Fact Finding Report on the Northern Rangelands Trust's Operations in Community Conservancies in Isiolo County



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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

It is important to understand how community members are involved in the process of setting up and managing community wildlife conservancies; the benefits and inherent challenges in the conservancies, and how the grand conservancy initiative has shaped local economy, prevailing security scenario, the integration of pastoralist communities as well as the governance structures created to run them. Today, the community-based conservation greatly affects pastoralists' access to resources, their security, land rights, representation, their cultures and heritage.

The biggest proponent of this model is the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), an organization founded in 2004 and which is greatly funded by a number of European countries and the United States as well as international NGOs such as The Nature Conservancy (TNC), private trusts and rich people in the West. As a result, the NRT has managed to set up 35 conservancies across Northern and Coastal regions that cover a whopping 44,000 square kilometers or over 10 million hectares (i.e. about 8% of total land surface in Kenya). These conservancies are mainly in remote places where the Kenya government has little or no footprint. The NRT has been trying to fill the void by altering and adding to its initial conservation mandate a number of activities including security, prevention of cattle rustling, meeting the needs of the communities and livestock marketing. However, there have been a lot of complaints from communities who say that NRT has been violating their land and human rights. They accuse the organization of inspiring and facilitating inter-communal conflicts and increasingly imposing restrictions on how members of the communities exploit natural resources found in their ancestral lands.

It is out of this hue and cry that the fact-finding mission in Billiqo-Buulessa Community Conservancy was conducted. The exercise was carried out by a combined group of members of the Isiolo-based Waaso Professional Forum, Boran Council of Elders, the *Sisi kwa Sisi* organization formed by Students from the School of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure at the Kenyatta University, journalists as well as representatives from the Errant Native Movement.

The mission was informed by the following:

- Claims that the community in Billiqo-Buulessa Conservancy has lost much of its grazing
 areas and land rights following a move by the NRT to set up camp sites in the area. It
 was important to establish whether this was the true state of affairs bearing in mind that
 livestock production remains the most important livelihood activity for the community
 and that any tourism activity or other economic undertaking can only supplement, but
 not replace livestock husbandry;
- 2. That since the establishment of the Conservancy, there has been an increase in human-wildlife conflict resulting from a large number of wildlife using grazing areas and water resources in the conservancy as well as introduction of non-resident lions there;
- 3. That there has been an escalation in cattle rustling and deadly conflicts between the Boran and the Samburu Communities leading to the killing of many people and looting of large numbers of livestock. There were claims that this was inspired, instigated and facilitated by the NRT. There were also claims that the conflicts escalated with the

- creation of the Conservancy and that the NRT is biased towards the needs of the Samburu community over those of the Boran Community;
- 4. That there have been unexplained disappearance of a number of people in different parts of Isiolo and also within the Billigo-Buulessa and Gootu-Nakurpat conservancies;
- 5. Claims of corruption and suspicion that NRT has compromised elected leaders as well as the personnel in-charge of security and administration in the Marti Sub-County and the larger Isiolo County;
- 6. Claims that most members of the community in Billiqo-Buulessa Conservancy had no say in the decisions pertaining to the formation or management of the Conservancy and that they now want NRT out of the area;
- 7. There were also claims that the community's opposition to its operations has greatly infuriated the NRT which has resulted to 'punishing' the community by unleashing the highly-trained NRT rangers as well as *morans* from Samburu in order to make the community toe the line; and,
- 8. That NRT is involved in systematic destruction of the livelihoods of local families and the violation of human rights and land rights of the community through facilitating cattle raids by the Samburu *morans*, and denying members of the community the right of assembly and expression as enshrined in the Constitution as well as a number of other pieces of legislation.

Findings

- The joint team gathered firsthand information on how NRT had been violating the rights of the community and how it misuses the Isiolo County Security apparatus to harass and intimidate people opposed to its operations.
- The very formation of the two conservancies in Isiolo flouted the law and borders on fraud because neither were the provisions of the defunct Trust Lands Act nor the Community Lands Act adhered to. Although the NRT appears to have merely invoked the Wildlife Management and Conservation Act, this was mischievous in that the organization's operations are not grounded on the Act itself and ought to have been covered by relevant land legislation too.
- NRT has not only altered the power and traditional governance structures of the communities in the North but actively promotes recurrent inter-community conflict in Isiolo County. There are reports that the conservancies' security apparatus set up by the NRT responded to incidents of livestock rustling only in cases where the victims were from the Samburu community. Since the Biliqo-Bulesa Conservancy was formed in 2006, the Boran community has experienced as many as ten raids conducted by Samburu morans, during which more than seventy people were killed and thousands of livestock stolen. From numerous interviews with past Board officials of the conservancy, and other community members, it emerged that fifty nine of the people were killed by the

Samburu Morans who were assisted by a specially-trained NRT rangers who travelled to the area of attack in NRT-branded vehicles. Four of the victims died after the young men from the Boran community engaged in counter attacks.

- The government too was not an innocent bystander as far as inter-communal conflict in the North is concerned. Rather, the government too has a hand in the conflict. This was evident during a second visit to Billiqo-Buulessa, Gootu and Kina areas. The team was joined by officials from InformAction, a human rights organization that makes and uses film and community discussions to encourage ordinary people to speak out and take action against violation of their rights. InformAction screened the film, *No Man's Land Ni Yetu*, which it produced in 2012. Community members watched attentively and in utter silence and disbelief as they absorbed how the government systematically arms different communities in the North; the utter neglect and marginalization of the communities there the neglect and the ongoing displacement of local population to pave way for wildlife conservation.
- Over the last five years, different parts of Isiolo have experienced disappearances of a number of people from the Boran community. This has captured the attention of people across the country especially after elected leaders recently took up the issue and the mainstream media covered the story of six bodies that were found in Tsavo National Park. As the team went around Isiolo and interviewed different people, they expressed suspicions that this is a highly secretive operation involving unnamed KWS and NRT personnel who were alleged to have been involved in poaching of elephants and other big game.
- There appears to be a well-orchestrated scheme to weaken and destroy traditional institutions and facilities in protected areas of Isiolo to pave way for their handover either to NRT or to foreign entities. This was evident as the team toured the Shaba National Reserve which has little or no security in the park. The team came across an unmanned watch tower and dilapidated structures in the Rangers Quarters at one of the gates of Shaba. Former rangers of the defunct Isiolo County Council told the team that lack of security in the park has been part of a deliberate effort to destroy the park and hence prime it for eventual takeover by private companies. Reports show that the scheme started in mid-2000s when African Parks, a South Africa-based company owned by the late Dutch Billionaire, Paul Van Vlissingen, expressed interests in acquiring some of the protected areas in a number of African countries including Kenya. As narrated in The Big Conservation Lie book, the company acquired parks in Zambia under controversial circumstances but it did not succeed in Kenya even after some of the top officials in the Kenya Wildlife Service travelled to South Africa to meet Vlissingen. However, it seems that Africa Parks did not give up because it has since made moves to acquire Shaba. The Isiolo County government appeared to have warmed up to the idea until a group of local people opposed to it went to court.

- Former conservancy committee members, the elders, women and the youths claimed that they were not fully aware of the implications of setting up the conservancy. From the interviews, it was very clear that most did not have adequate understanding of the nature of NRT's operations. They claimed that although an agreement between NRT and a few appointed elders of the community was signed, they have neither seen the agreement nor are they aware of its provisions.
- Apart from giving the Biliqo-Bulesa conservancy a vehicle, constructing two substandard classrooms, a mud-walled nursery school and teacher's houses, the NRT has reneged on most of the promises it made to the community prior to the formation of the conservancies. In any case, the organization engineered the sacking and replacement of members of the first board after they demanded to know what came of the promises made to the community. Those interviewed added that finances meant for the Conservancy were banked in an NRT account and that the Conservancy has only held two annual general meetings since it was formed. Further, they said that past and current conservancy board members have no powers and do not even know what income was earned by the conservancy.
- Community members expressed suspicions that NRT is interested in securing minerals' rich areas within Isiolo County. This was after the organization went out of its way to secure areas suspected to have precious minerals. Community members in Billiqo-Buulessa area reported that although the conservancy was started solely for conservation purposes and was under the NRT, the Chinese had somehow managed to start mining *mica* and other undeclared minerals especially at Kula Maawe outskirts before they were chased out and given a strong warning never to return. However, the Team was not able to establish the connection between the Chinese miners and NRT.
- The delay by the government to implement the Community Land Act as well as the failure by the National Land Commission and the Isiolo County Government to initiate a process that would lead to registration of community land has given the NRT adequate room to violate the rights of the community over its land. From the interviews, it also became clear that NRT has capitalized on the lack of awareness of the land rights of the inhabitants of the Conservancy to violate their rights. However, the community protested after the NRT unilaterally identified and embarked on the construction of five tourist camps in resource-rich areas of the Charri Rangeland.
- NRT and the government have totally disregarded Boran traditional resource management system. For one, the government has not only brought in a parallel governance structures and resource management system but has also continued to target the community's land for the construction of the Mega-infrastructure project under the Vision 2030 development programme without consulting the community

members. There has also been intrusion of the community's land by the NRT and neighbouring communities from other counties. Indeed, the Team came across a large number of herders from other communities who were not only herding thousands of camels, cattle, sheep and goats but had also established temporary settlements there. The community's leadership has not been of much help in this regard. It is with this in mind that the Boran Council of Elders passed a resolution that barred other communities from other counties inhabiting areas outside of the municipalities because the latter have not been following the Boran community's code of ethics neither have they been adhering to their traditional resource management systems.

• However, the Community has, to a certain extent, continued to use a well-established governance and resource management system. What the community has been asking for is the promotion and strengthening of their customary laws on access, use and management of the rangeland resources with the aim of improving natural resource management and empowering local governance institutions. It has also called for the quick adoption of the *D'eeda* (a traditional ecological management policies) rules as part of Isiolo County Legislation.

