

# UNACCOUNTABLE & COMPLICIT

THE WORLD BANK FINANCES EVICTIONS &  
HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN TANZANIA



The Oakland Institute

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is based on field research conducted by a team of researchers in Tanzania, who remain unnamed to ensure their safety.

The views and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the Oakland Institute alone and do not reflect opinions of the individuals and organizations that have supported the work of the Institute.

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Front Cover: TANAPA rangers. Source: Tanzania National Parks Facebook Page

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The World Bank's US\$150 million Resilient Natural Resource Management for Tourism and Growth (REGROW) project in Tanzania will develop four priority Protected Areas (PAs) to increase tourism in the southern region of the country. This however, comes at an enormous cost to local Indigenous communities living adjacent to the PAs.

One of the four targeted parks is the Ruaha National Park (RUNAPA). This report details how the Tanzanian government, with funding from the World Bank, through threats of evictions, extrajudicial killings, and cattle seizures, is attempting to force communities away from their homes and villages. Its plan to evict tens of thousands of people living close to RUNAPA is in violation of the Bank's safeguards and procedures. Communities report that park rangers, receiving funding through REGROW, have been implicated in murders of several villagers and numerous instances of violence since the project began in 2017. The project's goal to improve local livelihoods is overshadowed by massive cattle seizures, which are decimating herders' financially.



Former World Bank President David Malpass speaking with Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan during a World Bank event in April 2022. Source: World Bank Africa Facebook

The World Bank, however, has turned a blind eye to the horrific abuses unleashed on the communities – by choosing to not enforce its own safeguards. In response to the Oakland Institute's complaint about the government's planned evictions to expand RUNAPA, the Bank claimed that its "mandate does not extend to overseeing the conduct of Member countries' government agencies or to intervening in the event of alleged wrongdoing unrelated to a World Bank-financed project." This approach effectively renders any safeguards obsolete as the Bank claims that the abuses are not related to its project. Yet, the government's brutal tactics to force communities away from the area to expand tourism in RUNAPA – an explicit goal of REGROW – are inextricably tied to its financing by the World Bank.

While bolstering the tourism sector is framed by the government and the Bank as being beneficial for the country, the impact on the communities living adjacent to PAs illustrates a starkly different reality. Under the guise of "protecting" the environment, the government is forcing Indigenous pastoralists and small

farmers to bear the cost of generating tourism revenue. Given the appalling attempt by the World Bank to shirk responsibility from the abuses detailed in this report, it must be held accountable for its complicity in brutal human rights abuses perpetrated by the Tanzanian government.

"People living in Mbarali are suffering very much from RUNAPA armed rangers. They treat them with cruelty, including killings, with no proper reason. No steps have been taken by the government. There is no rule of law. The land of the farmers and pastoralists is taken by RUNAPA and we are forced to leave our ancestral land. The communities of Mbarali, if steps are not taken, will fall into poverty, which was not the intention of the REGROW project."

– Impacted villager<sup>1</sup>





## INTRODUCTION

On May 6, 2023, a helicopter carrying six Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) rangers made a surprise landing in Mwanawala village in the Mbarali District of Tanzania. The rangers quickly seized 250 cattle from a pastoralist, under the false pretense that the cattle were encroaching on the nearby RUNAPA. They next confronted another pastoralist, who would not allow his cattle to be taken illegally. In response, he was severely beaten, suffering a large cut on his head that required hospitalization.<sup>2</sup> The violence was not over as the rangers proceeded to brutally assault three Maasai women.

On May 11, 2023, the Mbarali Member of Parliament (MP), Francis Mtega, raised the alarm about the incident at the Tanzanian National Assembly.<sup>3</sup> He detailed the severity of the situation, “They [TANAPA rangers] burnt a bush knife. When it got hot, they beat them with it. They peel the whole body with it. They were beaten and tortured badly. Those survivors had the [helicopter] pilot to thank, who felt sorry and intervened to save them from being killed.”<sup>4</sup>

This is just another episode in an escalating campaign of violence waged by the Tanzanian government against communities living near PAs across the country. The government’s denial of basic services to forcibly relocate 90,000 Maasai pastoralists in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA)<sup>5</sup> and violent eviction of 70,000 from grazing lands in Loliondo for trophy hunting by the royal family of the United Arab Emirates<sup>6</sup> has captured global headlines in recent years. The dire situation in the south of the country has gone unreported – despite a very similar process of dispossession and human rights abuses and the same desire to boost tourism revenue.

While the government has come under increased scrutiny for these abuses, the role of the international “development” partners has gone overlooked so far. The World Bank launched the Resilient Natural Resource Management for Tourism and Growth (REGROW) project in Tanzania in September 2017. Through financing infrastructure, management, and alternative livelihoods for communities, the project will help the Tanzanian government develop four priority Protected Areas (PAs) to increase tourism in the Southern Circuit of the country – currently less visited than the world-famous safari attractions and Mt. Kilimanjaro in the north.<sup>7</sup> The Bank’s support works towards the government’s goal of attracting five million visitors annually to generate US\$6 billion from tourism revenue.<sup>8</sup>

International financing of the government’s plan raises major concerns given its documented record of human rights violations in different parts of the country to boost tourism. The objective of this report is to detail the extent of abuses and evictions occurring to expand RUNAPA and the complicity of the World Bank through its financing of the REGROW project.





