



## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

# 2023

## Defining Moments of an Unforgettable Year



2023 was a breathtaking adventure. Initially, it was amazing. Then it tested us. Then it was spectacular. Despite the turbulence encountered, we evolved into our highest form, and harnessed every opportunity to optimize the impact of our community conservancy model.

With unwavering supporters like you behind us, we addressed the most pressing needs of our member conservancies, achieved incredible conservation milestones, increased communities' climate resilience, and transformed thousands of lives!

Come along with us as we look back at some of the highlights that made 2023 a truly extraordinary chapter in our journey.

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## January

A historic drought marked the start of 2023, placing pastoralist communities under enormous financial strain. To mitigate this, Melako Community Conservancy in Marsabit County activated its emergency drought response, distributing 50 tonnes of assorted food rations to 6,600 vulnerable households in five drought-stricken Conservancy locations, namely, Koya, Laisamis, Logologo, Lontolio, and Merille. This initiative, worth Ksh 5,500,000, was funded by the Northern Kenya Rangelands Carbon Project (NKRCP), following community approval at zonal-level meetings.

The biting drought intensified as the year unfolded. To counteract its debilitating effects, felt across the NRT landscape, we implemented additional interventions in our member conservancies, increasing community members' resilience.

In Merti North, Merti South, Korbesa, Mata Arba, Yamicha, and Malka Galla Locations in Cherab Community Conservancy, 10.8 tonnes of maize flour, generously donated by the Chandaria Foundation, were issued, benefiting 2,100 households.

Additionally, the NKRCP (through the Carbon Community Fund) distributed Ksh 23,393,039 to five community

conservancies: Kalama, Melako, Naibunga Upper, Naibunga Central, and Biliqo Bulesa. This initiative benefited 14,330 households, easing the financial burden of community members and ensuring children remained in school throughout the drought season.

In Nakuprat-Gotu Community Conservancy, UK-based Khalsa Aid International, through Ramgharia Youth Association, donated 500 relief aid hampers, assisting the most vulnerable community members affected by the prolonged drought. During the exercise, at least 10 tonnes of food rations and other basic commodities were distributed to households in seven drought-stricken conservancy areas (Kiwanja, Attan, Ngaremara, Manyatta Zebra, Daaba, Nakuprat, and Gotu).

Further stepping up drought mitigation efforts, our teams traversed the NRT landscape, providing fuel and transport subsidies and livestock feed, installing water supply systems, and restoring boreholes, so community members, their livestock, and wildlife could access safe, clean water.



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# February

**30** youth from Ishaqbini Hirola Community Conservancy in Garissa County graduated from NRT Trading's Ujuzi Manyattani Program, with marketable skills in mobile phone repair and tailoring.

The graduates were issued startup toolkits so they could launch their businesses and be self-employed. To further support them in their journey and ensure their success, the youth were trained in business management through NRT Trading's Biashara Mashinani Program. 2023 saw 210 Ujuzi Manyattani graduates from various community conservancies, including Shurr, Songa, Naibunga Central, Kaptuya, and Kiunga, undergo the business management training.

The Ujuzi Manyattani Program is supported by USAID's Local Works Program and implemented in collaboration with the National Industrialization and Training Authority and polytechnics.



I refused to be defined by my disability. Joining Ujuzi Manyattani transformed my life and restored my hope and will to live. Many in my position are begging in the streets, but I am earning an income through phone repair services.

Peter Lepedo,  
**Ujuzi Manyattani beneficiary, from  
Songa Community Conservancy in  
Marsabit County**

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# March

In honor of International Women's Day and in an effort to narrow the gender inequality gap, NRT hosted the 2023 Women Leadership Summit—the third of its kind, bringing together more than 300 women from all 43 NRT member community conservancies and amplifying their voices in conservation.

The Summit, organized by NRT and held in Ruko Community Conservancy, aligned its objectives with those of NRT's Gender and Social Inclusion Program and sought to identify culturally appropriate solutions for bridging gender gaps. It also aimed at promoting gender diversity in leadership, supporting aspiring female leaders, boosting women's participation in conservation and community development, and broadening their knowledge of gender equity in community conservation.

To wrap up the event, the women joined the rest of the world in commemorating International Women's Day on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, celebrating their conservation achievements.

The Summit was also supported by Conservation International (CI), the European Union (EU), the Italian Agen-



cy for Development Cooperation, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Danish International Development Agency, and the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi, through the Integrated Management of Natural Resources for Resilience in Arid and Semi-Arid Counties Program.

To further empower women across the NRT landscape, 35 women from Leparua, Ltungai, and Melako Community Conservancies underwent NRT's Leadership and Management Program training with support from both CI and NRT.

