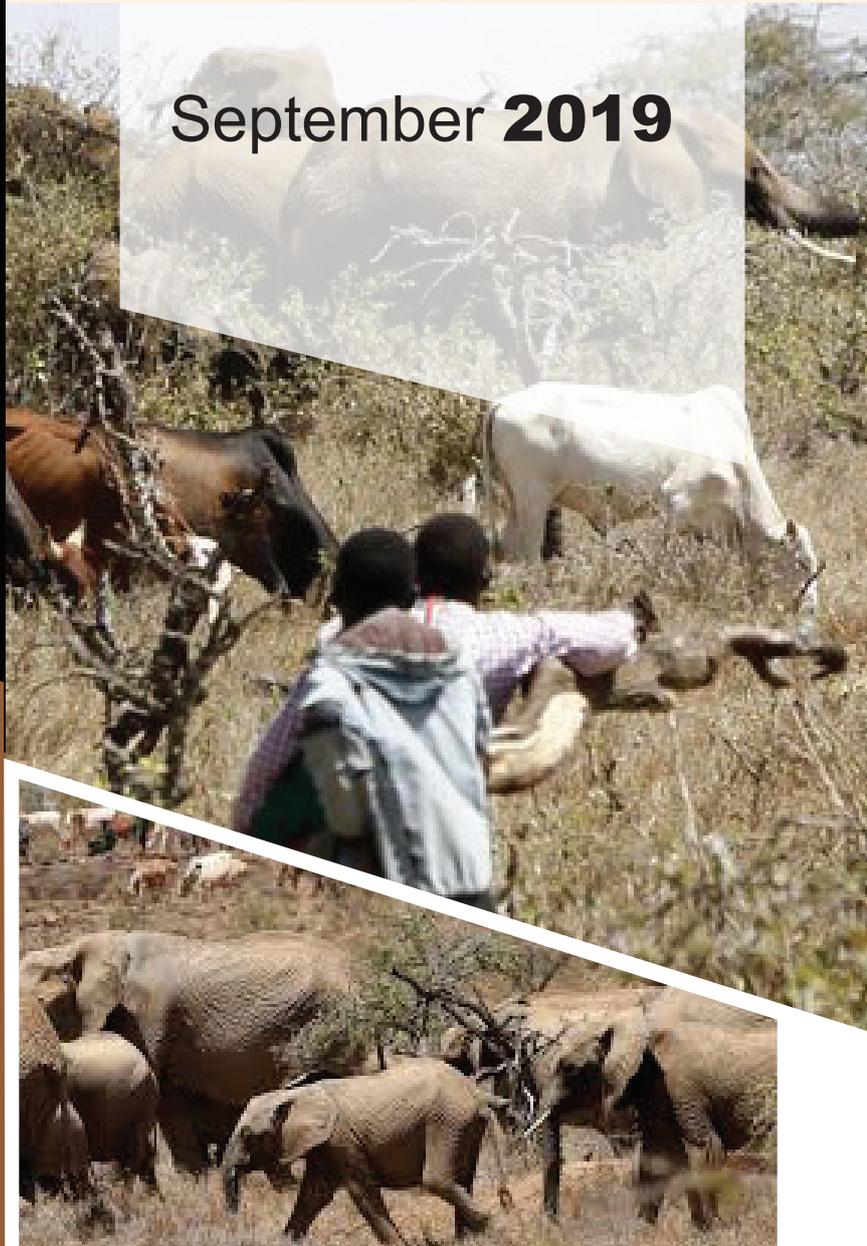


# POLICY BRIEF

## Community Wildlife Conservancy Model: An Enabler to Sustainable Pastoral Livelihoods

September 2019



### Introduction

In the last eight decades or so several attempts have been made to come up with management approaches to effectively and sustainably manage natural resources within arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) in Kenya. Among them are Block Grazing, Group Ranching, and Pastoral sedentarization among others, each achieving different levels of success. The Community Wildlife Conservancies (CWC) model is the latest approach aimed at enhancing sustainable development of local communities through harnessing local resources. Since its initial establishment here in Kenya in late 1990s, CWC have brought a number of benefits to local communities such as improved social services and amenities, diversified income, and improve grazing and security. However, the model is faced with a number of challenges that requires policy interventions.