## THE GREAT RUAHA RIVER BASIN

Located in the south west of Tanzania, the Ihefu and Usangu wetlands in the Mbarali District are fed by the nearly 300 mile-long Great Ruaha River. For centuries, the area has supported pastoralist and smallholder farmer livelihoods.<sup>9</sup> The Indigenous Sangu people are recognized as the original inhabitants of the Ihefu wetlands, grazing their herds of cattle along the Great Ruaha River dating back to pre-colonial times.<sup>10</sup> By the mid 20th century, drawn by the fertile soil and open grazing pastures, the Il-Parakuyu Maasai and Sukuma peoples settled in the area.<sup>11</sup> After the construction of the Kidatu and Mtera power plant dams in the 1970s and 1980s, the river became a critical source of electricity for the country.<sup>12</sup>

The river has also been used to expand irrigated rice cultivation in the Mbarali District, one of the major rice producing regions of the country. In the Usangu Plains, land devoted to growing rice grew from 145 km<sup>2</sup> in 1986 to 1,150 km<sup>2</sup> in 2013.<sup>13</sup> On average, an estimated 600,000 tons of rice are produced annually in the Basin,<sup>14</sup> comprising 90 percent of all crops produced by a mix of smallholders and large commercial farms.<sup>15</sup>

Referred to as the “ecological backbone” of Tanzania,<sup>16</sup> the Great Ruaha River also plays a vital role in supporting a rich diversity of wildlife. Today, RUNAPA has one of highest populations of elephants and lions in Tanzania, in addition to over 570 species of birds.<sup>17</sup> Leopards, cheetahs, spotted hyenas, wild dogs, giraffes, buffaloes, zebras, warthogs, and sable antelopes can also be found in the area.<sup>18</sup> The river also supports healthy numbers of hippopotamuses, Nile crocodiles, and a diversity of fish species.<sup>19</sup>

First gazetted as the Saba Game Reserve by the German colonial government in 1910, the area was renamed the Rungwa Game Reserve by the British in 1946.<sup>20</sup> The area, today known as the Ruaha National Park (RUNAPA), formally obtained National Park status in 1964. Over 60 percent of land in Mbarali District (one of the districts bordering the park) is currently classified as a PA.<sup>21</sup>

In recent years, the flow of the Great Ruaha River has decreased, intensifying competition over the river as the government seeks to protect and expand hydroelectricity, rice cultivation, and tourism.<sup>22</sup> This has constrained communities’ access to land and water, which has undermined their livelihoods and left many disenfranchised (see Box p.9).





# THE REGROW PROJECT

In September 2017, the World Bank launched the Resilient Natural Resource Management for Tourism and Growth (REGROW) project through a US\$150 million loan to Tanzania. The objective of this eight-year<sup>23</sup> project is to “improve management of natural resources and tourism assets in priority areas of Southern Tanzania and to increase access to alternative livelihood activities for targeted communities.”<sup>24</sup> REGROW focuses on four PAs: Mikumi National Park (MINAPA), Nyerere National Park (NNP), Ruaha National Park (RUNAPA), and the Udzungwa Mountains National Park (UMNP). The Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) and Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) are the two primary implementing agencies.<sup>25</sup>

Table 1. REGROW Project Funding by Component<sup>26</sup>

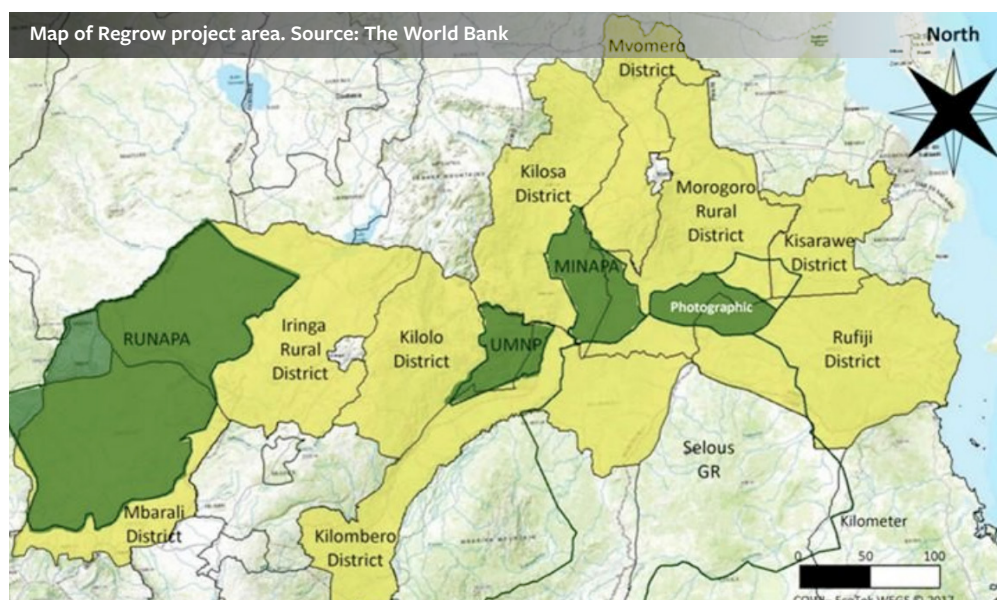
Component	Cost (US\$ Million)
Strengthen management and improve infrastructure in priority Protected Areas	106
Strengthen alternative livelihoods for targeted communities in proximity to the priority Protected Areas	11.5
Strengthen landscape management and infrastructure investments in and upstream of the Ruaha National Park	24.5
Project management, institutional strengthening, quality assurance and control, and monitoring and evaluation	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>

With the majority of tourists destined to the north of the country to visit Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro Crater, and Mount Kilimanjaro, a key objective of the project is to develop new “tourism products” to expand the “Southern Circuit.”<sup>27</sup> Across the four priority PAs, the project seeks to increase the number of annual visitors from 98,504 in 2017 to 135,000 by 2025.<sup>28</sup>