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# April

NRT and Nasuulu Community Conservancy had the honour of hosting Hon. Peninah Malonza, the Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Wildlife, and Heritage. During her visit, she launched the Conservancy's tourism *banda*, a self-catering accommodation facility funded through the NKRCP.

Henriette Geiger, the Ambassador of the European Union to Kenya and delegations from USAID-Kenya, the Embassy of Denmark in Kenya, Agence Française de Développement, the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi, and the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) also attended the event.

In the same month, we had the pleasure of hosting the United States Ambassador to Kenya, Meg Whitman, when she visited Nakuprat-Gotu Community Conser-

vancy in Isiolo County, to gain insights on the impact of the NKRCP.

Among the notable highlights from the 2023 visits was one by His Excellency Dr. William Ruto, the President of Kenya, who graced us with his presence at our booth at the 2023 Rhino Charge event, an offroad motorsport competition organized by the Rhino Ark Kenya Charitable Trust to fundraise for conservation efforts in Kenya. The competition took place at Nkoiteiya Community Conservancy, an NRT member conservancy in Samburu County.

We deeply value every effort made throughout the year to travel to our headquarters and our member community conservancies, including visits by the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy, Dan Jørgensen, (who engaged with community members from Nasuulu and Ngare Ndare Community Conservancies in Isiolo and Meru Counties respectively), an EU Delegation from Brussels and Nairobi (who toured Kaptuya and Ruko Community Conservancies), representatives from the Lucille Foundation (who made site visits to Kalama Resource Center, Lesoro Dispensary, and Ndada-po Sand Dam) and a delegation from The Nature Conservancy who visited Kalama Community Conservancy.



I am very happy with what NRT is doing to reseed some of our environmentally degraded areas. I want to promise you the collaboration, the working together, and the partnership of the Government of Kenya in working on matters environment. I have agreed with the County Governments of Isiolo, Laikipia, and Samburu that we are going to do everything possible to ensure that we conserve the environment, and make sure that wildlife, human beings, and biodiversity live together in harmony.

H.E. Dr. William Ruto,  
President of the Republic of Kenya

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# May

In a game-changing moment for NRT Trading, the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) certified BeadWORKS as a fair-trade enterprise! The WFTO is the global community and verifier of social enterprises that fully practice fair trade. Spread across 76 countries, WFTO members all exist to serve marginalized communities.

The Kenya eCommerce Awards added another feather to BeadWORKS' cap by announcing the Program as the winner of the prestigious Best International/Export E-commerce Website Award!

BeadWORKS, a handicraft business, harnesses northern Kenya's women's rich beading culture, providing opportunities for pastoralist women in eight NRT member community conservancies to translate their traditional skills into much-needed income.

Searching for a timeless, classic gift for a loved one or looking to elevate your style this holiday season? Please take a moment to check out the newest BeadWORKS products. Every purchase you make supports pastoralist women in northern Kenya, wildlife protection efforts, and community-led conservation. To browse through the catalogue,

[click here](#) 



I used to pass the women beading under the tree and think, what are they doing wasting their time like that? Later, I was convinced by my sister to join a group. I am very proud of the money I make at BeadWORKS. It gives me independence, and I feel empowered as I have also learned money management skills.

Regina Lengamunyak,  
a deaf and mute star beader from  
Sera Community Conservancy in  
Samburu County

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# June

NRT, in collaboration with partners including TNC, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Lamu County Government, Base Camp Foundation, and the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, charted a course for sustainable fishing in Kiunga Community Conservancy by launching the Gear Exchange Program, in which fishers voluntarily exchange their seine nets for sustainable fishing gear.

During the Program's launch, 176 beach seine fishers (11 owners and 165 crew) voluntarily exchanged their beach seine nets (representing 85% of the seines in Kiunga) for new sustainable fishing gear issued by the Conservancy. The seines, which are currently in the custody of the KWS, will be recycled.

The exchange was preceded by a training conducted for the fishers on how to use the new gear and marked a significant milestone achieved in the protection of marine life in Kiunga Marine National Reserve. In addition to the new fishing equipment, the fishers will also benefit from NRT Coast's Fish-to-Market Program, which links them with a buyer, Kumbatia Seafoods. This prevents exploitation by middlemen, increasing the fishers' income.





The Gear Exchange Program is a step towards modernizing Lamu's cottage fishing sector as it faces the realities of overfishing and the effects of climate change. The Lamu County Government has set aside Ksh 40 million to go towards fisheries and the blue economy development budget, as part of our commitment to improve the blue economy sector.

Hon. Issa Timamy,  
Governor of Lamu County

Watch how the fishers in Kiunga Community Conservancy have embraced sustainable fishing.