### Community Wildlife Conservancies: What are they?

Community Wildlife Conservancy (CWC) model is a community-based natural resource management approach that allows communities to manage and benefits from wildlife and tourism resources existing in their land. The conservancy model in Kenya reflects a shift of wildlife management policy towards community-based conservation strategies that allow co-management of wildlife resources by the communities and the government. In the early 1900, land in the northern parts of Kenya was divided into large scale holdings which were used for ranching and sport hunting (Cronk, 2002). Following the reduction in wildlife numbers in 1970s, the Kenyan government issued a ban on wildlife hunting which led to a growing interest for wildlife conservation. Wildlife-related benefits facilitated the subsequent wildlife conservation

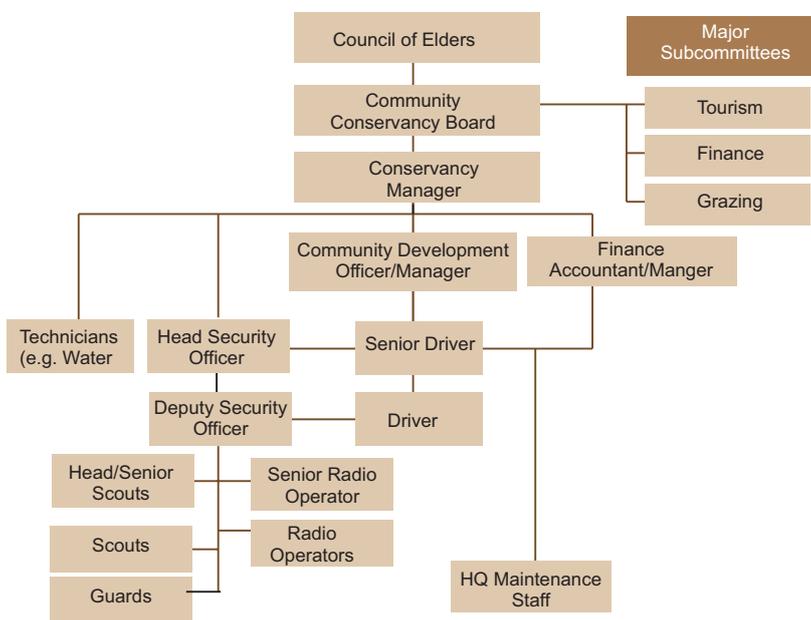
initiatives in the private and community ranches. Soon after, some of the small group ranches jointly formed community conservancies.

There are three groups of CWC based on primary source of operational cost support. One category of CWC are those whose operational costs are supported fully by Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT) an umbrella body formed in 2004, another category are those partially supported by NRT and County governments, and lastly CWC supported exclusively by County governments. Currently, there are over 39 conservancies under NRT covering an area of over 42,000 km<sup>2</sup> supporting estimated 320,000 people (NRT, 2019). These conservancies are spread across the counties of Laikipia, Baringo, Turkana, Marsabit, Garissa, Samburu, Tana River, West Pokot and Lamu.

Forty one percent of pastoral communities with conservancies perceive CWC establishment as a means to promote and achieve wildlife conservation, 21% see it as a means to promote conservation and management of rangeland, 19% perceive CWC has a means to promote peace and security in the area while 14% see CWC as an opportunity to empower members economically.

## CWC as sustainable livelihood option

NRT have adopted a governance structure which is socially inclusive where men, women and youth are involved in decision making. Below is a governance structures for CWCs supported by NRT.