To accomplish this goal, US\$106 million – over two-thirds of the project budget – finances infrastructure inside PAs, such as building unpaved roads to improve access to viewing areas, airstrips, and visitor centers.<sup>29</sup> The REGROW project also finances the strengthening of management and monitoring systems to improve wildlife protection. Through construction of additional security posts and provision of equipment to rangers, it directly supports the enforcement capacity of PA authorities and security forces to prevent the so-called “illegal” use of resources, which includes farming and grazing.<sup>30</sup>

Recognizing that “communities in and around Protected Areas are some of the poorest in the country,” the second component of the project will promote alternative livelihoods for communities adjacent to the PAs.<sup>31</sup> This includes training 5,000 households in tourism based activities, such as safari guide programs, supplying services, handicrafts, and agricultural products for tourists, and another 15,000 households in natural resource management (NRM) based livelihood opportunities.<sup>32</sup>

The third component is specifically targeted to bolster the capacity for landscape management upstream of the park. This is driven by the claim that poor land use and watershed management practices have led to “degradation of forests and watercourses...threatening the very natural resource base upon which Tanzania’s economy and poor depend on, while rampant wildlife poaching threatens to reduce the assets that are key to current and future tourism potential.”<sup>33</sup>





Entrance to RUNAPA near Iringa, Tanzania © Pius Mahimbi (CC BY 2.0) via Wikimedia Commons

## FORCED EVICTIONS TO EXPAND TOURISM

The creation of people-free wilderness areas is the key feature of the “fortress” conservation model. With the REGROW project, the establishment of three of the four target parks – RUNAPA, MINAPA, and NNP – resulted in local communities losing access to land.<sup>34</sup> This report examines RUNAPA, the only park that receives dedicated funding from REGROW, which the government intends to substantially expand to increase tourism. It has thus announced a ruthless expansion of the boundaries of the park, which will require widespread evictions impacting tens of thousands of people.

In October 2022, the Minister of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development (MLHSD), Dr. Angeline Mabula, proclaimed that five villages (Luhanga, Madundasi, Msanga, Iyala, Kilambo) with a population of 21,252 and an additional 47 sub-villages from 14 villages would be evicted – with their legal registration cancelled.<sup>35</sup> She warned locals, “If you continue to be there and the village is delisted it means you are breaking the law.”<sup>36</sup>

The government claims the boundaries of RUNAPA have encompassed these villages since the Government Notice signed in 2008 (GN 28), despite the fact it was neither implemented nor enforced. The concerned villages are legally registered, their residents did not provide their Free, Prior, and Informed Consent to the 2008 decision and have remained in the area for generations (see Box p. 9). Confusion and fear of evictions, expected to begin imminently, has terrified the communities.<sup>37</sup> In response to this injustice, 852 smallholder farmers from Mbeya filed a case to stop the government’s plans to evict them from their land at the High Court of Tanzania at Mbeya.<sup>38</sup> According to Jebra Kambole, the advocate representing the villagers, following the October 2022 announcement, communities have received insufficient information about the resettlement plans.<sup>39</sup>



Minister Mabula announcing the evictions.  
Source: Global TV Online

The uncertainty and fear from the eviction announcements has already impacted daily life for villagers. Large areas of rice paddy fields were left unplanted in case evictions took place before they could be harvested, damaging farmers’ livelihoods.<sup>40</sup> Houses have been marked for destruction in several villages. Construction on a secondary school in Luhanga village was paused following the announcements, denying students desperately needed classroom space.<sup>41</sup> The looming eviction threat has also adversely impacted education in Iyala village, where the number of students advancing from primary to secondary school has drastically fallen.<sup>42</sup> Parents explained how the anticipation of being uprooted has discouraged them from keeping their children in school.<sup>43</sup>

The people living in the villages specifically named for evictions are not the only ones to be impacted. Minister Mabula also announced that another 15 villages<sup>44</sup> are required to complete new land use plans.<sup>45</sup> Villagers fear these plans will impose new restrictions that prohibit farming and grazing – to the detriment of their livelihoods. Additional villages to the ones announced by Minister Mabula also face an eviction threat if the government decides to enforce the boundaries of GN 28. Some of these villages were previously targeted for eviction (see Box p.9) and now face renewed efforts to cancel their legal registration to allow for the expansion of the park. These evictions will have an enormous impact. For example, Mwanawala, one village reportedly at risk of eviction, has a population of 11,000.<sup>46</sup> While the government has not formally announced its plans, villagers report living in a pervasive climate of fear.





## A History of Evictions Along the Great Ruaha River

Since Tanzania's independence, communities living along the Great Ruaha River have faced evictions under the false pretext of them degrading the area. Given the important role the river plays in generating power and irrigating large-scale rice farms and the government's goal of promoting wildlife tourism, the interests and rights of smallholder farmers and herders have not been prioritized or protected.

In the late 1980s, large-scale irrigation projects began to disrupt the annual flow of the Great Ruaha River.<sup>47</sup> By 1993, the river stopped flowing above the Mtera dam “for the first time in living memory.”<sup>48</sup> Subsequent electricity shortages across Tanzania were blamed on the decreased flow and reduced output from the downstream hydroelectricity plants. In the ensuing panic, the government placed blame on communities living adjacent to the Usangu and Ihefu wetlands.<sup>49</sup> In 1998, areas of the Ihefu wetland were gazetted to create the Usangu Game Reserve, leading to the forced removal of fishermen and herders.<sup>50</sup> Only trophy hunting and wildlife research were permitted in the new game reserve.