[click here](#)

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# July

Sera Rhino Sanctuary in Sera Community Conservancy in Samburu County made history by conducting Kenya's first black rhino ear notching and transmitter fitting exercise. Six endangered black rhinos had their ears notched and transmitters implanted during the procedure, enhancing their protection and conservation and enabling researchers and conservancy scouts to easily identify and track them during daily patrols.

The exercise was conducted by the KWS, led by the Senior Assistant Director and Head of Capture and Veterinary Services, Dr. Isaac Lekool, and in partnership with Sera Community Conservancy, NRT, and the Samburu County Government.

Sera Rhino Sanctuary is East Africa's first and only community-run black rhino sanctuary. Established in 2015 with a founder population of 10 black rhinos, it



is now home to 22 black rhinos. Its conservation efforts are supported by partners including Fauna & Flora, St. Louis Zoo, Save the Rhino, San Diego Wildlife Alliance, and Tusk Trust.

Thanks to a dedicated team of conservancy scouts and strong community and partner support, no poaching incidents have been recorded in Sera Rhino Sanctuary since its establishment.



Through the concerted efforts of the government and dedicated stakeholders, we have successfully reversed the decline in rhino numbers in Kenya over the past three decades. This accomplishment is a testament to our unwavering commitment to safeguarding and conserving these magnificent creatures for upcoming generations.

Dr. Isaac Lekool,  
KWS Senior Assistant Director and Head  
of Capture and Veterinary Services

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# August

**10** rangers in NRT Coast were named the best-performing rangers in their respective community conservancies at a ceremony held in Malindi Marine National Park in collaboration with the KWS. Four others received special recognition and awards for their conservation of the endangered sea turtle and hirola and their outstanding wildlife protection efforts.

In Isiolo and Samburu Counties, rangers from NRT member community conservancies commemorated World Ranger Day by paying tribute to fallen rangers and those injured in the line of duty, in a ceremony attended by the Isiolo County Government led by the Deputy Governor, Dr. James Lowasa, the KWS, and other partners.

The event was also held to celebrate the advancements made in the Laikipia-Isiolo-Samburu Meru National Park ecosystem, as a result of rangers' efforts, including the



recovery of endangered wildlife, increased community understanding of natural resource conservation, and a flourishing wildlife population.

To improve ranger patrols, wildlife protection, and conservation of endangered species, over the last three years, NRT has been implementing an ambitious project that has seen its radio network upgraded and an Internet of Things (IoT) network established and expanded, creating a vast communication web connecting 22 NRT member community conservancies.

Deployed in collaboration with Connected Conservation Foundation, Cisco, 51 Degrees, EarthRanger, and the European Union's Community Policing Initiative Biolive Project, NRT's is Africa's largest landscape-wide, IoT conservation network.

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# September

NRT joined over 30,000 delegates from 120 countries in attending the inaugural Africa Climate Summit and charting a carbon-negative course for the world, one in which the continent contributing the least to global climate change does not continue to suffer the worst consequences.

The Summit, themed "Driving Green Growth and Climate Finance Solutions for Africa and the World," presented an opportunity to supercharge climate action.

Locally, through our community conservancy model, we are working hand in hand with our partners to mitigate the devastating effects of climate change, generate sustainable development income for indigenous communities, and increase their resilience through the NKRCF, the world's largest soil carbon removal project.

Verified Carbon Standard-certified by Verra, one of the world's leading and most respected carbon standards, awarded Triple Gold Status by the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance due to the benefits it provides to wildlife and communities, and named a Lighthouse Project by the Natural Climate Solutions Alliance, the NKRCF is restoring degraded rangelands across 1.9 million hectares (4.7 million acres), and is anticipated to remove 50 million tonnes of carbon dioxide over 30 years—the equivalent of the annual emissions from over 10 million cars.

An inaccurate report published by detractors that vilified the NKRCF led Verra to place the Project under its Section 6 review in March this year. Following the conclusion of the eight-month quality control review, Verra announced its findings, stating, "The NRT Project did conform to the Group's verified carbon standards. Effective immediately, the Project should once again begin issuing credits."



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# October

NRT East, West, and Mountain Regions awarded education bursaries worth Ksh 27,500,000 from the Community Livelihood Funds and the NKRCPC to 2,324 students in Kinna, Sericho, Garbatulla, Cherab, Masol, Pellow, and Naibunga Upper Community Conservancies, with support from the European Union, USAID, and Agence Française de Développement.

In 2023, the NKRCPC disbursed bursary funds amounting to Ksh 90,011,244 to community conservancies involved in the Project, benefitting over 12,000 students. The bursaries improved school attendance rates and were a respite for struggling pastoralist families, who had been under immense financial strain after losing livestock, their main source of livelihood, to drought.