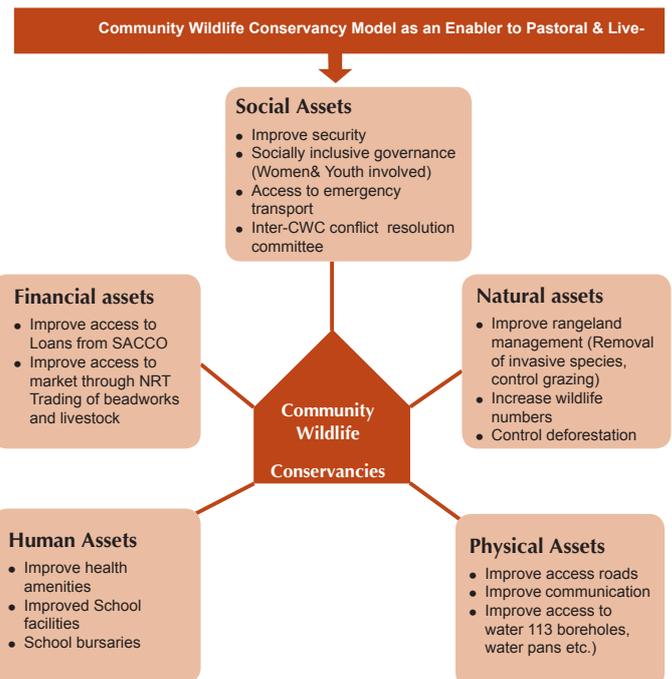


## Livelihood Assets

**Social assets:** At the top of the governance structure is the Council of Elders largely drawn from chairpersons elected from all members CWCs. Its main function is to provide oversight of all conservancies and promote peaceful co-existence of pastoral communities. Each CWC is governed through a board whose membership consists of elected men and women at least from 2016. The board is the overall decision making organ often with three thematic sub-committees; such as finance, grazing, welfare/peace/tourism etc. Grazing committee predominantly run by men and youth develop grazing plans well as general rangeland management, however women play critical role in supporting enforcement during herding especially of sheep and goats. The secretariat (e.g. managers, accountants and

security team) performs day to day running of the CWC operations. Regular elections are held every two years to elect new office bearers.

**Natural assets:** CWC facilitate accumulation of natural assets through control of land degradation from overgrazing, removal of invasive species as well as control of deforestation, control poaching among other rangeland management practices. For example, Kalama and Nasuulu CWCs are involved in manual removal of invader species such as *Acacia reficiens* (Ol-churai in Maasai language) which has taken over almost 30% of their land making it unavailable for grazing; Naibunga CWC is tackling invasive alien species Sour prickly pear (*Opuntia stricta*) and Sweet prickly pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) using Cochineal bugs as biological control agent. A summary of all livelihood assets are indicated in the diagram.





*Invasive Sour prickly pear (Opuntia stricta) species that has covered expansive area of Laikipia North is slowly spreading into Il Motiok group ranch of Naibunga Conservancy*



*There has been a significant increase in elephant population within Laikipia-Ewaso ecosystem owing to safe and quality habitats provided by the CWC's.*

Through CWC, wildlife poaching has significantly reduced. For example, the Proportion of Illegally Killed Elephants (PIKE) reduces from a high of 82% in 2012 to a low of 38% by 2015.

Financial assets: CWC has facilitated increased income and enhanced access to financial resources through initiatives such as bush lodges and cultural manyattas for tourists and market access for livestock and beadwork through NRT Trading. Market access for cattle has been credited as an

innovative incentive way to destock the rangeland and also avoid livestock death during extreme drought period

Human assets: CWCs under up to 845 persons have been directly employed by CWCs under tutelage of NRT. Availability of bursaries and education infrastructure (schools and libraries) has greatly enhanced human assets though access to education. Re-investing incomes in health facilities has promoted healthy living among communities in order to achieve positive livelihood outcomes.

## **Constrains to Community wildlife conservancy model and policy recommendations**

### **Inability to implement human-wildlife compensation policy**

The population of elephant, buffalo and giraffe in Ewaso Ng'iro Ecosystem showed a remarkable increase and this has been attributed to establishment of CWC and private conservancies (Ngene et al 2017). Decline in Proportion of Illegally Killed Elephants (PIKE) and increase in population of the endangered Hirola antelopes, have been attributed to concerted anti-poaching operations, habitat management, awareness creation, conflict resolution and wildlife monitoring and conservation. However, increasing number of wildlife has brought with it increase in human wildlife conflicts. On average, slightly over 700 human-wildlife cases are reported in Isiolo Kenya Wildlife Office (KWS) regional office alone every month. As of 2016, KWS was yet to pay Kes. 2.2 Billion Worth of compensation for 2303 human-wildlife conflicts claims made between 2014 and 2016 (GOK, 2018). These compensation claims are only for loss of human life and bodily injuries. Loss of income from livestock predation and crops raiding by wildlife are often not considered. Spread of pests and diseases from wildlife to livestock constitute other costs to communities.

