely unknown. Prime Minister Majaliwa has

stated that these houses are part of "stage one" and that the government has surveyed "2,500 plots and set aside 1,700 acres for grazing and farming" in Msomera alone. Despite these claims, the aforementioned issues with the government's current relocation sites raise serious doubts on its capacity to fulfill the lofty promises to the remaining "volunteers."



## THE MYTH OF WIDESPREAD "VOLUNTEERS" AWAITING RESETTLEMENT

Despite the Tanzanian government's claims that there are large numbers of NCA residents awaiting resettlement, Maasai communities have waged a steadfast struggle against displacement from their ancestral lands. According to Prime Minister Majaliwa, over 400 individuals have already signed up for relocation, <sup>25</sup> a figure that is heavily disputed by Maasai communities. <sup>26</sup>

In April 2022, a letter written by community leaders in the NCA was sent to the government and its main donors. Signed by over 11,000 Maasai community members, the letter clearly stresses their demand to remain in the NCA, stating: "This is not the first time that we are fighting to secure our rights and protect the lives of our people—we need a permanent solution and we need it now. We will not leave; Not Now, Not Ever!" 27

Indigenous residents recognize the high number of migrants into the NCA and largely support their relocation. However,

current resettlement plans are top-down and do not grant authority to the local communities to control the process. As a result, under the guise of relocating "volunteers" from the NCA, Maasai who have stewarded the land for generations risk being forcibly removed under this pretense.

Past attempts to attract volunteers for resettlement have largely failed. In an earlier attempt to reduce human population in the NCA, 159 families were resettled from the NCA to Jema village (Sale division, Ngorongoro district) between 2007 and 2010. While some social services were developed, they were quickly taken over by other nearby populations while the relocated NCA families faced harassment as "new-comers." As much of the land and services promised were not available to these families, they returned to the NCA or found other places to live.

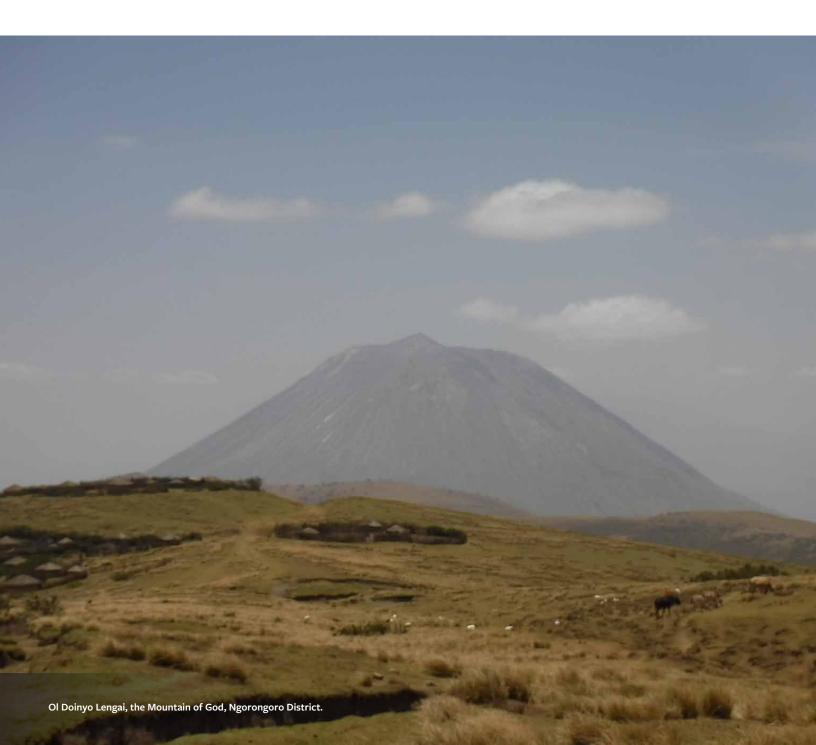


#### THE WAY FORWARD

For centuries, the Maasai have been the occupants and guardians of the land in East Africa's Great Rift Valley. Their lifestyle, livelihoods, and culture are dependent on the thriving surrounding ecosystems. This kind of long-term care and conservation should be rewarded and lauded. Instead, the Maasai are fighting for their lives—facing violence, starvation, eviction, and disease, as investors and tourism enterprises seek to profit off of their stewardship.

Maasai also face restrictions on where they can graze their livestock; access water, and practice subsistence cultivation within the NCA—leading to starvation. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee remains complicit, as it has failed to use its leverage and influence over the Tanzanian government to ensure respect for Indigenous rights within a World Heritage Site.

It is imperative that Indigenous residents of the NCA are not just consulted but given substantial authority over any resettlement schemes or changes to land use regulations. The dominant framing used by international conservation agencies and Tanzanian government departments—that the NCA must either prioritize conservation or Indigenous livelihoods—ignores the evidence that empowering Indigenous communities is the most effective way forward to ensure environmental sustainability.



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