In May 2006, the government launched the “Anti Livestock Operation” to remove villagers and livestock from the Usangu Game Reserve and surrounding areas.<sup>51</sup> Armed police, TANAPA rangers, and anti-poaching units forcibly evicted approximately 1,000 households of Sukuma, Iparakuiyo, Taturu, and Barabaig pastoralists and agro-pastoralists.<sup>52</sup> Sixteen villages were disbanded and over 20,000 livestock removed from the area by 2007.<sup>53</sup>

The “mass expulsion” resulted in the loss of livelihoods, family separations, and hunger, as crops were destroyed and animals starved to death.<sup>54</sup> While moving cattle out of the area, pastoralists faced fines, seizures, and poor water sources, resulting in the loss or death of cattle.<sup>55</sup> Reports indicated serious limitations with the resettlement sites, including unlivable conditions in some of the areas.<sup>56</sup> The evictions and new restrictions on grazing reportedly occurred against the will of the local communities. The government's compensation to the evicted villagers was derailed by embezzlement in 2008.<sup>57</sup> In 2016, 600 evicted farmers finally received compensation but it was far too little and too late.<sup>58</sup>

Evidence shows that small farmers and pastoralists are not responsible for the river's degradation or reduced energy generation.<sup>59</sup> A 2010 statement from James Ananya, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, cited numerous studies that showed the “increased irrigated cultivation during the dry season by large farms in the area” was responsible for environmental degradation.<sup>60</sup> Other studies have shown the power cuts experienced in the 1990s were actually due to the mismanagement of the two dams rather than a significant reduction in the annual flow of the Great Ruaha River.<sup>61</sup> Today, the river continues to experience seasonal drying, further indicating that removing communities was not an effective solution.<sup>62</sup>

In 2008, the government expanded the borders of RUNAPA to absorb the Usangu Game Reserve and portions of the Ihefu wetlands into the park.<sup>63</sup> This increased its size from 10,300 km<sup>2</sup> to approximately 20,226 km<sup>2</sup> – making it one of the largest PAs in Africa.<sup>64</sup> The expansion, announced through Government Notice 28 of 2008, included land that belonged to villages legally registered under the Local Government Act No.7 of 1982 and the Village Land Act.<sup>65</sup> The legal registration provided the villages jurisdiction within the boundaries of the registered areas.<sup>66</sup> The government, however, did not seek the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of the villages.<sup>67</sup> Efforts by the Mbarali District Council and legal challenges prevented immediate evictions following the announcement and local communities remained in the area.<sup>68</sup>

In 2020, former President John Magufuli visited Mbarali District. While addressing a public rally, he called the 2008 decision to annex villages “a serious blunder” and promised “this will never happen.”<sup>69</sup> President Magufuli's promise, however, ended with his sudden death in March 2021. The relief from his statement was short lived for villages adjacent to RUNAPA, with eviction plans announced in October 2022.

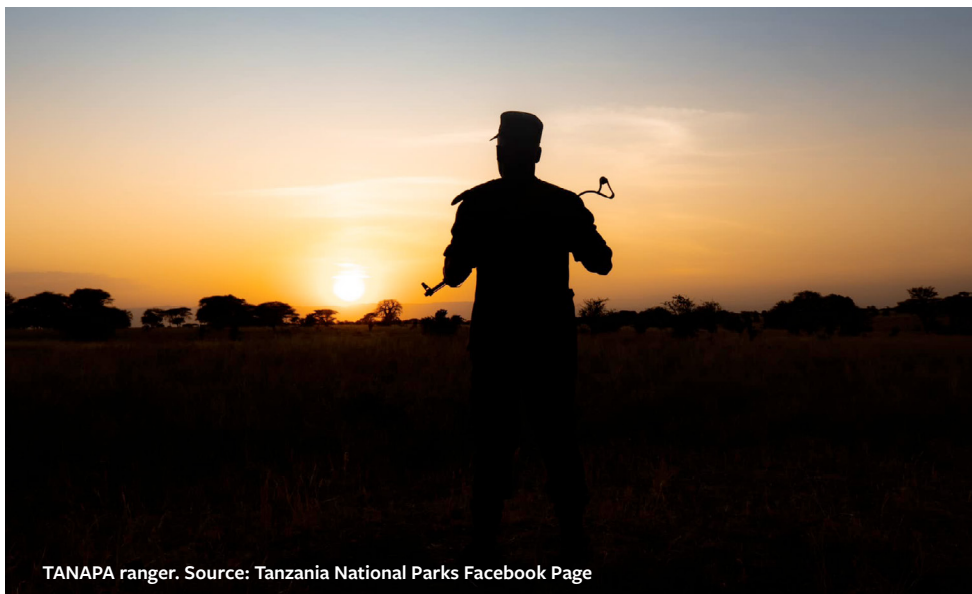


Map of GN 28 from 2008 to expand RUNAPA's borders



## RANGERS ACCUSED OF EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS AND VIOLENCE

A key component of the REGROW project is to increase the capacity of the guards and park authorities by providing them equipment and infrastructure. The project aims to strengthen monitoring systems to improve wildlife protection so that “the PA authorities will have better ability to detect illegal uses of resources,” including grazing and farming.<sup>70</sup> The REGROW Implementation Status & Results Report from December 2022 indicates “the Project continues to enhance park management capacity and measures and has provided equipment that are being used for patrols...” The project is also supposed to fund the construction of seven new ranger posts in RUNAPA.<sup>71</sup>