Recommendations

General Recommendation

The suggested way forward partly comes from the community, the resolutions made by the Boran Council of Elders, Waaso Professional Forum and elected leaders as well as observations by outsider agencies such as members of the Errant Natives Movement and InformAction. It should be noted from the outset that members of the community have the primary role in protecting and managing their resources. On their part, outsider agencies working with the community cannot, and are not interested in filling in the void once NRT moves out of the area. Rather, they are interested in helping to raise the technical capacity of the local people as well as the partnering institutions such as the Isiolo County Government in order to return the rights of the community to its land, and other resources and in setting up an outfit (or outfits) that can enable the community to conserve and benefit from the biodiversity in the Charri Rangeland. Most importantly, all the stakeholders will need to enable the community to jealously guard and protect its land against the powerful vested interests, to entrench and strengthen its traditional resource management system (i.e. D'eeda System)1 and to use the land in ways that can be self-sustaining over the long run. It is also important to consider how to address the observed (and rising) pressures on the land emanating from rise in human and livestock numbers, uncompromised immigration of other communities into Isiolo rangelands,

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¹ Refer to: The Gumi Gaayo Assembly of the Boran: A traditional Legislative organ and its relationship to the Ethiopian State and a modernizing World. Abdullahi Shongolo, 1994. Zietschrift Für Ethnologie 119 (27-58).

development of mega-infrastructure projects, expansion of urban areas as well as awareness of impact of climate change that will rise with time.

Specific Recommendations

1. Outlawing of NRT's Activities in Isiolo County.

There is a confluence of perspective between the Isiolo County Government; Boran Council of Elders, Elected leaders, Waaso Professional Forum and majority of community members as far as the operation of NRT in the two conservancies is concerned. During various forums, all these stakeholders have either passed resolutions or have publicly called for the cessation of NRT's activities in Isiolo County. However, NRT is yet to do so and has instead attempted to divide the communities further by organizing and facilitating protest marches against the attempt to kick it out from the area. In this regard, the Isiolo County Government needs to formalize the decision by officially writing to NRT to ask it to move out of Isiolo. The letter ought to be copied to the relevant arms of the National Government and to other stakeholders. This ought to be done expeditiously in order to avoid worsening the security scenario and threats in the two conservancies.

2. Adoption of mixed use conservation model

NRT's conservation model, in which the communities in the North are kept apart from the wildlife that live in their midst, is an artificial mode of land use that exacerbates, rather than harmonize, human-wildlife co-existence. People have co-habited these areas along with the wildlife without conflict for many centuries. With the new NRT conservation model, where preference is given to wildlife rather than livestock, people see the wildlife as a predatory enemy and regard them as belonging to foreigners. Many people have been moved from established settlements by NRT claiming it as corridors for wildlife movement. Such model has changed people's perception towards wildlife thereby creating human-wildlife conflict to an unprecedented scale. It also creates exclusion besides diminishing pasturelands. This model ought to be replaced with mixed use model that will allow humans, livestock and wildlife to use the land concurrently. Already, the Isiolo County government has shown interest in encouraging the community to set up its own wildlife conservancies. To see it through, this idea should be taken up by the Boran Council of Elders and the Waaso Professional Forum who should explore the partners to bring on board for purposes of raising the community's capacity; the cost-benefit analysis; how to seek out potential investors as well as legal and technical advice over how to write agreements with potential tourist investors.

3. Formation of an interim committee

In order to effectively protect the vast Charri Rangeland, the community inhabiting the two conservancies of Billiqo-Buulessa and Gootu-Nakurpatt ought to organize additional meetings in order to agree on how to protect the land. In traditional setup, the community have *D'eeda*

Council of Elders mandated to manage the pasturelands and its resources. This institution has now been replaced with NRT management committee majority of who are not conversant with traditional customary laws and regulations. Members of the Errant Natives Movement implore the community to form an interim committee that would be in-charge of mobilising the community members to attend meetings, meeting with other stakeholders and for the purpose of registering a community trust or association. The interim committee ought to have trusted members of the community with membership coming from elders, religious leaders, women and the youths, among others who are conversant with traditional land management policies. Once the Trust or Association is formed, then the community ought to elect the office bearers.

4. Effective protection, planning and Management of the land

To protect the land, elders from the two conservancies of Isiolo ought to identify their boundaries jointly with younger community members and plant special trees or use known landmarks to delineate the boundaries. Once the community has agreed on the membership of the conservancies, then it should go ahead, with the help of relevant arms of the County Government, to register the land under the Community Land Act and get the relevant ownership documents. It will be important for the community to continue with communal ownership so as to guarantee the continuation of the extensive livestock production and to guard against the sale or leasing of the land to outsiders by corrupt individuals or groups. With the assistance of the County Government, it is recommended that they engage the services of land use planners to plan the different settlements in order to guarantee controlled growth of these areas, harmonious use of the land as well as maintenance of peace, security and restoration of resilience.

5. Promotion and legal protection of the *D'eeda* System

The *D'eeda* institution is a resource management system that has worked well for the Boran Community for ages. The system is a complete cultural way of life which takes into account the environment, wildlife, livestock as well as human welfare. It also offers options for drought situation and other natural calamities². Although the system is largely in place, it has been weakened by the adoption of 'alien' institutions by the NRT, where decisions are made unilaterally as opposed to group decision making, and as well by the empowerment of politicians, chiefs and other members of the county administration, continued loss of traditional authority of the elders as well as immigration of other communities into Boran-dominated areas. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency in order to restore the communities' resilience against adverse effects of climate change. In this regard, there is a need to strengthen,

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² Abdullahi Shongolo, 1994. Adaptive Responses of the Pastoralists to the drought of 1991/1992 in Northern Kenya. A comparative study of the Boran and Gabra Pastoralists of Moyale District. A Consultancy Report on Social, Economic and Cultural changes caused by the drought: Marsabit Development Programme/GTZ; in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Development and Marketing. 210p.1994. University of Bielefeld: Institute of Development Research Centre.

legalise and entrench the *D'eeda* resource management system so that it can be officially recognized and binding by both the National and County governments. In this regard, the Boran Council of Elders ought to compel the elected leaders to push for the enactment of the *D'eeda* Regulations by the Isiolo County Assembly so that they become part and parcel of the county legislation.

6. How to tap and benefit from the land

Usually communities in Kenya do not benefit from the resources they own because they are either not well organized or have no clue on how they ought to benefit. As aforementioned, the communities in Isiolo can overcome this by getting themselves organized into registered trusts and associations. Once they do this, it is important to have meetings to discuss and decide on what resources ought to be left for use by the community and which ones should be leased to investors. In this regard, it is important for the Boran Council of Elders, the D'eeda Council and other traditional institutions -with the help of professionals from Isiolo and elsewhere- to identify, delineate and map out the key resources the communities need for its livestock-based economy now and into the future. Then together with other members of the community, these stakeholders ought to discuss and decide which areas they can concession to investors. It is important to also decide whether the communities will be merely getting benefits in terms of cash from annual leases, employment of a few local people and investment in schools, water and health projects or they would wish to jointly co-own with the investors the companies that invest in tourism, mining, ranching, agriculture or nature-based ventures. The community should also boost its capacity over time so that they can eventually take over these enterprises. This should go hand-in-hand with rain harvesting at household and community levels, considering the possibility of permaculture farming on parts of the land and especially closer to settlements and setting up nature-based enterprises as well as value-addition ventures.

7. Promotion of Intra-Community and inter-community peace and cohesion

It is very important for the Boran Council of Elders and other traditional institutions to take up the role of bringing the community together so as to do away with the current intra-community divisions and animosity created by the NRT. There have also been suggestions that to create peace between the Boran, Somali, Turkana, Rendille, Samburu and Pokot communities, there is need for other stakeholder to organize and facilitate a series of peace meetings bringing together five elders from each of the communities to discuss how to attain lasting peace, role of communities in conservation and other issues of common concern³.

³ Pastoralism and Politics in Northern Kenya & Southern Ethiopia: Abdullahi Shongolo with Professor Dr. Günther Schlee. Published 2012. James Currey, London. ISBN 978-1-84701-036-0.

8. Legal action against NRT over the killing of people

The community, through the Boran Council of Elders, Waaso Professionals and with the assistance from members of the Errant Natives Movement and relevant human rights organizations ought to take the NRT to court over the killing of more than seventy people and loss of thousands of heads of livestock in Billiqo-Buulessa Conservancy. To commence the process, the Waaso Professional Forum ought to liaise with Errant Natives, InformAction and other human rights organizations to accurately record the details of all the people killed at the hand of NRT rangers, to get medical records and death certificates and to contract committed lawyers to take the matter to court.

1.0 Introduction

ommunity-based conservation has expanded rapidly across Northern Kenya, driven by huge funding from foreign private and governmental agencies. However, a number of challenges have arisen, which are attributed partly by the sheer size of the geographical area under 'community conservation' and the application of a single conservation model across a region that has diverse ethnicity, geographically and ecologically varied terrain. The challenges have, however, been downplayed and the success of the initiatives emphasized. This is not surprising given the sheer scale of donor investment in the initiatives. As a result, there has been limited effort to establish the amount of land under this model of conservation; the impact of on-going conservation effort on the livelihoods of pastoralists and how the conservation activities affect the movement of pastoralists and their livestock, security as well as access to pastures, water and other resources.

It is important to understand how communities are involved in the process of setting up and managing community wildlife conservancies; the benefits and inherent challenges in the conservancies, and how the grand conservancy initiative has shaped local economy, prevailing security scenario, the integration of pastoralist communities as well as the governance structures created to run them. Today, the community-based conservation greatly affects pastoralists' access to resources, their security, land rights, representation, their cultures and heritage.

