



Natural
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An NCS Lighthouse

Northern Kenya Rangelands

Project/Programme Type	The project is the world's first landscape-level grasslands soil removal project. Its credits are based on the amount of carbon its soil improvements remove from the atmosphere, using a new methodology that was verified by Verra. It is also the first validated methodology to work with pastoralist communities who use land resources communally.
Description	The project is implementing rangeland and grazing management practices with 14 pastoral communities in northern Kenya. These practices are not only creating healthier herds but also sequestering carbon in grassland and savannah soils. This ecosystem service can be measured in carbon credits, creating new income for rural communities, enhancing conservation efforts—including the protection of four endangered species—and addressing impacts of climate change.
Location	Northern Kenya
Scale	The project area covers 1.9 million hectares of grasslands and savannah. The largest soil carbon project in the world.
Number of Credits Issued to Date	More than 3 million
Project Proponent	Northern Rangelands Trust and Native, a Public Benefit Corporation



Impacts

Impact To-Date

The rangeland and grazing management practices have already removed over 3 million tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere and generated revenue for each of the 14 participating communities. Each community is using the income to fund its own priorities, including education, water access and sanitation. The project has achieved triple gold certification from Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards for exceeding the most stringent requirements and audits stipulating project benefits for the climate, local communities, and biodiversity.

Projected Longer-Term Impact

The project aims to remove 50 million tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere over 30 years. In doing so, it will not only create sustainable long-term income for local communities but also improve soil and pasture soil quality, drought resilience, and adaptation to other impacts of climate change.



A Carbon Project Breaks Down Barriers Between Communities in Northern Kenya

For the past decade, Andrew Dokhole has managed his cows, goats and donkeys in coordination with his neighbors from different religious and ethnic communities in northern Kenya. Despite their differences, “all of us depend on livestock,” Dokhole says. The local pastoral communities formed “conservancies” in the nineties to coordinate grazing schedules and livestock movements across more than 6 million hectares of grassland. Their cooperation improved herd health, relieved land conflicts and preserved natural areas for wildlife to thrive.

The Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), as the project was known, became a model of community-led conservation. Climate change has threatened some of its progress in recent years, however. “Grazing fields have shrunk and that means less pasture for livestock and wildlife,” says Priscilla Kushi, who was born in one of the conservancies. “It can create a bit of tension between conservancies.” Herders sometimes take their livestock so far away from their communities in search of grass that they become vulnerable to cattle rustlers. “Sometimes you don’t even have one animal to take to market because they are so weak,” Dokhole says.

As the market for ecosystem services emerged over the past two decades, the Northern Rangelands Trust realized that further improving pasture management could benefit the entire planet by sequestering carbon in the soil. The global carbon market was an opportunity, Kushi says, “to look at how these communities can raise money from more sustainable grazing activities within the conservancies.” The conservancies had few alternative livelihoods to livestock except

for small tourism businesses whose income plummeted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Carbon credits could become “sustainable income for communities that have limited alternative economic opportunities,” says Kushi, who works now as the Carbon Project Manager at NRT.

NRT laid the groundwork for the Northern Kenya



Priscilla Kushi
Carbon Project
Manager
Northern
Rangelands Trust

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Rangelands Carbon Project in 2008 with a pilot program to improve rangeland management in a single conservancy. In 2012, the project expanded to 14 conservancies covering an area of land covering an area of land slightly larger than Fiji, and in 2017, the conservancies gave NRT permission to sell carbon credits on their behalf. The Northern Kenya Rangelands Carbon Project is basing its credits on the amount of carbon its soil removes from the atmosphere. That calculation required a whole new methodology, which the Verified Carbon Standard (Verra) approved in 2015. “We are very much a pioneer test for it,” Kushi says. It has the potential, though, to provide a regular and growing source of income to communities in northern Kenya year after year.



