

## II Ngwesi Group Ranch

### Project background

#### Species of focus:

- Elephant, Rhinoceros

#### Country/Countries:

- Kenya

#### Site(s):

Lewa Wildlife Sanctuary - 8,645-hectares, located in Mukogodo Division, Laikipia District, north of Mount Kenya. The area is an important wildlife corridor between Laikipia and Samburu.

#### GPS coordinates:

No data

#### Project web site:

No data

## Summary description:

Following the end of commercial hunting in the region during the 1970s, local people used firearms purchased from Somali refugees to poach wildlife indiscriminately. By the late 1980s, elephant populations had been significantly reduced and rhinos had disappeared. The ecosystem has simultaneously been under threat from deforestation, with sections of the Mukogodo forest cleared for timber, fuel wood, and agriculture. As well as contributing to widespread land degradation, this has also increased local tensions between pastoralists and farmers.

The II Ngwesi Group Ranch in the central Kenyan district of Laikipia established an 8,645 hectares community-conserved area that aims to balance the needs of local pastoralists with wildlife conservation and the operation of a lucrative ecolodge. II Ngwesi Lodge was opened in 1996, and caters to the high-end Kenyan tourism market. II Ngwesi means 'People of Wildlife'.

The group ranch land is divided into settlement and conservation areas. The latter is further divided into a relatively small core zone, measuring 5km<sup>2</sup> (500 hectares) and a larger buffer

zone of 6,000 hectares. Within this buffer zone, pastoralists are permitted to graze livestock during dry periods, making it an important strategy for reducing the impacts of drought.

Il Ngwesi's work in the group ranch has focused on ensuring the ecological integrity of its conservation area while delivering tangible economic and social gains for its Maasai members. Conservation strategies have included:

1. Training and employment of security personnel - the bylaws established to protect the ranch's 6,500 hectares of conserved land include the outlawing of poaching or killing of animals in the conservation area. Il Ngwesi is not fenced, so nine security personnel have been employed, and given training and weapons by the government's reserve police force to enforce these bylaws.
2. Alternative livelihood activities have been encouraged to decrease the Maasai's reliance on livestock and increase household incomes. Conservation has been strengthened by the purchase of land outside the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch for agriculture: 2,000 acres were acquired for wheat planting (using US\$ 30,000 from the UNDP Equator Prize 2002). Community members have also been encouraged to diversify from livestock to agricultural activities, including the irrigation of land on the slopes of Mount Kenya.
3. Infrastructural projects, alongside health and education programs, have improved the wellbeing of the group ranch's communities.

## **Land management type:**

Communally managed land

## **Product(s) in trade:**

- Horn, Ivory

## **Product value at site level:**

No data

## **Types of poachers:**

Individuals from local community

## **Details of 'other' poacher type:**

No data

Project  
implementation

**Is the project implemented by an external party?**

Yes

## **Implementing organisation:**

The Il Ngwesi lodge is run as an independent limited company with a majority shareholding owned by the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch. The lodge is governed by a board made up of four community members, representatives from Lewa and Borana conservancies, and the local Member of Parliament. The Il Ngwesi Community Trust committee (or Natural Resource Management committee) consists of fourteen representatives from the seven Maasai communities. The committee meets three times a year to hear proposals from the community representatives and debate decisions concerning the management of the group ranch or particular land-use regulations. The Group Ranch committee consists wholly of Maasai community members, although they also seek advice from government departments and other partners in specific areas of expertise, including issues such as land acquisition, updating the members' register, and financial management. The Group Ranch committee is led by a Board of Directors, comprised of six elected members of the community and three external experts. To solidify this management structure, the Group Ranch has developed a constitution to establish clear decision-making and implementation processes

## **Name of funding organisation(s):**

The Il Ngwesi Group ranch is financially sustainable, with average annual revenues from the eco-lodge of around US\$ 86,500. This adequately covers the lodge's operational costs, while 40 % is invested in community development projects. The lodge has operated without external funding since 2004. In addition to lodge revenue, a conservation fee is also payable for entry into the area, at US\$ 40 per person, per day, while groups of visitors pay US\$ 300 per night to stay in the lodge's campsites. External funding is sought where Il Ngwesi's own revenues cannot cover its community development projects. International partners have also contributed in the form of technical assistance.