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# November

**32,000** semi-circular earth bunds were created by over 300 women in Naibunga Upper Community Conservancy as part of rangeland rehabilitation efforts, with support from Fauna and Flora and the Darwin Initiative.

Bunds, low embankments of compacted earth or stones in a semi-circle, enhance soil's water retention capacity, reduce rainwater runoff, and promote the natural regeneration of indigenous perennial grasses.

Between October and mid-November this year, the TWENDE (Towards Ending Drought Emergencies) Project, with technical support from Justdiggitt, facilitated the establishment of 13,844 semi-circular earth bunds in Westgate, after potential sites were identified, community sensitization was conducted, and community members were trained on bund usage.



The TWENDE Project is also supporting similar land restoration efforts in Kalama Community Conservancy, where it is overseeing the development of 5,770 semi-circular bunds.

As Kenya continues to experience above-average rainfall due to El Niño, it is expected that the rangeland rehabilitation activities at Naibunga Upper, Westgate, and Kalama Community Conservancies will yield bountiful grass harvests, securing the livelihoods of indigenous pastoralist communities and ensuring abundant pasture is available for livestock and wildlife.



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# December

**23** female teachers from 23 primary schools in NRT member community conservancies where our Girls' Mentorship Program operates, successfully underwent an annual teachers' training that increased their capacity to support and mentor young girls.

The Program, supported by the AKO Foundation through Conservation International, has increased enrollment by 154 girls in the 23 schools participating in the pilot, with 152 girls transitioning from primary to secondary school.



2023

Massive congratulations to these stars!

## Tom Lalampaa



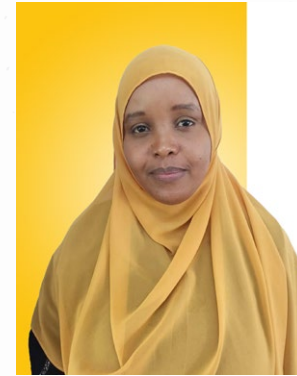
Our CEO and leader extraordinaire, Tom Lalampaa, was bestowed a recognition award during the National Conservancies Leaders Conference held in March at the Kenya School of Government. This award was issued in acknowledgement of Lalampaa's stellar contributions to the establishment of the KWCA and his distinguished role as founding chairperson.

## Gedhia Mamo



An exhilarating performance by our Executive Assistant, Gedhia Mamo, saw her clinch victory in the 10-kilometer amateur race of the 2023 Maralal International Camel Derby, held in Maralal in Samburu County. The thrilling camel racing event was attended by the Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, H.E. Musalia Mudavadi.

## Khadija Hussein and Vivian Jebet



We are immensely proud of our Regional Finance and Administration Officer-NRT East, Khadija Hussein, and our Senior Communications Officer, Vivian Jebet, for being crowned the winners of Conservation International's 2023-2024 Emerging Indigenous Women Leaders Fellowship.

This prestigious Fellowship promotes women's leadership in rangeland management and supports fellows in conducting research and implementing women-centered projects that foster equitable and inclusive governance in community conservancies.

Hussein's project elevates the financial literacy of women board members and leaders, while Jebet's optimizes communications and storytelling to empower and build the capacity of emerging women leaders in northern Kenya.





## Stella Napanu



Hats off to our phenomenal Rangelands Education Officer, Stella Napanu, for being elected as the Chairperson of the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association's National Conservancies Youth Forum. In this capacity, Napanu will serve as the youth representative at the national level and sit on the Board of the Association's National Conservancies Council. We wish her great success in this new role!

Hats off to our phenomenal Rangelands Education Officer, Stella Napanu, for being elected as the Chairperson of the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association's National Conservancies Youth Forum. In this capacity, Napanu will serve as the youth representative at the national level and sit on the Board of the Association's National Conservancies Council. We wish her great success in this new role!

## Without you, there is no us

Your enduring commitment to conservation and continued support were the cornerstone of our growth and success in 2023, enabling us to transform lives in indigenous communities across northern and coastal Kenya and Uganda.


Thank you for being part of our story and our conservation journey.

From all our member community conservancies and us at NRT, Happy Holidays!

Sending you our warmest wishes as you ring in the new year. May your 2024 be filled with abundance, joy, and exciting new opportunities!

## Get caught up!

Did you miss any of our monthly newsletters or want to read them again? Be sure to check out all the publications and catch up on the year's stories.

[click here](#) 

## Share the Gift of Resilience this Holiday

Simply [choose an area of our work](#) that aligns with the values and passions of your loved ones. Make a donation in their name, and they will receive a tailored e-card.

Your gifting will enable us to continue our vital work of transforming lives and conserving nature.

## Learn more about NRT

Please visit [nrt-kenya.org](http://nrt-kenya.org) for the latest updates on NRT, our member community conservancies, exciting new projects, and more!

