

Questions for NRT

August 23, 2021

Please see below five questions from the Oakland Institute regarding NRT's activities in Northern Kenya.

1. NRT claims that its goal is to "transform people's lives, secure peace and conserve natural resources." Local communities, where NRT is active, however, allege that the organization has dispossessed them of their lands and deployed armed security units that have been responsible for serious human rights abuses.

In particular, NRT's anti-poaching mobile units '9' teams face allegations of extrajudicial killings and disappearances, among other abuses. Rangers are allegedly routinely involved in policing matters and directly involved in conflicts between different ethnic groups, related to territorial issues or/and cattle raids that extend far outside their anti-poaching mandate. Multiple sources within the community, including members of councils of community elders, allege that dozens of people have been killed in circumstances involving NRT.

Questions: Is NRT aware of these allegations? Has NRT conducted any investigations to verify them? What measures have been taken to address these issues? Has NRT taken disciplinary action against any '9' team members related to the misuse of force in the past?

2. The loss of grazing land for pastoralists is a major challenge arising from community conservancies. Locals allege that NRT compels communities to set aside their best lands for the exclusive use of tourism. This loss of grazing lands has a severe impact on local livelihoods, especially in drought years.

Questions: Is NRT aware of these challenges? How does it address the loss of grazing land from locals? Have herders been compensated for their loss?

3. Although NRT claim they are community driven, communities allege that the conservancies have been instigated by outside parties rather than pastoralists themselves, who have a very limited role in negotiating the terms of these partnerships. According to several testimonies, leverage over communities occurs through corruption and cooptation of local leaders and personalities as well as local administration officials. A number of interviewees also allege intimidation, including arrests and interrogation of local community members and leaders, as tactics routinely used by NRT security personnel.

Questions: Is NRT aware of these allegations? Has NRT conducted any investigations of these allegations? Does NRT have any mechanisms in place for pastoralist communities to voice grievances with the terms of the partnerships or report abuses of power and corruption by local leaders?

4. In 2015, NRT formed a five-year, US\$12 million agreement with two oil companies active in the country – the British Tullow Oil and Canadian Africa Oil Corp – to establish and operate six community conservancies in Turkana and West Pokot Counties.

Question: As a conservation institution, how does NRT justify partnering with oil companies that intend to exploit fossil fuels in Kenya?

5. In recent years, locals have held protests and signed petitions against the presence of NRT. For instance, we learnt that Turkana County Government expelled NRT from Turkana in 2015; Isiolo's Borana Council of Elders (BCE) and communities in Isiolo County and Chari Ward in the Biliqo-Bulesa conservancy continue to challenge NRT; in January 2021, community of Gafarsa protested NRT's expansion to Gafarsa rangelands of Garbatulla Subcounty; and in April 2021, the Samburu Council of Elders Association, a registered institution representing the Samburu Community in four counties (Isiolo, Laikipia, Marsabit and Samburu), wrote to international NGOs and donors to cease further funding and audit NRT.

Questions: How is NRT addressing the concerns raised by local communities? Does NRT support the call made by local communities for an independent investigation into grievances around NRT's community conservancies?