**1.9
million
hectares of
savannah
grassland**



**1 of 21
projects
worldwide
with CCBA
Triple Gold
Status**



**50
million
tonnes of
carbon captured
and stored over
30 years**

**205,000
people
will
benefit**

**Follow the
progress**





The participating conservancies received their first revenues in 2022. Depending on the market price realized, upwards of 60 percent of each carbon credit sold goes to the conservancies, a percentage that will increase as the project pays down its development costs. Every conservancy will receive annual payments going forward and use some of that money on rangeland activities, like refining rotational grazing plans and general conservancy operations. The rest of the carbon revenue is spent on priorities identified by the communities, such as creating jobs, building infrastructure, developing public services or distributing direct payments to households. "There are no restrictions on how that money can be spent," Kushi says.

of their initiatives through a process designed by the Carbon Project Oversight Committee, which is made up of two representatives from each of the project's four counties and supported by NRT. Dokhole's peers elected him to the committee and he became its chair.



Sadia Mohammed Nasuulu
Conservancy and member of Carbon Project Oversight Committee

I'm really happy to see the conservancies be able to sit down together and prioritize different issues.



Andrew Dokhole
Melako Conservancy

This money has reached all these communities and brought them together under one umbrella. People are living in harmony and feeding their animals without fearing another clan.

Dokhole's community, Melako Conservancy, has used the carbon revenues to build toilets, expand access to piped water and subsidize the school fees of more than 2,000 students. "We hold meetings where we bring the community together and discuss the ways of using this money," he says. Each of the 14 participating conservancies decides democratically how to spend its share of the carbon revenues in public meetings. They must show collective community endorsement

"I'm really happy to see the conservancies be able to sit down together and prioritize different issues," says Sadia Mohammed, who represents Nasuulu Conservancy on the Carbon Project Oversight Committee. Her conservancy is near two protected areas for wildlife and is using the carbon revenue to build a safari lodge to attract visitors and generate new income as wildlife sightings become more common. Since the project's start, sightings of iconic species like elephants, giraffes, zebras, lions, cheetahs and wild dogs are stable or increasing in a majority of conservancies; and populations of endangered species, including the beisa oryx, Grévy's zebra and black rhino, have grown.

Dokhole similarly sees the carbon project as not only improving livelihoods within his community but also strengthening ties between neighbors. "This money has reached all these communities and brought them together under one umbrella," he says. "People are living in harmony and feeding their animals without fearing another clan."



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About the NCS Alliance

The NCS Alliance (NCSA) conveys the voice of businesses, NGOs and solution providers on the need to mobilize a high integrity demand for high quality Natural Climate Solutions (NCS). The Alliance focuses on identifying opportunities and barriers to investment in the NCS voluntary carbon market and serves as a forum for knowledge sharing and technical capacity building to ensure natural climate solutions reach their full potential in abating climate change, while also tackling nature loss and socio-economic issues. To build trust in high quality NCS, the NCSA has established the NCS Lighthouse programme.

For more information visit www.naturalclimatesolutionsalliance.org and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).



About NCS Lighthouse Programme

The NCS Lighthouse Programme shines a light on projects and programmes that can be used as examples of good practice for supply and are a beacon in the path to developing trust in NCS for people, nature and climate. The NCS Lighthouses help elevate the successful human, environmental, and climate stories behind these initiatives.

The NCS Lighthouses, selected based on screening criteria developed by an NCSA Taskforce comprising NGOs, businesses and solution providers, have demonstrated alignment to the NCSA's quality principles for NCS credits, as presented within 'Natural Climate Solutions for Corporates'.

The NCS Lighthouse Programme is made possible with generous funding support from the We Mean Business Coalition.

Disclaimer

Inclusion of an NCS project or programme in the NCS Lighthouse Programme does not imply a recommendation to purchase, trade or retire credits associated with the Lighthouse.

The NCS Alliance and its members take no responsibility for the purchase, trade or retirement of credits from these projects and programmes. Instead, it recommends that individuals, companies and other organisations procuring credits as part of their climate strategies conduct their own independent due diligence to validate the quality and environmental integrity of their purchases.

The NCS Alliance secretariat in no way benefits financially or by other means from the selection.

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