It is also important to consider that Northern Kenya is a region characterized by proliferation of small arms as documented by a number of Small arms surveys. It is also characterized by official neglect and occasional inter-community conflicts that are mainly driven by competition for resources and which worsen whenever there are droughts. Recently though the region has seen unprecedented expansion of infrastructure and an upsurge of conservation and tourism activities. This has resulted in loss of pasture or wildlife habitats. In Isiolo County, the development of a resort city and 'growth area' has increased land prices and escalated speculation and subdivision as investors seek to benefit.

2.0 Background to the Fact Finding Mission

Since the early 2000s, there has been a rise in the involvement of communities, and especially those inhabiting wildlife dispersal areas, in the national conservation program. This was inspired by the need to preserve ecosystems and wildlife habitats that happen to be on lands owned and held by local communities. The effort was entrenched in law following the review and enactment of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act in 2013. Championing the model have been a group of conservation NGOs and personalities who say that 70% of Kenya's wildlife is found outside national parks and reserves and that the survival of protected areas largely depended on the preservation of vast habitats and lands held by communities and private land owners.

The biggest proponent of this model is the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), an organization founded in 2004 and which is greatly funded by a number of European countries and the United States as well as international NGOs such as The Nature Conservancy (TNC), private trusts and rich people in the West. As a result, the NRT has managed to set up 35 conservancies across Northern and Coastal regions that cover a whopping 44,000 square kilometers or over 10 million hectares (i.e. about 8% of total land surface in Kenya). These conservancies are mainly in remote places where the Kenya government has little or no footprint. The NRT has been trying to fill the void by altering and adding to its initial conservation mandate a number of activities including security, prevention of cattle rustling, meeting the needs of the communities and livestock marketing. However, there have been a lot of complaints from communities who say that NRT has been violating their land and human rights. They accuse the organization of inspiring and facilitating inter-community conflict and increasingly imposing restrictions on how members of communities exploit the natural their resources found in their lands.

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 livestock production remains the most important livelihood activity for the community
 and that any tourism activity or other economic undertaking can only supplement, but
 not replace livestock husbandry;
- That since the establishment of the Conservancy, there has been an increase in humanwildlife conflict resulting from a large number of wildlife using grazing areas and water resources in the conservancy as well as introduction of non-resident lions there;
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 by the NRT. There were also claims that the conflicts escalated with the creation of the
 Conservancy and that the NRT is biased towards the needs of the Samburu community
 over those of the Boran Community;
- Claims of corruption and suspicion that NRT has compromised elected leaders as well as the personnel in-charge of security and administration in the Marti Sub-County and the larger Isiolo County;
- Claims that most members of the community in Billiqo-Buulessa Conservancy had no say in the decisions pertaining to the formation or management of the Conservancy and that they now want NRT out of the area;

- There were also claims that the community's opposition to its operations has greatly annoyed the NRT which has resulted to 'punishing' the community by unleashing the highly-trained NRT rangers as well as *morans* from Samburu in order to make the community toe the line;
- That NRT is involved in systematic destruction of the livelihoods of local families and
 the violation of human rights and land rights of the community through facilitating
 cattle raids by the Samburu *morans*, and denying members of the community the right of
 assembly and expression as enshrined in the Constitution as well as a number of other
 pieces of legislation; and,
- That the NRT has reneged on the promises it made before the establishment of the Conservancy and that the community has consequently realized minimal benefits over the thirteen years since the conservancy was formed.

3.0 Findings

3.1 NRT's Violation of the Rights of the Community

The joint team experienced firsthand how NRT had been violating the rights of the community. The team visited the Billiqo-Conservancy between January 26 and 29, 2019. Prior to the tour, the team was informed that NRT had, on ten different occasions, used its influence within the security and administration establishments in Isiolo County and especially in the Marti Sub-county to frustrate the desire by the community to hold any meeting to deliberate on whether to continue with the conservancy or not. Indeed, when the team visited, it was evident that even conducting the fact-finding mission was risky.

According to community members, the NRT had earlier sent its officials who would travel in the organization's vehicles inciting and buying off some members of the area in order to unleash chaos during the planned community meeting. To avoid what would have otherwise become an ugly encounter, the team decided to hold long discussions with members of the community on the evening of January 26th at Billiqo Market during which they narrated how the conservancy was started and the harrowing experiences they have experienced at the hand of NRT rangers and the Samburu raiders. There were also claims that the NRT has introduced lions into the conservancy which have been killing livestock and attacking and injuring some of the residents.

NRT Led to increased Human Wild Life Conflict.

There were claims from the people interviewed by the team that the NRT has introduced unique lions into the conservancy and their grazing areas which have been attacking the residents. The Community claimed that the lions are not the normal lions they are used to seeing in the areas but different "white colored" that attack human beings instead of animals. The normal lions in the area scavenge for domestic and wild animals.

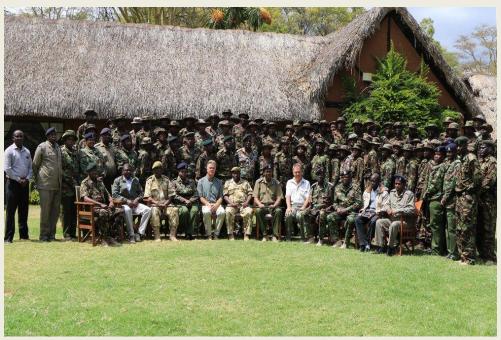
Community members reported that there was a time some white men came looking for sites to establish lion sanctuaries and they never agreed to their idea. From the communities' point of view, it appears around seven lions that feed only on human flesh and some snakes have been introduced into the area to threaten their survival and existence. They feel this is done deliberately to displace them and stop them from practicing nomadism. The Fact finding team was able to establish that there are cases of lions' attack on the rise in the area.



Two people were attacked by NRT lions at Malka Chaachanne in Biliq. Here is one of the victims, Abdullahi Diida Koote (pictured). The other was Hussein Ali. Both were attacked on 2nd. Feb, 2019 and were treated at Marti hospital.

On the morning of January 27th, the team visited and interviewed some of the family members of the victims killed during the Samburu raids and counter-raids by the Boran. Many of the interviews were held in their homes at the Buulessa Market. As this was going on, the team saw rowdy young people being ferried to the venue of the meeting by land cruisers belonging to the NRT and the Billiqo-Buulessa Conservancy who shouted threats to members of the team saying they would kick them out of the area. Later, the rowdy youth succeeded in disrupting the meeting. They were led by Guraaca Guyyo Karayyu (a.k.a Mapengo), the Head teacher of Diima Ado Primary School in Komu division and Jaarso D'iba Taari, Deputy Head teacher of Diima Ado Primary School. At some point, Guraaca heckled and insulted the meeting

conveners. Being a school day, the two were supposed to be in school but had instead chosen to lead the chaotic group.



At some point, the NRT Rangers were given additional training by the police

On their part, the police from the Marti Police station were ferried to the venue ostensibly to keep peace. However, the police seemed more interested in finding out whether the conveners of the meeting had a permit. In addition, the police were unwilling to stop the rowdy youth from disrupting the meeting even after finding out that the conveners had indeed taken necessary steps as is required by the law. Eventually, the police stopped the meeting and ordered everyone to disperse which greatly pleased the rowdy youth.



Photos of NRT Land cruisers ferrying rowdy youths to the venue of the meeting.





Community meeting before it was disrupted by youths ferried to the venue in a vehicle belonging to the NRT conservancy.

The Acting Deputy County Commissioner (DCC), James Miring'u, and the Assistant County Commissioner (ACC), Njeru Ngochi, were of no much help either. The DCC and the ACC were evidently not in control. They also claimed that they were both new to the area and were not aware that the Samburu have invaded the lands belonging to the Boran from where they conduct frequent raids. They also expressed ignorance of the connection between insecurity and NRT operations in the Conservancy. The Fact-Finding Team found it unconvincing that the two are not aware that tens of people have been killed during the raids and that the Samburu people had invaded a big chunk of the Boran people's land. The Team concluded that the two were either not in control of the security situation in the area or are compromised by the NRT.

Isiolo County Leaders' Meeting.

What followed was a leaders meeting convened by an NGO after the Fact Finding Team's visit which raised attention of the public outcry from the communities in Isiolo County.

Brief on the Public Meeting Held to Discuss Operations of the Northern Rangelands Trust in Biliqo-Buulessa Conservancy.

Leaders Present

- **1.** Mohamed Sampile –Isiolo County Secretary
- **2.** Fatuma Waare Duulo –Senator
- 3. Hassan Odha -Member of Parliament
- **4.** Rehema Diida Jaldeessa -Women Representative
- **5.** Ali Diima Member of County Assembly
- **6.** Hussein Goolica –Speaker, Isiolo County Assembly
- 7. Abshiro Halake –Nominated Senator
- 8. Isiolo County Commissioner
- **9.** *Isiolo County Police Commander*
- 10. Isiolo County DCI
- **11.** KWS Representative.

NRT Officials Present

- 1. Ture Boru Conservation Manager.
- 2. Dr. Tuqa Jirmo

The meeting was held at the compound of Billiqo Banda Women Group facility. Initially, the NRT had planned to have a closed-door meeting of only 100 people. The organization had locked out most members of the community from accessing the venue. But this was strongly opposed by the Senator, Fatuma Waare Duulo, who said that everyone interested needed to attend as the meeting was about land issues. The rangers manning the gate were forced to open it allowing everyone to attend the meeting. During the entire meeting, there was a lot of tension and heckling by agitated members of the community, most of whom shouted down any speaker who supported NRT's operations in the conservancy. There was also applause by a few people for those in support of NRT operations.

Programme of events.

Hon. Rehema, Women rep. was the MC. She asked those complaining against NRT operations to appoint two male elders, a woman and one youth representative. Likewise, she asked those in support of NRT to appoint similar number of representatives to speak.