### **Restricted access**

Under CWC model, often a core conservation area within the conservancy is established solely for use by wildlife. This restricted access is contentious during extreme drought situations where there are no pastures and water. The establishment of some CWCs has restricted access to historical dry season grazing areas, salt-licks and cultural sites to non-members. For example, non-members neighbouring Biliqo Bulesa conservancy are no longer able to freely access the Kuro Bisan Owwo hot spring - a source of salty warm water traditionally used for three months of the year to deworm small stock during droughts. This brings about tensions among members and non-members. Restricted access to water and pastures resources during extreme weather events, increases communities' vulnerability to climate variability and change.

Although the community conservancies has generated over 800 permanent jobs, the creation of security team consisting of armed National Police Reservists (NPP), Mobile Rapid Response Teams and unarmed Rangers has triggered suspicion and tensions among the non-members. The neighboring communities who have



traditionally competed for pastures and water claim that they live in fear due to increase firearms in the hands of civilians within established CWCs. Borana community has particularly raise concern over the arming of rangers within CWC through national government community policing policy.

## Benefit sharing

Another constrains to realization of sustainable and resilient livelihoods include inequality in sharing of benefits accruing from tourism and related investments. Tourism as an ecosystem services cannot be entirely accrued solely from within one conservancy or even few conservancies but from several properties within a larger landscape. Wildlife roam within a wider area far beyond the boundaries of one or two conservancies and therefore wildlife conservation support is required from CWC members and non-members alike.

## Policy Recommendations

- Wildlife conservancies as a land use model by design must support the main source of livelihood - pastoralism, by guaranteeing access to pasture, and water. This is critical, as restricting access to conservancy resources renders neighbouring non-member communities vulnerable to the impacts climate variability and climate change and members to resist the model.
- Conservancies must operate within a landscape, in that should unfavourable conditions prevail (which often do occur) within, there is opportunity to seek pastures and water outside their borders within and even beyond the Counties amongst non-members. It is incumbent upon economic blocks such as Frontier Counties Development Council (Economic block covering seven ASAL County governments) to enact policies that promote local actions with landscape thinking.
- Sharing benefits with non-members living within the wider landscape is recommended because they also incur costs

## References

1. GOK 2018. Performance Audit Report on the effectiveness of measures put in place by Kenya wildlife services in protecting wildlife.
2. ASSAR, 2018. Do conservancies enhance the adaptive capacity of communities? Perspectives from ASSAR's work in Kenya. [http://www.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image\\_tool/images/138/East\\_Africa/Kenya/ASSAR%20KENYA%20CONSERVANCY\\_ONLINE.pdf](http://www.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/138/East_Africa/Kenya/ASSAR%20KENYA%20CONSERVANCY_ONLINE.pdf)

whenever they allow wildlife to co-exist with their livestock through livestock predation, damage to crops, injuries or even death.

- Pastoral communities have co-existed with wildlife for centuries; however the idea of setting aside land as core conservation areas within conservancy model where livestock are excluded re-introduces Protected - Area-concept a precursor to CWC. It is therefore necessary to strike a balance between conservation and pastoral livelihoods objectives. The incentives for communities to set aside land predominantly for use by wildlife should be significant enough to compensate for the benefits foregone by dedicating critical grazing areas for conservation, as well as other wildlife-related losses such as crops damage and livestock predation.
- Reciprocity for water and pastures within and between communities as well as neighbouring Counties must be factored in areas planning to implement CWC model. During extreme droughts all communities with or without conservancies will require resources (mainly water and pastures) far beyond their boundaries and this demand strengthening of reciprocity. Traditional institutions that supported resource sharing in the past (e.g. Borana Deedha system) should be recognized, strengthened and institutionalized particularly by ASAL County Governments to support landscape thinking.
- The perception that rangers misuse the arms given to them should be demystified. Trust from non-members is crucial in implementing a successful CWC. Involving National or County government officers during operations to recover stolen livestock is one way through which such trust can be build.

## CONTACT ADDRESS

**Staline Kibet (Ph.D)**  
 Land Resource Management and Agricultural  
 Technology Department  
 College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences  
 University of Nairobi  
 P.o Box 29053-00625, Kangemi  
 Nairobi, Kenya  
 Mail: [larmat@uonbi.ac.ke](mailto:larmat@uonbi.ac.ke)  
 website <http://larmat.uonbi.ac.ke/> or  
[www.uonbi.ac.ke](http://www.uonbi.ac.ke)