TANAPA ranger. Source: Tanzania National Parks Facebook Page

Direct support to guards raises serious concerns given that RUNAPA and TANAPA rangers are allegedly implicated in extrajudicial killings of villagers near the park since the World Bank's involvement began. On April 23, 2021, RUNAPA rangers reportedly shot and killed William Nundu, a fisherman.<sup>72</sup> The same day, they allegedly killed two young herders, 25-year-old Sandu Masanja and Ngusa Salawa, just 14 years old, in the Rujewa Ward (close to RUNAPA).<sup>73</sup> The Mbeya regional police commander claimed that they were killed by wild animals while illegally entering the park. Francis Mtega, Member of Parliament (MP) for Mbarali, called for an investigation into the involvement of RUNAPA

rangers in these murders as well as the circumstances of the death of Musa Ndikwege and the disappearances of Abdallah Daimon and Abed Udama.<sup>74</sup> A report compiled by the community organization, Chama Cha Wafugaji Tanzania (CCWT), in April 2022 documented these killings and six additional murders – allegedly committed by RUNAPA rangers – since 2017.<sup>75</sup>

Women have also suffered violence at the hands of wildlife rangers. During field visits to Luhanga, Vikaye, and Mwanawala villages, the research team interviewed several women who reported rapes by RUNAPA rangers.<sup>76</sup> Fearful of law enforcement, these brutal crimes have gone unreported and were shared on the condition of absolute anonymity.

In May 2023, after TANAPA rangers travelled by helicopter and attacked herders and women in Mwanawala, violence by park rangers was again brought to the attention of the Tanzanian Parliament. After hearing the account from MP Mtega, the Prime Minister ordered officials from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and TANAPA to immediately visit Mbeya Region and meet with the District Commissioner.<sup>77</sup> The District Commissioner and the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism traveled to Mwanawala village, accompanied by a heavily armed police force. During the visit, villagers were threatened by high ranking officials with “dire consequences,” if they continued to speak to media.<sup>78</sup>

The government's failure to address the situation in Mwanawala during the visit is not surprising given its track record of ignoring abuses by conservation authorities. During the same Parliamentary session, MP Easter Matiko made a call for a different path forward, given the prevalence of violence against communities near PAs. She said, “The people who are suffering are not those of Mbarali alone. The problem is all over the country... The Parliament should take charge. Because we see the government repeating the same thing and we need to do something. Let us establish a Parliamentary committee to investigate these conflicts once and for all.”<sup>79</sup> Her suggestion was promptly shut down by the Speaker, who insisted that the government's visit would resolve the issue.<sup>80</sup>



MP Mtega calling on Parliament to investigate murders near RUNAPA in May 2023. Source: Uhondo TV







Maasai herders with their cattle © The Oakland Institute

## CATTLE SEIZURES TO DRIVE PASTORALISTS FROM THEIR LAND

The government agencies have also been seizing cattle in large numbers and selling it through an expedited auction process to the severe detriment of local communities. Cattle plays a vital role in pastoralists' livelihoods and these seizures have economically decimated families. Villages facing eviction primarily fall within the Mbarali District, where livestock keeping is the second most practiced livelihood activity after agriculture.<sup>81</sup> As well documented in other PAs in Tanzania, especially in Loliondo,<sup>82</sup> cattle seizures are conducted to force pastoralists to leave their land and find alternative livelihoods.

On September 27, 2022, the Minister of State in the Vice President's Office responsible for Union and Environment, Dr. Selmani Jafo, claimed herdersmen have "invaded" the Ihefu valley inside RUNAPA and caused great damage to water sources in the park.<sup>83</sup> He announced the herders would face legal action if they failed to vacate the area. Commissioner for Mbeya Region, Juma Homera, echoed concerns around the environmental damage caused by livestock and proclaimed that the operation to seize livestock would continue.<sup>84</sup>

The ensuing operation was carried out on a broad scale, with disastrous consequences for herders. RUNAPA's Assistant Conservation Commissioner, Godwell Meing'ataki, stated, "We have captured 12,758 cattle in the park during 2021/2022," and the agency collected over TSh1.2 billion [~US\$511,508]. He openly admitted that pastoralists "pay these fines very fast, they could bring loads of money if we told them to."<sup>85</sup> During these seizures, pastoralists report cases of cruelty by the RUNAPA rangers.

### Reported Cattle Seizures Since September 2022

#### September 14-24, 2022

3,492 cattle were seized in an 11-day period, allegedly for grazing within the Ihefu wetlands; Owners were forced to pay fines.<sup>86</sup>

#### November 22, 2022

RUNAPA rangers seized 172 cattle belonging to Kideka Dabda in Mbarali District. Even though Mr. Dabda showed up and the Mbarali District Court issued an injunction stating that the cattle should not be auctioned off, the cattle were still sold.<sup>87</sup>

#### December 2, 2022

93 cattle from Madundasi village (located south of RUNAPA) belonging to two pastoral families were auctioned off with the permission of the Mbarali District Court.<sup>88</sup>

#### December 7, 2022

Rangers captured 293 cattle including 280 belonging to Muge Gida Gwilasa, a pastoralist, in Vikaye. Gwilasa informed the Vikaye Village Executive Officer about the seizure of his cattle and hired an advocate. On December 12, 2022, the court ordered him to pay a fine to get his animals back.<sup>89</sup>

#### December 19, 2022

Rangers captured 140 animals at Mwanjulwa area within RUNAPA. Despite attempts of the owner to pay to reclaim his animals, on December 22, 2022, the District Court ordered 138 animals to be auctioned as unclaimed.<sup>90</sup>

#### May 6, 2023

TANAPA rangers captured 250 cattle belonging to a pastoralist in Mwanawala village despite being outside RUNAPA's boundaries.<sup>91</sup>



Violent livestock seizures are not new for local herders. A similar strategy was employed by the government between 2006 and 2007 in the Ihefu and Usangu wetlands. According to a 2007 report from the Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organization's (PINGO's) Forum, "many livestock died and others left in critical health conditions due to starvation, disease and lack of water," while held by conservation and government authorities.<sup>93</sup>

For most herders, cattle seizures induce an enormous financial strain that can be impossible to recover from. Rather than supporting communities living next to PAs, the government appears to be proactively working to undermine their livelihoods to force them out of the area. The World Bank's support to rangers, leading these seizures, raises serious questions about its role and responsibility in the devastating impact the REGROW project has on community livelihoods.