NRT Supporters' Sentiments

Both the NRT supporters and those opposed were given four slots to speak. Largely, those in support of NRT's operations had nothing substantial to say apart from praising the organization for bringing benefits to the community including employment of about 40 people, a conservancy vehicle and putting up a few classrooms in a local school.

Sentiments of those opposed

The people opposed gave moving narratives of the sufferings the community since NRT set up the conservancy some 13 years ago. They were categorical that they want NRT out of the area for involving itself in the following:

- The secretive nature of the purported agreement made between the NRT and a few members community, which most said they have neither seen nor were aware of what it says;
- Loss of access to much of the community's grazing areas that are now invaded by members of the Samburu community;
- That the NRT abets, promotes and sustains insecurity and conflict between the Borana and Samburu communities and that it has helped Samburu Morans to carry out nine raids that had (by then) resulted in the deaths of sixty three people from the area;
- How the organization has created bad blood and divisions within the community itself;
- How NRT has taken over the most eco-diverse areas in the conservancy without involving the community;
- That the NRT corrupts county administration, the police and both local community leadership and elected leaders, in order to have them on its side. The leaders were accused of not representing the interests of the community and for snubbing a meeting called earlier by the elders to discuss the same issues;

- That NRT gives loans to women and youths to repay with interest which is illegal according to Islamic sharia;
- That the Organization has introduced strange lions in the conservancy which were attacking and injuring the people and killing livestock;
- That people deserted several settlements after NRT restricted their movement claiming the areas were important wildlife movement corridors and that they hindered wildlife's access to rivers;
- That the rangers were under instruction to intimidate all those opposing the operations of the NRT; and,
- That the majority of the community members unanimously resolved the NRT to stop its operation in the entire area.

After the two parties had expressed their sentiments, the MC invited the officials of NRT to respond to the allegations made. The Conservation Manager, Mr. Ture Boru, was given a chance to speak. Boru arrogantly stated that he is in charge of the thirty five community conservancies, Biliqo Buulessa being only a minor one. He then made derogatory remarks that raised the anger of the participants. He narrated how members of Boran community were using his Sakuyye people as a shield in defense of the Samburu morans. The MC had to force him to withdraw the statement and to apologize to the community. Having apologized, he then continued saying; "the claims that NRT had taken over the community land or that it had fenced off any part of it, was not true." He gave credit to the NRT for having assisted the community. He also informed that all board members were elected by the community and that it was a misplaced priority if they had not done much more for the community. Somehow, Boru forgot that he was in-charge of the thirty five community conservancies and informed the audience that the conservancy (i.e. Biliqo-Bulessa) had experienced insecurity and threats from Samburu conservancies (all under his administration) because it did not have adequate manpower and other support. He said Samburu County has many conservancies and hence has been provided with more facilities and resources including vehicles and a large number of rangers employed. This was a clear indication that he too agreed with the allegations made by the community of lack of security and threats posed to them by the NRT rangers from Samburu Conservancy. He urged the community to accept creating more conservancies in order to get more resources to counter the Samburu threat.

On his part, the area MCA, Ali Diima was shouted down by the residents when he proposed that some additional three or five conservancies be started in the area. Interestingly, as he spoke this, the tent under which participants sat was blown off by the wind which was interpreted as a sign that his leadership will eventually come to an end soon for taking an anti-people stand. Dr. Tuqa Jirmo, who said he is only a friend of NRT officials, said that although he does not work directly for the NRT, he reiterated that the idea of the conservancy is a good one and that the locals should point out what they need the NRT to do for them. This attracted uproar by community members who shouted that the NRT should leave the conservancy. It was evident that none of the three speakers managed to convince the audience as to why the NRT operations in the area were of any benefit to the community.

Brief on what leaders said

Some of the leaders were flown into the meeting by a fourteen sitter plane allegedly owned or hired by the NRT. They too were divided on the issues. There were those who tried to convince the community to accept what NRT has been trying to do in the Conservancy. But their remarks attracted angry reactions from most of the people present. When she rose to speak, the Senator, Fatuma Duulo apologized on behalf of the leaders for not catering for the interests of the community and for not guiding it when it signed the agreement with the organization (NRT). She ruled out the endorsement of NRT operations during the meeting and promised to take up the matter by consulting with other leaders so that a way forward can be arrived at. She blamed the leaders and particularly the County Government officials for having not given right decision on behalf of the community. She said the NRT should have consulted the County Government before establishing a conservancy in the area. She said the County Government neglected its role and thus caused conflict between the NRT and the community. She said the BBC community were suffering in silence having lost human lives and extreme poverty meted on them by the Samburu raiders as well as intimidation from NRT rangers and attacks by lions. She also blamed the KWS for having neglected their duty to defend the local community from the marauding lions. There was drama when the County Secretary attempted to snatch the microphone from her. This was after she accused the County Government of involving itself in scandals and gave the example of how it attempted to give the Living Good NGO a Ksh443 million contract to deliver health services in the County. This annoyed members of the community with some daring him to do it again. He appeared to threaten the senator when he said; "we shall soon deal with you", angering the community members who shouted him down. He was also reminded that he is an employee of the County unlike the senator who was elected into office. The meeting was almost in disarray as angry residents demanded the County Secretary to leave. Attempt by the security team to control the crowd was all in vain. However, Hon. Fatuma asked the Security team to note what the County Secretary said and that she was going to take the matter as threat to her life. Hon. Fatuma urged the community to remain patient as the matter was to be discussed further by the leaders in Isiolo and that they would give a way forward to their grievances.

Police Asked to Investigate NRT Officials

The last to speak was the County commissioner though most the people in the shade had already left in protest against the County secretary's provocation. The County Commissioner said he was unaware of all the happenings. He expressed ignorance of what has been taking place saying that he is new in the County and that he is yet to come across the issues raised by the community. The police were asked to investigate false accusations made by NRT and Conservancy officials who recorded a statement at Marti Police Station saying that a group composed of members of the Waso Professional Forum, Journalists, students of Kenyatta University and members of the Errant Native Movement who had toured the conservancy at the end of January were masqueraders from Ethiopia and Somalia who incited the people against NRT. Earlier, many of the speakers had praised the group for supporting the community at the hour of need and for having brought its plight to the attention of a lot of people which culminated in the meeting.

The meeting ended inconclusively and people dispersed murmuring discontented.

Box 1: Police Harassment of People Opposed to NRT

Ali Matmolu was arrested by CID officers after being accused of not supporting NRT's work in Billiqo-Buulessa Conservancy. He was taken to Marti Police Station where he was interrogated for two days. Among the questions the CID officers asked were where he comes from, where he lived and for how



long, number of his children and the livestock he owns and whether his children provides money to him. He was then accused of plotting to destroy a tank put up by the NRT, creating conflict between NRT and the local people and falsely accusing the organization of seizing guns from local home guards. Then the CID officers asked him whether he knew the benefits NRT had brought to the community. "When I said that I was not aware of any benefits, the officers started enumerating the benefits." He says that the officers told him that NRT had employed many people from the community, that it donates cash and as well buys cows from the community. "They then asked me whether I knew the head of the NRT." After the interrogation, he was ordered to report back the following day. The CID officers continued with the interrogation for a second day and released him without charging him for any offence. When the fact-finding Team asked him why he thinks the CID officers arrested him, he admitted that he had publicly opposed the continued operation of NRT in the conservancy.

He was adamant that NRT had not brought any benefits to the community. He then accused the CID officers of being used by the NRT to force him to change his perspective. He was categorical that it is not the work of CID officers to lobby for the organization.

Further, the community complained of harassment by NRT which overflies seven aircrafts that have the organisation's logo. We were informed that this mainly takes place close to Marti Centre and that the aircrafts often overflies the area as many as twelve times a day and land on the hilly area. Many of the times, the aircrafts fly so low creating anxiety among community members and scares away herders and their livestock which often disperse and run away with some of them getting lost. Community members said they did not know NRT's mission in the area but were aghast that whenever they approach the aircrafts, they are usually arrogantly chased away by soldiers from the British Army Training Unit in the area (BATUK).

3.2 NRT Promotes Inter-communal Conflict

Ile ndovu tuliyoambiwa tutakua tukiikamua sasa imekua ya kutumaliza (i.e. "we were told that we will be benefiting from wildlife conservation, instead we have been losing our lives")

-Sheikh Dabbaso Ali Dogo, Former Chairman of the Billigo-Buulessa

Inter-community conflicts in the North have a long history. This largely emanate from cattle raids as well as competition over water and pasture. The conflicts have worsened with the proliferation of small arms in the region. However, local communities had-in the past-established effective traditional mechanisms to either avoid the conflicts or to resolve them whenever they occurred.

According to Dr. Abdullahi A. Shongolo, a Consultant with the Germany-based Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology, the Boran, Samburu, Somali, Rendille and other communities in the North avoided conflicts by sending elders to seek and negotiate for the permission to graze in each other's lands especially during droughts. Usually, the elders from the affected

Box 2: Testimony of Asha Happi whose husband Ali Noor Ali was Killed by Samburu Raiders



Asha Happi is a 45 year-old widow whose husband, Ali Noor Ali, was killed during a raid by Samburu Morans in 2014 at Lososia area in Isiolo North. Together with 21 other herders, Ali had taken his livestock far away from home and was staying at a manyatta owned by Chief Abdi Yattani. During the raid, the heavily armed Samburu attackers were allegedly assisted by highly trained rangers from the NRT. They carried out the raid very early in the morning and killed 6 people including Ali. They also stole over 4,800 heads of cattle and a lot of camels. Since her husband was killed, Happi has not received any help from the elected leaders or the government and neither has any government official visited her to inquire what happened. Today, the widow finds it extremely difficult to take care of the couple's 7 children. Some of the children are no longer in school because she does not have any means of earning an income. Today, she relies on members of her clan, relatives and friends who gave her a few heads of cattle, sheep and goats to keep her going. She is hopeful that with time the livestock will increase in number and that she will sell some to pay school fees for her two children who are still in school.

community would visit their counterparts that were not as affected by the droughts with a message of goodwill and to seek grazing permission on behalf of their community members. In most cases, such a request was granted once the elders of the host community assessed the available pastures and deliberated on where to allow the affected people to graze their animals. But according to Dr. Shongolo, this system was done away with following the appointment of

chiefs and the elected leaders who can now make unilateral decisions on this matter without consulting the community especially after money has changed hands.

