

September 24, 2021

Dear Tom,

The last couple of weeks have been very busy, delaying my response to you.

To follow up on more information as requested by you – our work is used by diverse audiences to guide policies and to resource/finance impactful change. In the arena of conservation, this targets advancement of protection of nature and the local communities.

Several of our partners who are family foundations agree with us that the overarching goal of protecting biodiversity is extremely important and deserves all the attention and resources. We are researching and making public facts and analysis around the way conservation is practiced and what does work. Our reports highlight issues with “fortress” conservation leading to human rights violations as in the [case of the Ngorongoro Conservation](#) Area in Tanzania, as well as positive examples of community-led efforts to protect the environment so they can be supported.

Please see our work, for instance, highlighting the case of [Community Markets for Conservation \(COMACO\)](#) in Zambia, helping people address the challenges of food insecurity and environmental degradation while conserving wildlife and other natural resources. Another example we have highlighted is the work of Hammer Simwinga (winner of the Goldman Prize) with the Wildlife and Habitat Conservation, in Muchinga Province in northern Zambia. <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/events/unfair-game-politics-poaching>. We organized several events in the Bay Area in partnership with the Tikvah Grassroots Empowerment Fund to raise awareness and support for the creation of the Mukungule Community Nature Conservancy – Zambia's first community initiated and operated nature conservancy.

For the past few years, we have been working with a few family foundations that seek to support conservation initiatives that are inclusive and incorporate FPIC into all stages of operation. One donor member emphasized “the health of the planet and the well-being of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and by extension, all of us, depend on supporting such a model of conservation. The search for solutions is as important. Thankfully, some of those inclusive and participatory experiences are emerging as alternative ways of working. And I appreciate that the Oakland Institute has been searching and bringing forward more examples of these alternatives.”

As we researched NRT as one of “the alternatives,” several communities came forward with serious allegations against NRT that I shared with you.

These allegations raise fundamental questions about the claim that NRT conservancies are owned and driven by communities. The multiplication of protests and petitions by local communities against NRT add to these concerns. For instance, community demonstration against NRT in Sericho Ward on September 2, 2021 – rejecting expansion of the conservancy, demanding community land registration, land use to be subjected to public participation and with full consent of the community. Kinna residents similarly held a peaceful demonstration on September 11

against NRT for alleged “illegitimate community land grab.” These recent events come after a number of previous peaceful protests held by local communities against NRT-led conservancies, such as those of Gafarsa residents of Garbatulla in January 2021.

Furthermore we have obtained copies of petitions signed by hundreds of community members of Kinna Ward against the NRT community Conservancy model; challenge in court by over 500 applicants from the Indigenous Pokot community against NRT, Masol Community Conservancy, Pellow Community Conservancy, and the County government of West Pokot; petition/s against continued donor support to NRT over human rights violations in Samburu, Isiolo, & Marsabit counties; Complaints over conservancy establishment at Merti Cherab Ward – Merti; and more.

Raising even more serious concern, our researchers received a number of direct testimonies including accusations of killings involving conservancy rangers. For instance, on April 13, 2019, Ahmed Abdi Rahman was allegedly killed at a water point in Kurobisanowo in Biliqo through a shooting involving six NRT employees in uniform. In another incident, two conservancy rangers, Ekisin Lotaro and Tachiri Lonakutok, of Nasuulu Community Conservancy in Isiolo county, were detained after being accused of killing Simon Looru at Loruko village in Burat Ward on September 4, 2019. The Borana Council of Elders alleges that the number of people killed by 9-1 rangers is 83. We have also received numerous testimonies that allege the use of NRT vehicles and logistics in inter community raids that led to numerous deaths of community members, in presence of NRT rangers in several instances.

I shared our findings with you and was seeking a response in the spirit of transparency. As you must already know, we did not make our findings public at the Our Land! Our Nature! conference or at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille earlier this month. However, given the number and the severity of the alleged abuses, including killings, claims that “No NRT or community conservancy member of staff nor Ranger has been implicated in human rights abuses” and that “NRT has not identified misuse of force in the ranger operations” is disconcerting.

Sincerely,

Anuradha Mittal