## **Community organisation(s) involved:**

The Il Ngwesi Group ranch is owned and managed by the local population of almost 7,000 Laikipiak Maasai pastoralists.

## **Was the project established specifically to engage communities in combatting IWT?**

Partly (one of a number of objectives)

1995

## **Year the IWT project or component started:**

Ongoing

## **Project status is currently:**

## Case study information is up to date as of:

### Community engagement

#### **Approach taken to community engagement and its rationale:**

Community members are employed as game guards

Community members benefit from tourism as a conservation incentive

Community members are provided with livelihood alternatives in lieu of wildlife use

Community members benefit from development projects (e.g. infrastructure development such as health or education facilities) as a conservation incentive

#### **Details of 'other' community involvement approach type:**

No data

#### **Financial:**

The lodge typically employs around 32 staff; 24 are employed full-time, with 15 working at the lodge and nine full-time guards. Casual workers are also hired on a regular basis.

Income generation associated with ecotourism includes the development of artisanal handicraft-making by a women's group, while Il Ngwesi has also explored the possibility of purchasing and marketing locally-produced honey for tourists. In conjunction with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), the Group Ranch has initiated a four year programme targeting women's groups in craft making. The programme trains women in quality beadwork skills and enables access to micro-credit facilities to allow them to purchase raw materials for production.

Plans are in place to establish a rural bank in the Il Ngwesi community with assistance from K-Rep, a Kenyan bank. Small loans will be made available at low interest rates (around 5%) for future business development activities and sustainable enterprises within the community.

The group ranch has also been able to boost household incomes through improved land use management which has had substantial benefits for livestock and agriculture. During the 2008-9 droughts, Il Ngwesi's livestock were able to graze within the buffer zone portion of the conservancy area. This helped to substantially mitigate the loss of cattle compared to other areas. The buffer zone supplied approximately three months' worth of grass for the herds, with total livestock losses estimated at around 60 %; the communities bordering the conservancy experienced losses around 40%. This compared with livestock losses of up

to 90% in other areas of Kenya.

## **Non-financial:**

40 % of the net profit from the eco-lodge is reinvested in community development, while the remaining 60 % is used to cover the lodge's operational costs. The lodge generates approximately nine million Kenyan Shillings (US\$ 86,500) gross income annually, with the net profit usually ranging between KSh 1.5-2 million (US\$ 14,400 to US\$ 19,200.) Some 500,000 Kenyan Shillings (almost US\$ 6,000) is allocated annually for an educational bursaries scheme, whereby community youth members are funded to attend secondary school and universities. The Group Ranch has also benefitted local primary schools through the building of houses for teachers at Sang'a Primary School, and sinking a borehole at Enakishomi Primary School. Investments in health have come through the building of a health clinic at Nadungoro, for which Il Ngwesi is in the process of seeking approval from the government to operate. The Group Ranch have also worked closely with Lewa Conservancy in a mobile health project, ensuring that seven local communities are visited once a week by health workers.

Donor support has been sought to fund teachers' salaries. External assistance has additionally supported the Ngare Ndare pipeline which was repaired after being damaged in 2006. This has ensured a water supply for the lodge and for livestock. This water system has been extended to schools and communities in 20 % of the group ranch area through pipes. Communities have also benefitted from the Sang'a water project, which was rehabilitated with the support of the Lewa Education Trust. In total, seven water systems have been put in place, carrying water from river sources to villages. The greatest impact on the health of local people has come through Il Ngwesi's donor supported "Afya II" program on HIV/AIDs, which provided awareness, testing, and counselling for the disease.