The issue is complicated further by the entry of NRT which has altered the power and traditional governance structures of the communities in the North and replaced with their own, traditional natural resource management systems such as the D'eeda system. Instead of working through such established institutions as the D'eeda Council, NRT has appointed conservancy managers, security scouts and members of the conservancy boards who have effectively taken over the decision-making roles that were the preserve of the elders. The latter now wield largely unchecked and ultimate power in the conservancies. NRT has also imposed its influence on the management of resources by reducing the grazing area of the Boran Community in the Billiqo-Conservancy and is accused of favouring the Samburu herders and promoting insecurity and inter-communal conflicts there such that some villagers were forced to move from their former settlement to more secure urban centres.

Even before the team toured Billiqo-Buulessa Conservancy, there were reports that the conservancy security apparatus set up by the NRT responded to incidents of livestock rustling only in cases where the victims were from the Samburu community. Members of the Boran community say that the NRT has gone out of its way to impoverish them by destroying their livelihoods. They say that the aim is to make them amenable to manipulation not only by the organization but also tourism investors.

According to a local elder, *Mzee* Mohamed Adan, the organization influenced the withdrawal of guns held by home guards who earlier defended the Boran pastoralists. He added that since the Conservancy was formed in 2006, the community has experienced as many as ten raids conducted by the Samburu *morans*, during which more than seventy people were killed and thousands of livestock stolen. From numerous interviews with past officials of the conservancy board and other community members, it emerged that fifty nine people were killed by the Samburu Morans who were assisted by the specially-trained NRT rangers who travelled there in NRT-branded vehicles. Four of the victims died after the young men from the Boran community engaged in counter attacks.

Further, the team found out that well-armed Samburu herders have invaded the land belonging to the Boran community and have been grazing their animals in an area spanning seventy kilometres from the boundary separating the two communities, thus denying the community access to water resources and pastures there. During the community meeting it was discussed how some four hundred cows that were stolen from a herder up North beyond Marti were later seen at the NRT market during the recent Marsabit destocking programme. But despite them being clearly recognized and identified by different people and informing the authorities, nothing was done and NRT not only kept this herd, but transported them first to Lewa Downs which is in Meru County, then to Ol-Pejeta which is in Laikipia, to fatten them for the profit making NRT Trading.

Under the hidden agenda of 'giving back to the community' NRT formed "...NRT Trading sector (NRTT) a social unit for profit enterprise owned by NRT. NRTT's vision is to 'build sustainable businesses' and resilient commercial activity across northern Kenya, improving the economic status of households and communities and providing commercial revenue to conservancies."

How is this 'building of sustainable businesses and commercial activity' achieved when NRT

- 1. Arms the Samburu to loot Boran Cattle
- 2. NRT prices are the lowest for cattle across the whole of Kenya?
- 3. "Laikipia Beef" from Ol-Pejeta is the most expensive beef to be found in Kenya.

Community members were upset and alarmed by NRT, and also questioned why conservation is in competition and conflict with the pastoralists' way of life and in particular the age-old system of buying and selling of cattle. They questioned why conservationists who came to Isiolo to 'look after wild life', ended up venturing into beef marketing venture.



Some members of the community waving placards to show displeasure with NRT

Seemingly, members of the Boran community have resigned to their fate as they have not been able to kick out the invaders. The police and the sub-county administration have not been of much help in this regard as the Acting Deputy County Commissioner and the Assistant County

Commissioner expressed ignorance of the invasion claiming that both of them were new to the area and were yet to get a grasp on the raging threats to security.

The government is not an innocent bystander as far as inter-communal conflict in the North is concerned. Rather, the government officials has a hand in the conflict. This was evident during the subsequent visit to Billiqo-Buulessa, Gootu and Kina areas. The team was joined by officials from InformAction, a human rights organization that makes and uses film and community discussions to encourage ordinary people to



speak out and take action against violation of their rights. InformAction screened the film, No Man's Land Ni Yetu, which it produced in 2012. Community members watched attentively and in utter silence as they absorbed how the government systematically arms different communities in the North; the utter neglect and marginalization of the communities there, the neglect and the on-going displacement of local people under the guise of conservation. The Documentary proves beyond any doubt, that the conflicts in the North, and especially between the Boran and Samburu communities, are deliberately provoked to cause nasty friction between communities that had adopted relative peaceful co-existence and which had developed traditional dispute resolution mechanisms in the past. Although the documentary largely centred on the experiences of the Samburu people, it was an eye-opener for close to sixty members of the Boran community, many of who later commented that the problems facing Samburu are the same ones they face. Indeed, some asked the Team to organize how elders from Pokot, Samburu, Boran, Turkana and other communities can meet to discuss issues of common concern across the region. In addition, it was apparent that after watching the Documentary, community members understood that largely, the conflict between them and other neighbouring communities is deliberately instigated by external forces that have been after their resource-rich land and who, more or less, look at it as 'no man's land'. This appeared to have emboldened them since those who spoke firmly reiterated that the community would uphold the decision of the Boran Council of Elders and the elected leaders to kick NRT and Ian Craig out of Isiolo County.

The Team concluded that the greatest challenge to the security in Billiqo-Buulessa conservancies, as well as in other conservancies in the North, is that the Kenya government has largely ceded its responsibility of providing security to the residents. There is evidently a thin

line between the roles of conservancy security vis-à-vis State security personnel because the former are well trained and equipped with sophisticated weapons by NRT and have been handling roles that are legally the preserve of the police, the KWS and the County administration. In most other countries, no NGO, such as the NRT, is allowed to conduct operations that lead to violence and are coercive in nature. In this regard, the government has failed the community of Billiqo-Buulessa and needs to take its responsibilities seriously.

3.3 Mysterious killings and Disappearance of People

Over the last five years, there have been unexplained disappearances and deliberate killing of a number of people from the Boran community, under the guise of protecting the wildlife. This captured the interest of citizens across the country especially after the elected leaders recently took up the issue and the mainstream media covered the story of six bodies that were found in Tsavo National Park. As the team went around Isiolo and interviewed different people, they expressed suspicions that this is a highly secretive operation involving unnamed KWS and NRT personnel who are alleged to be involved in poaching of elephants and other big game. The Team listened to numerous stories of the horrors perpetuated by those involved. The killers are known by community members, yet despite being identified and reported to the local police stations, none of them has ever been arrested.



For example, a woman was shot five years ago at dawn while men were leaving a mosque after Fajr – Morning Prayers. This was after a group of fifty armed men raided a tiny village. They slunk in from the north east, shooting anything that moved. Oh hearing the noise, a mother who lived near the masjid ran out of her house seeking shelter. Despite having a baby on her back, the raiders shot her dead.

After the deadly raid, her mother (*pictured here on the left*) found her grandson alive. She took him off her dead daughter's back, and realized that he was completely unharmed. The young boy (*held by grandmother in the photo*) is now five years old today and lives in trauma.

What is disquieting about the raid is that the MP of the neighbouring county in Wajir had alerted all the ethnic Somali people living there and facilitated them to flee a week prior to the raid. The second was that the raiders are said to have come from a distance of over two hundred kilometres without being detected by the police.

3.4 Systematic Destruction of Institutions that manage biodiversity in Isiolo



During a subsequent visit to relevant areas in Isiolo, we went through the Shaba National Reserve within Isiolo County. It was pitifully obvious that there was no security in the park. The team was told by ex-rangers with the defunct Isiolo County Council, that lack of security in the park is part of a deliberate effort to destroy the park and hence prime it for eventual takeover by private companies. The scheme started in mid-2000s when African Parks, a South Africa-based company owned by the late Dutch Billionaire, Paul Van Vlissingen, expressed interests in acquiring some of the protected areas in a number of African countries including Kenya. As narrated in The Big Conservation Lie book, the company acquired parks in Zambia under controversial circumstances but it did not succeed in Kenya even after some of the top officials in the Kenya Wildlife Service travelled to South Africa to meet Vlissingen. However, it seems that Africa Parks did not give up because it has since made moves to acquire Shaba. The Isiolo County government appeared to have

warmed up to the takeover and appeared ready to hand over the management of the reserve to the South African company were it not for the fact that some residents of Isiolo went to court to oppose the move.

Since then however, the County Government appears disinterested in restoring the Reserve to its previous status despite having set aside millions of shillings for conservation activities in its budget. This was evident as the team toured Shaba where we came across significant dilapidated structures that were rotting. For instance, we found the watch tower unmanned while the roads in the park appeared to have been neglected for years. A little further ahead from the watchtower, we came across the unoccupied Shaba Gate Rangers Camp which is desolate and run down. Most of the rangers' houses have no doors; their windows are broken and appeared not to have been used for years. The camp had a disused armoury and safe which have no doors, a water boozer overgrown by weeds, roofless toilets and a big water tank that is no longer in use.