“Rangers captured my herd of cattle on September 21, 2022. The rangers assaulted me badly. I, as the owner of the animals, had no option but to follow the impounded livestock. I was severely beaten. I felt like dying. They forced me to cut and pull thorny branches and make a holding kraal [corral for cattle]. Then I was forced to stare at the very hot sun. The animals were also tortured. They did not eat or drink water for six days. Those were severe punishments.”

– Pastoralist, Iwalanji village<sup>92</sup>

## REGROW PROJECT FAILS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS

The second component of the REGROW project includes US\$11.5 million to improve “alternative” livelihood activities for selected communities adjacent to PAs. Some of these include “supplying services and agricultural products to tourism operators, promoting low environmental impact agricultural micro-enterprises, scholarships for community members in tourism, wildlife, conservation, guide-training programs and production and marketing of handcraft items demanded by tourist market.”<sup>94</sup>

► Households with access to alternative livelihood activities supported by the project (Number, Custom)				
	Baseline	Actual (Previous)	Actual (Current)	End Target
Value	0.00	649.00	649.00	20,000.00
Date	21-Dec-2017	20-Jun-2022	20-Jun-2022	28-Sep-2023
► Households trained by the project in reduction of human-wildlife conflicts (Number, Custom)				
	Baseline	Actual (Previous)	Actual (Current)	End Target
Value	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,000.00
Date	21-Dec-2017	20-Jun-2022	20-Jun-2022	28-Sep-2023

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By the project's completion date in 2025, 20,000 households across the four target PAs are supposed to receive training in these alternative livelihoods – 5,000 households trained in tourism-based activities and 15,000 in natural resource management (NRM) skills.<sup>95</sup> However, according to the Bank's latest data, six years into the project, only 649 households have received training.<sup>96</sup>

Other than a brief and vague mention of “establishing conservation friendly crop, livestock and forestry-related initiatives,”<sup>97</sup> actual support to pastoralists in expanding access to grazing land, water, or veterinary services remains critically absent from the project. One livelihood initiative does include a training to reduce human wildlife conflict and protect crops and livestock that could be helpful for villagers. However, only 6,000 villagers across the four PAs will receive this training and according to the latest project implementation update, none have benefitted so far.<sup>98</sup>

The REGROW project additionally commits US\$24.5 million to strengthen landscape management and infrastructure financing in and upstream of RUNAPA.<sup>99</sup> This has also failed to deliver so far. Aiming to train 20,000 smallholder farmers through “Farmer Field Schools” on improved efficient irrigation water use remains far from realized, with only 337 people trained as of the latest status report.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, the goal to improve irrigation infrastructure on 22 km<sup>2</sup> of land used by smallholder farmers has so far been completed on only nine km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>101</sup>

Efforts to address poverty in communities adjacent to the PAs are far behind implementation schedule. Critically, the project fails to address the broader impacts that the communities face as a result of the World Bank and Tanzanian government's efforts to increase tourism – including over 20,000 people facing evictions from villages neighboring RUNAPA and widespread cattle seizures.

## The GEF Funds the Devastation of RUNAPA Communities

In addition to the REGROW project, significant support for the Tanzanian government's abusive and violent management of conservation in the Great Ruaha River Basin comes from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a financial intermediary fund of the World Bank.<sup>102</sup> The “Supporting the Implementation of Integrated Ecosystem Management Approach for Landscape Restoration and Biodiversity Conservation in Tanzania” project is funded in part by three GEF agencies, including the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) – which also serves as the implementing agency.<sup>103</sup>

Approved in 2018, the five-year project aims at strengthening the “integrated natural resources management and restoration of degraded landscapes for building resilient socio-ecological systems in Tanzania,” to benefit 100,000 households.<sup>104</sup> The Great Ruaha River basin is one of two target areas for restoration. The GEF has provided US\$11.2 million for the US\$75.5 million project, while the Tanzanian government financed the majority of the remaining budget.<sup>105</sup> The Centre for International Forest Research (CIFOR) and Bioversity International each additionally provided approximately US\$1 million.<sup>106</sup> The project is designed to restore natural vegetation and springs allegedly damaged by farming, grazing, and fishing.

The GEF's support to policy and institutional frameworks to reduce landscape degradation is problematic given the government's rampant trampling of the rights to land and life of communities living adjacent to the Great Ruaha River. The Tanzanian Vice President's Office and National Environmental Management Council are the lead executing agencies of the project. The Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Human Settlements Development (MLHHSD) that announced the evictions in October 2022 sits on the steering committee of the project. The MLHHSD also “plays an important role in ensuring wise and informed allocation of land for settlement and other uses, in alignment with the objectives of the project.”<sup>107</sup>

Providing funding directly to the Tanzanian government while working to support the very institutional and policy frameworks that threaten to dispossess tens of thousands of people near one of the project's target areas renders the GEF complicit in the abuses perpetrated by the government.