**The community engagement project is** Stand alone  
initiative

## **Details of wider response:**

No data

Yes

**Do community guards carry firearms?**

**Do community guards conduct joint patrols with formal guards?:**

No data, possible values:

- Yes
- No
- Not known

- Not applicable

## **Are community guards unarmed, without armed backup?:**

No data, possible values:

- Yes
- No
- Not known
- Not applicable

## **Do community guards have rights of arrest?:**

No data, possible values:

- Yes
- No
- Not known
- Not applicable

## **Do community guards have specialist training:**

No data, possible values:

- Yes
- No
- Not known
- Not applicable

## **Are community guards covered by military law in the case of someone being killed or wounded?:**

No data, possible values:

- Yes
- No
- Not known
- Not applicable

## **The community has traditional authority to sanction poachers from within their community?:**

No data, possible values:

- Yes
- No
- Not known
- Not applicable

## **What “rules of engagement” for working with communities does the case study address?**

Include local people in wildlife monitoring and enforcement networks

## **Other key principles for engaging communities emerging from this case study:**

No data

## **What has been the impact on poaching/IWT?**

Don't know/Case study/project has not assessed impact on poaching

## **What has been the impact on wildlife populations?**

Not known/not documented

## **Further detail about the impact on poaching:**

No data

What worked and why?; What didn't work and why?

## **What worked about the community engagement approach and why?**

Community participation through Il Ngwesi's governance structure is fundamental to its long-term sustainability. By giving the group ranch inhabitants a voice and a vote, the initiative has ensured a strong degree of local ownership. Its tangible socioeconomic impacts have also gained it the support of the community. This support is not assured, however, and external land acquisitions have also been used to ease pressures within the conservation area.

The long-term ecological sustainability within the Laikipia District is aided by Il Ngwesi's relationship with neighbouring conservancies through the Northern Rangelands Trust.

## **What did not work and why?:**

No data

## **Further comments or additional information about**

## community engagement:

Population growth and unpredictable weather patterns have increased tensions over land use for wildlife conservation versus livestock grazing. The Group Ranch Committee has therefore proposed relocating the various communities to external sites. 100% of the group ranch would then be used for conservation, although there are fears that this could lead to the land being managed by Kenya Wildlife Service as a government-run conservancy.

### Bibliographic information

Published documentation

## Main source(s) of information:

**Title:** Il Ngwesi Group Ranch, Kenya. (English Version)

**Author(s):** UNDP

**Year of publication:** 2012

**Journal/Book Series details:** Equator Initiative Case Study Series

**Publisher:** United Nations Development Programme

**Place published:** New York, US.

**Download/Access URL:**

[http://www.equatorinitiative.org/images/stories/winners/85/casestudy/case\\_134816...](http://www.equatorinitiative.org/images/stories/winners/85/casestudy/case_134816...) [1]

**Title:** Il Ngwesi Group Ranch, Kenya. (Swahili Version)

UNDP

**Author(s):**

2012

**Year of publication:**

Equator Initiative Case Study

**Journal/Book/Series**

**details:**

**Publisher:** United Nations Development Programme

**Place published:** New York, US

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**URL:**

[http://www.equatorinitiative.org/images/stories/winners/85/casestudy/case\\_1\\_1363...](http://www.equatorinitiative.org/images/stories/winners/85/casestudy/case_1_1363...) [2]

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## **Additional source(s) of information:**

**Title:** Il Ngwesi Group Ranch, Kenya - Equator Prize 2002 Winner

UNDP

**Author(s):**

2011

**Year of publication:**

Vimeo

**Journal/Book/Series**

## details:

**Publisher:** United Nations Development  
Project

<https://vimeo.com/27016070> [3]

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Case study entry  
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### Links

[1] [http://www.equatorinitiative.org/images/stories/winners/85/casestudy/case\\_1348161335.pdf](http://www.equatorinitiative.org/images/stories/winners/85/casestudy/case_1348161335.pdf)

[2] [http://www.equatorinitiative.org/images/stories/winners/85/casestudy/case\\_1\\_1363209741.pdf](http://www.equatorinitiative.org/images/stories/winners/85/casestudy/case_1_1363209741.pdf)

[3] <https://vimeo.com/27016070>