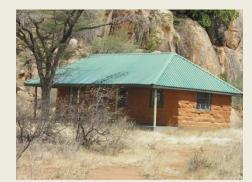




The neglected Shaba Gate Rangers' Quarters

Over the years, the failure by institutions in Kenya to effectively manage the country's protected areas has given conservation NGOs and conservation personalities the justification they needed to call for the handover of the relevant wildlife areas to foreign entities. Indeed, by failing to spruce up roads, security installations and rangers' quarters, the Isiolo County government appears to have accepted that the fortunes of wildlife in the Reserve will be better promoted by inviting private entities to manage Shaba. Indeed, we found it interesting that NRT has already put up its own rangers' quarters some two hundred metres from the Gate. The well-maintained facility is virtually invisible against the background of a sharply pointed pyramid-like hill. When we visited it, it was manned by four NRT rangers who seemed not to be involved in any activity as we found them sleeping. The question that came to our mind was why NRT had decided to have the rangers' quarters close to a protected area that is, by law, under the Isiolo County Government.





NRT's Rangers Camp Close to Shaba Gate

3.5 NRT's Deception of the Community

uring the discussions, former conservancy committee members, the elders, women and the youths claimed that they were not fully aware of the implications of setting up the conservancy.

From the interviews, it was very clear that most did not have adequate understanding of the nature of NRT's operations. They claimed that before it was started, they had sought advice from local politicians. According to Ibrahim Ali Kunno, a former Member of the Conservancy

Board, local elders had visited current Isiolo Governor, Mohamed Kuti, to seek his advice. Kuti, who was then the local MP, advised the community to shelve the idea of the conservancy saying that it stood to be exploited by white people. However, the board decided to go on with the scheme after Ian Craig, the Founder of the NRT, handpicked a few of the elders and asked them to negotiate with the community on NRT's behalf. Among those selected was Gollica Jaarso Gaade, a former Councilor now an employee of NRT, who Ian Craig hosted at Lewa Conservancy in Laikipia. He then asked the elders to identify other elders who later joined them in coaxing the rest of community members to accept the idea. This led to the signing of an agreement between NRT and the community. But all the people interviewed were categorical that they have neither seen the agreement nor are they aware of its provisions.

Some of the community members said they participated in seminars called by NRT to form the conservancy. During the seminars, NRT made a raft of promises, most of which it has not met more than thirteen years after the Conservancy was established. The promises made included the following:

- 1. That there will be permanent peace between the Boran and Samburu communities and that incidents of insecurity and cattle rustling would be a thing of the past;
- 2. The construction of boarding schools for young pupils from Samburu, Boran and Rendille communities in order to create understanding and lasting peace between the communities;
- 3. That NRT would employ the youths as rangers who would not only provide security to the wildlife but also local population;
- 4. NRT promised to invest Ksh50 million in the conservancy and asked members of the first Conservancy Board to identify projects of their choice that would benefit the community; and,
- 5. That each tourist visiting the conservancy would be paying as much as Ksh1 million into the conservancy kitty;

However, the community reported that apart from giving the conservancy rangers one vehicle, constructing two sub-standard classrooms, a mud-walled nursery school and teacher's houses, the NRT has reneged on most other promises. In any case, NRT went out of its way to worsen the plight of the community and unilaterally makes all the decisions on their own. For instance, the organization had initially refused to appoint a local person as the Conservation Manager and decided to give the position to a member of the Samburu community who was later rejected by the community. It also engineered the sacking and replacement of members of the first board after they demanded to know what came of the promises made to the community. Those interviewed added that finances meant for the Conservancy were banked in an NRT account and that the Conservancy has only held two annual general meetings since it was



Community members protest against NRT's Operations in Billiqo-Buulessa Conservancy

formed. Further, they said that past and current conservancy board members have no powers and do not even know what income was earned by the conservancy.

3.5 The Mineral Connection

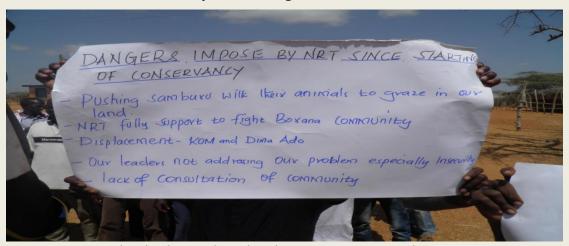
ost of the community members expressed suspicions that NRT has other intentions besides its stated mission of involving the community in wildlife conservation. They said that the NRT was interested in securing minerals-rich sites within the Conservancy and beyond. Matters have not being helped by the fact that the NRT has cleared, marked or planted beacons on the sites it has identified for the construction of camp sites and/or lodges. In addition, the community reported that NRT's founder, Ian Craig, has been seeking information on the sites that were allegedly identified and marked during the colonial period including some euphorbia and *Tamarindus indica* (or *roqqa* in Oromo language) trees he says were planted by his father in Balballa area. The sites identified by Craig and the NRT happen to be the same ones where tourist facilities are set to be put up. But the community has opposed moves to put up the tourist facilities there saying that the NRT made the decision without involving them.

There are also claims that the British colonial administration had done exploratory studies in the entire area and had identified and marked over sixty sites there which are said to have massive mineral wealth. Further, members of the community told the team that NRT has gone out of its way to secure these areas pending exploitation by foreign companies. This seems to be confirmed by documents that indicate Isiolo as one of the counties hosting immense mineral wealth in Kenya.

Not reported on national media was another story this time concerning Chinese who were found mining *mica*. They too were chased out of Kula Maawe with a strong warning never to return. Mica is said to be used to make 'phone screens' – it is not plastic. Mica Sheets are clear and transparent. "...we used to cut them, and put them on our floors in our homes..." one community member stated. "...now there is almost nothing left here on top – we have to dig deeper but we do not have the big equipment..." He gave us a short history which began in the 1970's when the "First family" – the Kenyatta's - began mining Mica for sale but later sold the mine to a man the community members referred to as a *muhindi* in 1998. "...But we chased him away..." said a miner who did not want to be identified.

Besides mica, the area is suspected to be rich in gemstones and other minerals. Members of the community expressed the feelings that mineral presence on their land is the reason for their marginalization and refusal by the government to register their land.

3.6 Violation of Community's Land Rights



A community member displays a placard with accusations against the NRT

In Kenya, communities are defined as consciously distinct and organized groups of land users who are citizens of the country sharing common ancestry, similar culture, language and/or unique mode of livelihood. The administration and management of community lands is provided for by the *Community Land Act*. The Act gives pastoral communities a legal framework to govern their land with full recognition of their ancestral heritage and unique governance and livelihoods systems. It recognizes, protects and provides for the following:

- Registration of community land rights;
- Administration and management of such lands;
- Titling and conversion of community land;
- Management of environment and natural resources on community land. It states that
 that natural resources found in community land shall be managed "sustainably and
 productively for the benefit of the whole community including future generations; with
 transparency and accountability; and on the basis of equitable sharing of accruing
 benefits";
- Resolution of disputes over community land rights; and,
- It accommodates the customs and practices of pastoral communities relating to land by providing for their registration as long as they are consistent with the Act and other applicable law. In particular, it says that community land in a pastoral area shall be available for use by members of the community for grazing of their livestock.

Although this piece of legislation became part of Kenyan law in 2016 and was meant to give effect to the provisions of the Constitution on community land, the process of developing Regulations for its implementation have taken a long time. At the same time, members of the pastoral communities are not aware neither are they informed on the provisions of the Act. Further, the National Land Commission and the Isiolo County Government are yet to initiate a process that would lead to registration of community land and implementation of this law. This

has given organizations such as the NRT adequate room to manipulate communities for their own ends.

From the interviews, it became clear that NRT has capitalized on the lack of awareness of the land rights of the inhabitants of the Conservancy to violate their rights. However, the community protested after the NRT unilaterally identified and embarked on the construction of five tourist camps in resource-rich areas of the Charri Rangeland. This included the following:

- 1. Balballa Camp that is set to be put up along an animal movement route close to the Ewaaso Nyiro River;
- 2. Maddo Gurba Huqqa which is close to a community shallow well;
- 3. Sabarwawa, an area where the water table is quite shallow;
- 4. Nyaacisa which was previously used by the community for traditional ritual naming ceremonies; and,
- 5. Kuro-Bisaan Owwo which is close to a hot spring, which the community has identified as being beneficial to livestock health.

Box 3: NRT Attempts to Create a Spa for Tourists at Kuro-Bissan Owwo Hot Springs

Kuro-Bissan Owwo is a collection of springs that have hot and salty water bursting through the rock. The water settles into a pool that overflows down the hill to finally collect on a large shallow oasis and a stream. The area around the springs is overgrown with marsh grasses, short trees and doum palms – whose fruits both elephant and monkeys and baboons love. The area attracts thousands of birds as well as other wildlife species that venture there to drink water from the stream. At the same time, members of the Boran community take their cattle to the hot springs not only to water them but also to tap the water's medicinal properties. For instance, the water acts as a de-wormer while ticks



and lice are said to fall off after livestock wades into the water. In addition, the hot springs are used by community members to heal skin ailments. Upon knowing this, NRT came up with a plan to put up a health spa for tourists there and indeed fenced off the entire area and went ahead to pipe the water with the aim of dissuading herders from taking livestock to the springs. At the same time, we learned that NRT allowed tourists to engage in bird shooting in the area. But this was not only against the will of the local people but was a decision NRT made unilaterally. In addition, the construction of an artificial wall and the damming of the springs ended up reducing the pressure of the water. Today, the jet of hot water is no more; the water merely oozes from the ground. The community countered NRT's actions by destroying the perimeter fence. However, the Team learned that even after doing so,

the community has been unable to access and use the water from the springs because NRT has deployed is rangers and Samburu raiders there. Indeed, when we toured the spring's site, we found no livestock taking the water while our guards were on the lookout for possible attack. Later, we learned that the raiders deployed by NRT killed an elderly man days after the Boran community declined an invitation by the organisation to attend a peace meeting with Samburu. The killing forced the Isiolo Governor, Mohamed Kuti, and other leaders to openly castigate Ian Craig and the NRT for secretly having an arms cache and operating an armed outfit whose command and control center is in Lewa Conservancy in Laikipia and whose operations are not controlled by the National Police Service. But as we left the Kuro-Bissan Owwo Hot Springs, we felt that the community is gradually regaining some measure of control of its resources.