# WORLD BANK VIOLATES ITS OWN SAFEGUARDS

## Evictions

The government's announcement of evictions to expand RUNAPA directly contradicts the World Bank's assurances that the project would not lead to any forced resettlement. The REGROW Resettlement Policy Framework states that the "project, by design, is not expected to cause or influence the need for any kind of resettlement."<sup>108</sup> The document mentions that government's other development activities in the PAs and priority villages around them where REGROW will be implemented "may result in involuntary resettlement and/or loss of assets or access to assets and livelihoods." Despite this, the Bank inaccurately concludes that the "MNRT has represented that there are no such activities planned at this time."<sup>109</sup>

If evictions and resettlement are considered, the project safeguards stipulate that the MNRT would first need to prepare and implement a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) and that it would be required to follow "international best practice with regards to land acquisition and resettlement."<sup>110</sup> The Bank would "provide technical assistance and MNRT will receive WB review, comment and approval prior to implementing any resettlement activities."<sup>111</sup> Additionally, the safeguards require public consultation meetings in the affected villages with relevant stakeholders.<sup>112</sup> Instead of complying with these requirements, the government is blatantly disregarding the protections in place. As it moves forward with eviction plans, the government has failed to prepare a RAP, hold consultations, or follow international best practices.

In April 2023, the Oakland Institute wrote to the management of the World Bank pointing out that the forced eviction of five villages and 47 sub-villages violated their safeguards. The World Bank, through REGROW, provides direct material support to the government for management of RUNAPA as well as policy and institutional support. The villages are located within the disputed and never acted upon borders drawn by GN 28. The government is now planning to evict these villages claiming they are within RUNAPA's boundaries where human settlement is prohibited. Given the REGROW project's focus on the park, planned evictions and violence suffered by the communities to expand RUNAPA is inextricably linked to the project.



Beacon marking RUNAPA's border in 2022. Source: The Chanzo

The Bank, however, failed to take responsibility, stating that "to the extent that the government is pursuing evictions for purposes of extending park boundaries, such activities would fall outside the scope of the Project."<sup>113</sup> The Bank also claimed that its mandate "does not extend to overseeing the conduct of Member countries' government agencies or to intervening in the event of alleged wrongdoing unrelated to a World Bank-financed project." This statement effectively renders its safeguards obsolete, as long as the Bank can claim the abuses are unrelated to its project.

**"To the extent that the government is pursuing evictions for purposes of extending park boundaries, such activities would fall outside the scope of the Project."**

– World Bank REGROW Project Team





The failure of the World Bank's safeguards and guidelines in preventing the evictions set to unfold highlights a broader malaise within the institution when it comes to displacement of local populations. In 2015, three internal reports reviewing over two decades of Bank projects with potential resettlement concluded "oversight of those projects often had poor or no documentation, lacked follow through to ensure that protection measures were implemented, and some projects were not sufficiently identified as high-risk for populations living in the vicinity."<sup>114</sup> The Bank was unaware of the status of displaced people for 61 percent of sampled projects.<sup>115</sup> Years of investigative reports exposed the devastating impact of Bank projects on communities around the world.<sup>116</sup>

In response, the Bank launched a plan to improve the oversight and management of resettlement practices.<sup>117</sup> However, as evidenced by the REGROW project, serious gaps between safeguards in place and what happens in practice continue to undermine the institution.

## Ranger Violence & Cattle Seizures

Over the course of the project, the World Bank has failed to take any action against rampant violence committed by the rangers it finances. In a letter to the Oakland Institute, the Bank distanced itself from the abuses reported to be committed by TANAPA by asserting that the project's involvement is limited to "providing materials and equipment for monitoring and patrolling, specifically for wildlife monitoring. None of the materials or equipment include weapons, firearms, or similar items."<sup>118</sup> The Bank disregards its support to and close partnership with TANAPA – the agency responsible for overseeing the "implementation and supervision, as well as the construction and operation of project activities."<sup>119</sup> Even if not weaponry, the material support that the REGROW project provides to those responsible for the abuses is significant and critical in allowing them to operate.



Maasai herders with their cattle © Summering2018 (CC by 4.0) via Wikimedia Commons

In its communication to the Institute, the World Bank also recommended that "alleged incidents of extrajudicial killings should be reported to the judicial authorities for review and action."<sup>120</sup> The Bank assumes that the Tanzanian judicial system is capable of holding the government accountable. To date, despite numerous cases filed to challenge forced evictions in the name of conservation – for instance in Loliondo and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area – the courts have failed to provide redress or justice to communities.<sup>121</sup> The government has also demonstrated a blatant disregard for regional human rights mechanisms, as evidenced by Tanzania's withdrawal from the African Court on Human and People's Rights in 2019.<sup>122</sup>

The only action that the World Bank claims to have taken in response to these shocking instances of violence committed in the project area was to express "its concern about these allegations," to the Tanzanian government.<sup>123</sup> When questioned by the Oakland Institute about steps taken to ensure herders are not mistreated by park authorities, the Bank again shirked responsibility, claiming "to the World Bank's knowledge, the rangers' work under the Project is conducted only within park boundaries."<sup>124</sup> This claim is contrary to TANAPA's aforementioned seizure of 250 cattle in Mwanawala on May 6, 2023 – outside of RUNAPA's boundaries, and several other cases. The Bank also stated that "to the extent that park rangers contravene applicable Tanzanian law, the alleged cattle seizure incidents should be reported to the relevant authorities in Tanzania."<sup>125</sup> Given rangers are perceived as law enforcement by communities near RUNAPA, villagers are very unlikely to risk reporting abuses and illegal seizures to TANAPA or other agencies, given the fear of retribution.





The Bank also responded that the project's grievance mechanism has not received any complaints related to the allegations of evictions, human rights abuses, or livelihood restrictions.<sup>126</sup> This demonstrates its lack of due diligence and ignorance of the fact that 852 villagers filed a case in the High Court of Tanzania to stop the impending evictions.<sup>127</sup> It also questions the effectiveness and relevance of the Bank's grievance mechanism which the villagers do not use. To date, the Bank has failed to provide information regarding the number of villages who received training and information about the mechanism.