What angered the Boran community is that NRT intention to set up all the camps on the relevant sites would have affected the survival of local people and the livestock-based economy in Billiqo-Buulessa and Gootu-Nakurpat conservancies. Indeed, the sites selected by NRT have water resources the community relies on for domestic water needs and for watering tens of thousands of livestock. The community has been resisting the takeover by NRT because it fears that it would not only lose part of its land but also access to the water as well as culturally and environmentally-important sites. But as the table above demonstrates, NRT has been deploying well-trained rangers and raiders from the Samburu community which is regarded a threat to the herders.

3.7 Total Disregard of the Traditional Natural Resource Management System

It was clear from the fact-finding mission that besides the tremendous pressure exerted on the land belonging to the Boran community; external vested interests have totally disregarded the Boran community's traditional natural resource management system. This includes the government which has not only brought in a parallel governance and management system but has also continued to target the community's land for the construction of the Mega-infrastructure project under the Vision 2030 development programme. There has also been intrusion of the community's land by the NRT and neighbouring communities from other counties. Indeed, the Team came across a large number of herders from other communities who were not only herding thousands of camels, cattle, sheep and goats but had also established temporary settlements there. The community's leadership has not been of much help in this regard.

It is with this in mind that the Boran Council of Elders passed a resolution that barred other communities from inhabiting areas outside of the municipalities because the latter have not been following the Boran community's customary code of ethics neither have they been adhering to its traditional resource management system. This has led to an alarming deterioration of many parts of the County and has negatively affected the sustainability of the livestock-based economy as well as the survival of wildlife and the people.

Members of the Boran have a formidable and irreplaceable knowledge of the land and traditional governance and resource management system handed down across generations and which is vital for their existence. This includes what is known as the *Gada* system, an indigenous democratic socio-political system of the Oromo peoples in both Kenya and Ethiopia. The system was recognized during the 11th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that took place in Addis Ababa in 2016. Developed from knowledge gained by community's experience over generations, it regulates political, economic, social and religious activities of the community and deals with issues such as conflict resolution, reparation and protection of women's rights. It serves as a mechanism for enforcing moral conduct, building social cohesion, and expressing forms of community culture. *Gada* is organized into five classes with one of these functioning as the ruling class consisting of a chairperson, officials and an assembly. Each class progresses through a series of grades before

it can function in authority with the leadership changing on a rotational basis every eight years. Class membership is open to men, whose fathers are already members, while women are consulted for decision-making on protecting their rights. Knowledge about the *Gada* system is transferred to children from birth. The learners are taught orally and cover history, laws, governance, rituals, time-reckoning, cosmology, myths, rules of conduct, and the function of the *Gada* system itself. Meetings and ceremonies take place under a sycamore tree which is considered a sacred *Gada* symbol, while major clans have established *Gada* centres and ceremonial spaces according to territory (UNESCO, 2016)⁴.

It is therefore clear that the Community has a well-established governance and resource management system and does not need 'saving' from themselves by organizations or foreigners. What the community has been asking for is the promotion and strengthening of their customary laws on access, use and management of the rangeland resources with the aim of improving natural resource management and empowering local governance institutions. In this regard, the Team concluded that the Boran Council of Elders were right to declare that the community has every right to its lands; to access their economic wealth and to maintain its culture.

Box 4: Operationalization of the D'eeda System at Moolliti Shallow Wells





As the name implies, these are a collection of wells dug by pastoralists in Kinna area. The Team learned that D'eeda rules provides for use of water by everyone including travelers from other communities and

wildlife. We learned that a well or borehole can be dug by any person from the community, but that digging it does not translate to ownership. Wells are open to *all* pastoralists and their animals. It is a system that has survived for hundreds of years. Because of the large numbers of differing herds, there is a tight watering rotation that is strictly followed. Jumping a queue results in automatic banishment from the well which no one wants to risk as it can lead to the death of their livestock because they cannot survive for more than three days without water.

All cattle, goats, sheep and camels are watered during the day time. The pastoralists have installed portable pumps to draw the water from the wells. We were told that by 4.00 pm however, the rules require all the herders to drive their livestock away from the wells. The last to water their animals are required to fill the troughs with water for the "night traffic" as wildlife approach water holes towards sunset and into the night. Birds drink in the early morning and late evening. The rules are simple but categorical; - leaving the troughs empty results in an automatic fine of five of the relevant herder's biggest cattle – even if they were the well builder!

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⁴ See, Asmarom Legesse. Oromo Democracy: An indigenous African Political System. The Red Sea Press, Inc 2000.

Recommendations on the Way Forward

General Recommendation

The suggested way forward partly comes from the community, the resolutions made by the Boran Council of Elders, Waaso Professional Forum and elected leaders as well as what emanated from outsider agencies such as members of the Errant Natives Movement and InformAction. It should be noted from the outset that members of the community have the primary role in protecting and managing their resources. On their part, outsider agencies working with the community cannot, and are not interested in filling in the void once NRT moves out of the area. They are only interested in helping to raise the technical capacity of the local people as well as the partnering institutions such as the Isiolo County Government in order to return the rights of the community to its land, and other resources and in setting up an outfit that can enable the community to conserve and benefit from the biodiversity in the Charri Rangeland. Most importantly, all the stakeholders will need to enable the community to jealously guard and protect its land against the powerful vested interests, to entrench and strengthen its traditional resource management system (i.e. D'eeda System) and to use the land in ways that can be self-sustaining over the long run. It is also important to consider how to address the observed (and rising) pressures on the land emanating from rise in human and livestock numbers, immigration of other communities into Isiolo, development of megainfrastructure projects, expansion of urban areas as well as climate change awareness that will rise with time.

• Specific Recommendations

Outlawing of NRT's Activities in Isiolo

There is a confluence of perspective between the Isiolo County Government; Boran Council of Elders, Elected leaders, Waaso Professional Forum and majority of community members as far as the operation of NRT in the two conservancies is concerned. During various forums, all these stakeholders have either passed resolutions or have publicly called for the cessation of NRT's activities in Isiolo County. However, NRT is yet to do so and has instead attempted to divide the communities further by organizing and facilitating protest marches against the attempt to kick them out from the area. In this regard, the Isiolo County Government needs to formalize the decision by officially writing to NRT to ask it to move out of Isiolo. The letter ought to be copied to the relevant arms of the National Government and to other stakeholders. This ought to be done expeditiously in order to avoid worsening the security scenario in the two conservancies, which NRT intends to initiate.

Adoption of mixed use conservation model

NRT's conservation model, in which the communities in the North are kept apart from the wildlife that live in their midst is an artificial mode of land use that exacerbates, rather than harmonizing, human-wildlife co-existence. It also creates exclusion besides contracting pasturelands. This model ought to be replaced with mixed use model that will allow humans, livestock and wildlife to use the land concurrently. Already, the Isiolo County government has shown interest in encouraging the community to set up its own wildlife conservancies. To see it through, this idea should be taken up by the Boran Council of Elders and the Waaso Professional Forum who should explore the partners to bring on board for purposes of raising the community's capacity; the cost-benefit analysis; how to seek out potential investors as well as legal and technical advice over how to write agreements with potential tourist investors.

Formation of an interim committee

In order to effectively protect the vast Charri Rangeland, the community inhabiting the two conservancies of Billiqo-Buulessa and Gootu-Nakurpatt ought to organize additional meetings in order to agree on how to protect the land. Errant natives should implore the community to form an interim committee that would be in-charge of mobilising the community members to attend meetings, meeting with other stakeholders and for the purpose of registering a community trust or association. The interim committee ought to have trusted members of the community with membership coming from elders, religious leaders, women and the youths. Once the Trust or Association is formed, then the community ought to elect the office bearers.

Effective protection, planning and Management of the land

To protect the land, the community in the two conservancies of Isiolo elders ought to identify their boundaries jointly with younger community members and plant special trees to mark the boundaries. Once the community has agreed on the membership of the conservancies, then it should go ahead, with the help of relevant arms of the County Government to register the land under the Community Land Act and get the relevant ownership documents. It will be important for the community to continue with communal ownership so as to guarantee the continuation of the extensive livestock production and to guard against the sale or leasing of the land to outsiders. With the assistance of the County Government, it is recommended that they engage the services of land use planners to plan the different settlements in order to guarantee controlled growth of the relevant areas, harmonious use of the land as well as peace, security and restoration of resilience.

Promotion and legal protection of the D'eeda Resource Management System

The D'eeda is a resource management system that has worked well for the Boran Community for ages. The system is a complete cultural way of life which takes into account the environment, wildlife, livestock as well as human welfare. Although the system is largely in place, it has been weakened by the adoption of 'alien' institutions by the NRT, the empowerment of politicians, chiefs and other members of the county administration, continued loss of traditional authority of the elders as well as immigration of other communities into Boran-dominated areas. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency to restore the communities' resilience against adverse effects of climate change. In this regard, there is a need to strengthen, legalise and entrench the D'eeda resource management system so that it can be officially recognized by the national and county governments. In this regard, Boran Council of Elders ought to pressurise elected leaders to push for the enactment of the D'eeda Rules by the Isiolo County Assembly so that they become part and parcel of the county legislation.