## **REGROW Abuses Violate World Bank Operating Procedures**

The evictions, extrajudicial killings, and livelihood restrictions within the REGROW project area do not only contradict the project's safeguards, but also violate several of the World Bank Operating Procedures (OPs). The Bank's OPs are supposedly in place to "ensure that the people and the environment are protected from potential adverse impacts" of its projects.<sup>128</sup> These policies should require borrowing governments to address environmental and social risks before receiving World Bank support.<sup>129</sup>

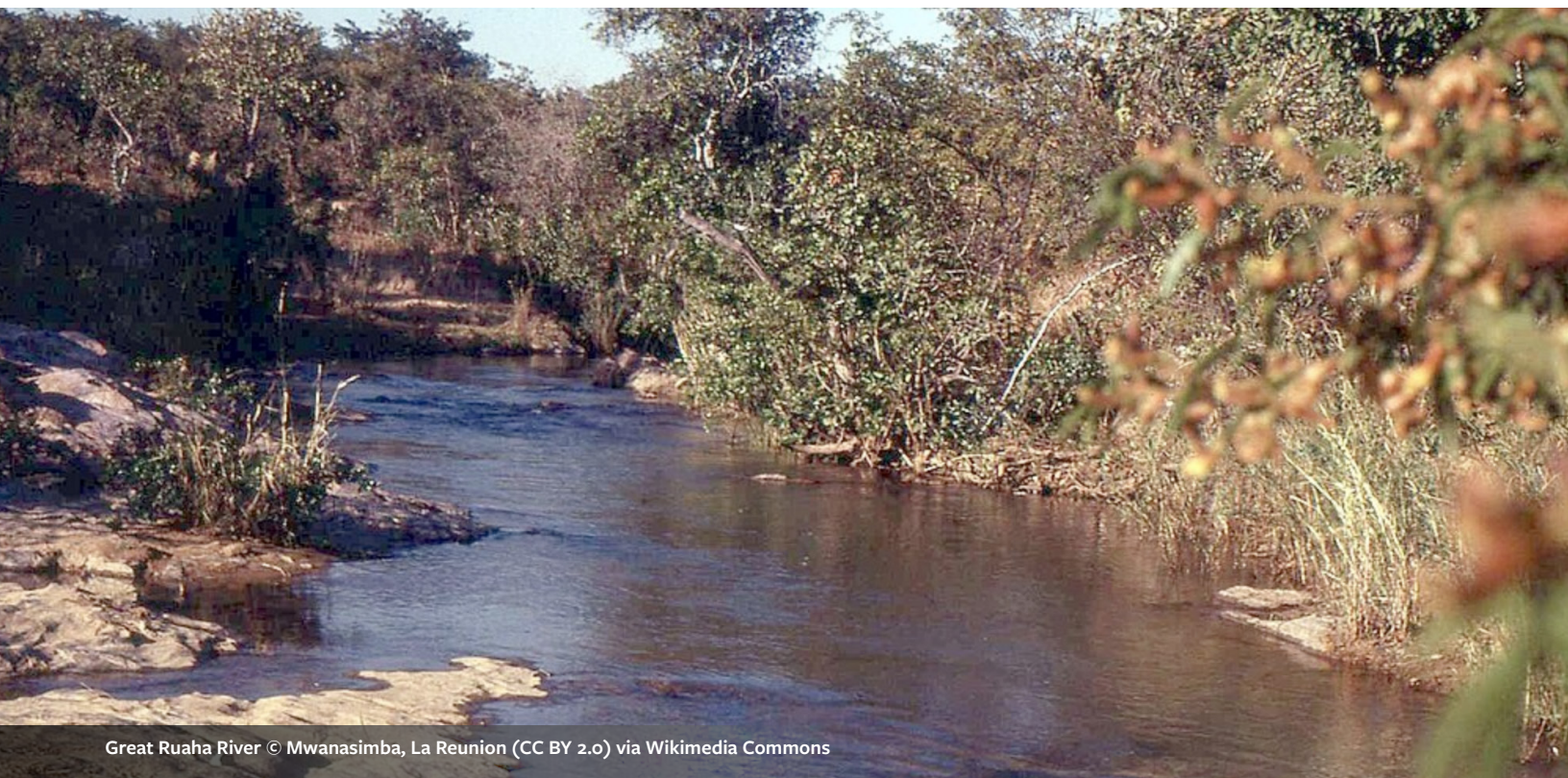
The evictions set to occur without the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of communities stand in violation of several relevant World Bank OPs that are supposed to ensure consultation and participation of impacted peoples. These include the Environmental Assessment (OP/BP 4.01), Physical Cultural Resources (OP/BP 4.11), Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12), Natural Habitats (OP/BP 4.04), and Forests (OP/BP 4.36).<sup>130</sup>

These abuses have impacted several Indigenous groups, including the Maasai, Datoga, and Sangu pastoralists, who inhabit the project area. Despite this, the Bank failed to trigger its policy on Indigenous Peoples, causing irreparable harm to the identity, culture, and rights of the Indigenous community in the project area.

## **THE WORLD BANK MUST BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE**

The long, brutal history of communities being evicted for the expansion of RUNAPA in the years preceding the project implementation – coupled with the Tanzanian government's track record of ignoring land rights in the name of conservation – should have triggered internal alarms for the Bank before deciding to finance the project.

Through the REGROW project, the Bank is a key financier of the Tanzanian government's oppressive and violent "fortress" conservation model, which is being implemented to boost tourism. Its attempt to shirk responsibility from the evictions, extrajudicial killings, and livelihood restrictions detailed in this report is appalling. The Bank chooses to look the other way as its own safeguards and procedures are violated. It must be held accountable for its complicity with the Tanzanian government's actions and abuses.





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