9. How to tap and benefit from the land

Usually communities in Kenya do not benefit from the resources they own because they are either not well organized or have no clue on how they ought to benefit. As aforementioned, the communities in Isiolo can overcome this by getting themselves organized into registered trusts and associations. Once they do this, it is important to have meetings to discuss and decide on what resources ought to be left for use by the community and which ones should be leased to investors. In this regard, it is important for the Boran Council of Elders, the D'eeda Council and other traditional institutions with the help of professionals from Isiolo and elsewhere to identify, delineate and map out the key resources the communities need for its livestock-based economy now and into the future. Then together with other members of the community, these stakeholders ought to discuss and decide which areas they can concession to investors. It is important to also decide whether the communities will be merely getting benefits in terms of cash from annual leases, employment of a few local people and investment in schools, water and health projects or they would wish to jointly co-own with the investors the companies that invest in tourism, mining, ranching, agriculture or nature-based ventures. The community should also boost its capacity over time so that it can eventually take over these enterprises. This should go hand-in-hand with rain harvesting at household and community levels, considering the possibility of permaculture farming on parts of the land and especially closer to villages and setting up nature-based enterprises as well as value-addition ventures.

10. Promotion of Intra-Community and inter-community peace and cohesion

It is very important for the Boran Council of Elders and other traditional institutions to take up the role of bringing the community together so as to do away with the current intra-community divisions and animosity created by the NRT. There have also been suggestions that to create

peace between the Boran, Somali, Turkana, Rendille, Samburu and Pokot communities Boran, there is a need for other stakeholder to organize and facilitate a series of meetings bringing together five elders from each of the communities to discuss how to attain lasting peace, role of communities in conservation and other issues of common concern.

11. Legal action against NRT over the killing of people

The community, through the Boran Council of Elders, Waaso Professionals and with the assistance from members of the Errant Natives Movement ought to take the NRT to court over the killing of about 70 people and loss of thousands of heads of livestock in Billiqo-Buulessa Conservancy. To commence the process, the Waaso Professional Forum ought to liaise with Errant Natives, InformAction and other human rights organizations to accurately record the details of all the people killed at the hand of NRT rangers, to get medical records and death certificates and to contract committed lawyers to take the matter to court.

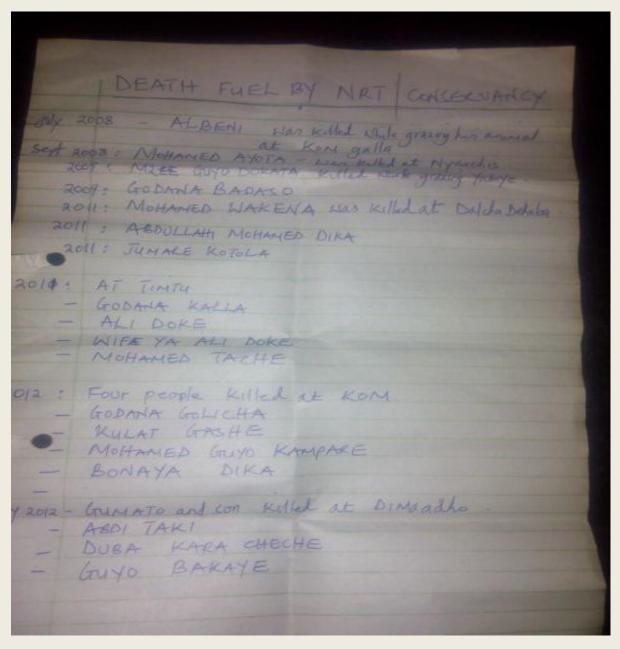
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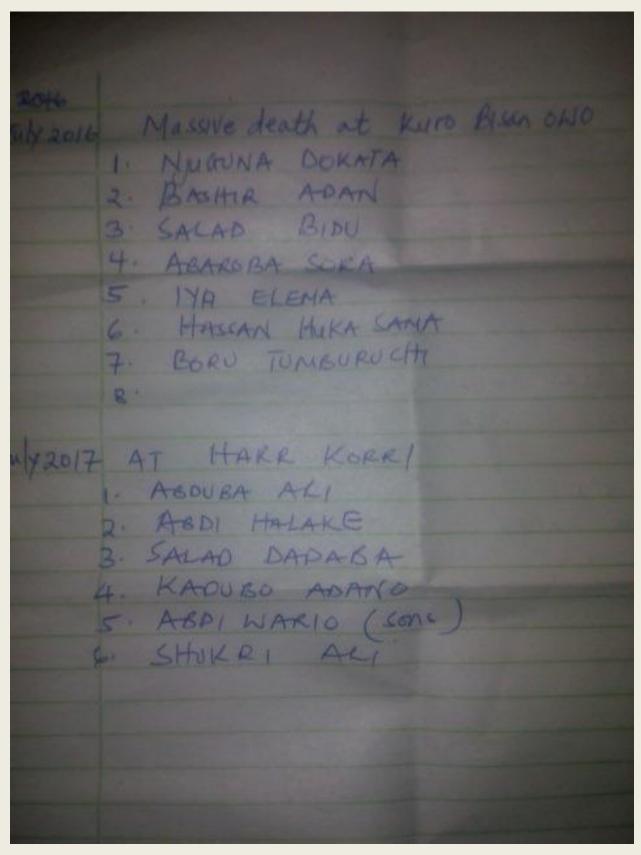


Magaando Crater

APPENDICES

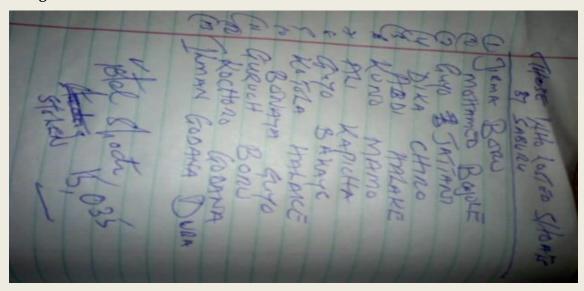
Appendix 1: List of People killed by Samburu morans following alleged instigation of the NRT.



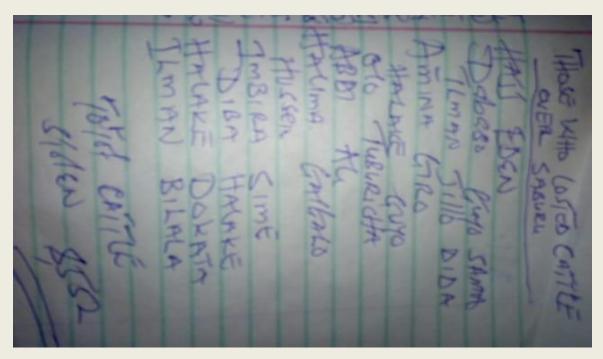


Source: Community display on a placard during a meeting held in Billiqo Centre on 28.01.2019

Appendix 2: List of People who lost livestock to the Samburu morans following alleged instigation of the NRT.



Source: Community display on a placard at Billiqo meeting. 28.01.2019

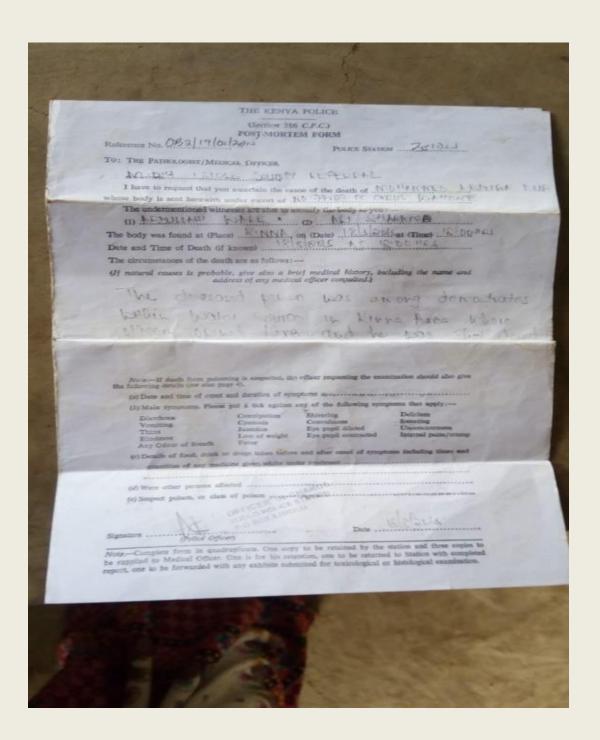


Source: Community display on a placard at Billiqo meeting. 28.01.2019

Records of unexplained killing of local people



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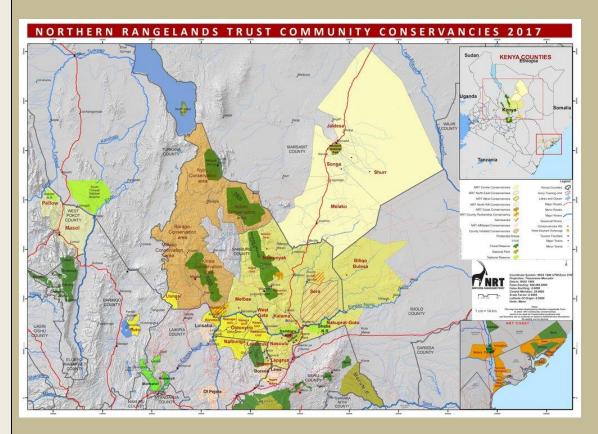


Community elders in a meeting at Billiqo.



Uwaaso Nyiro River drying up near Gootu Bridge.





Location: Billiqo and Buulessa, Marti Division, Isiolo District **Postal address:** c/o Northern Rangelands Trust, Private Bag, Isiolo

Manager: D'okata Golompo

Contact: Billiqo-Buulessa@nrt-kenya.org

Ethnicity: Boran Population: 10,000

Land Ownership: Community Land **Core Conservation Area:** 364,000 hectares

Main Livelihood: Pastoralism

Key Wildlife Species: Giraffe, leopard, waterbuck, lesser kudu, greater kudu, hippo, ostrich,

buffalo and lion

Year of Registration: 2007

Staff Employed from the Community: 24 **Annual Operating Budget:** US\$ 89,000

Source: NRT Website