

**Milgis**



**Trust**



**A year in the Milgis**

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# Foreword from the Directors 'Desk'

**Helen Douglas-Dufresne**  
Founding Director

Thank goodness we ended up living on the Milgis Lugga!!! NO wonder we are in a good mood every day! Can you imagine waking up to this year in, year out.. We are surrounded by song from the birds and the people AND not only that... These days we hear lions every night.. and sometimes we are even lucky to see them! Elephants are the norm every day, browsing peacefully up and down the luggas, on the hills and even up into the top of the mountains. Who would have believed that 25 years ago!!?

A while back we were part of a BBC film - 'Human Planet', a clever documentary series showing the world how wild animals and humans can rely on each other in the natural world to exist.. Our part was in 'Rivers'. Mark Deeble was the cameraman. It was all about how the nomads use elephants to survive and vice versa.. Elephants have an amazing ability to know where the water is closest to the surface in a dry lugga, they dig in the sand for this precious resource! Every year the place to find water is different because these huge luggas change their course after every flood. So where do the nomads come into this??

Imagine you are on the move with your family and all your animals, you've just crossed the searing hot Kaisut desert and now arriving on the Milgis Lugga, probably pretty thirsty. Where do you start to look for water?? At first glance there's just miles and miles of sand ... But to their absolute relief coming across elephant tracks mean's water is not far and to follow them!! The Nomads will then make a proper well for their use and move on. Over the next few dry months the water level will get deeper and eventually the elephants will rely totally on the human dug wells for their survival.

The second part of the film concentrates on showing this. So to get this part of the film, Mark and Pete spent some blustery nights, perched on an uncomfortable rock or sand bank in the full moon.. Sitting patiently above a water hole on the Milgis Lugga hoping for the elephants to traipse in. Sometimes the elephants got wind of the two figures in the moonlight and moved off to another water hole,!! BUT luckily some nights they were able to get incredible film content of very cautious elephants coming across driven by thirst, incredibly controlled to get a drink!

I'm so excited to say things are different now... These days anywhere in our Milgis conservation area you could sit comfortably under a tree and they'll come knowing you are there and have an easy drink.. Each year it gets better.

It's because of the tireless work of our manager, scouts and Lkiramats. Even Pete, Digs and I - We never give up.. BECAUSE.. there is nothing nicer on earth than seeing free, relaxed elephants, being able to live without fear of their lives every minute.. One of our most satisfying activities is digging special easy access wells for our elephants, to drink in peace (of course this helps all living beings to get to water during these hard times) This gives employment, and eases the human wildlife conflict... and the elephants can do as much damage, enjoy the water, have a bath! SO a WIN WIN situation.. Enjoy reading more in this well put together 'year in the Milgis' report.. June 19-June 20 by Digs.. And Finally we are only able to do this because of YOUR DONATIONS... THANK YOU EVERY ONE!!!

Helen



# Conservation issues from the manager

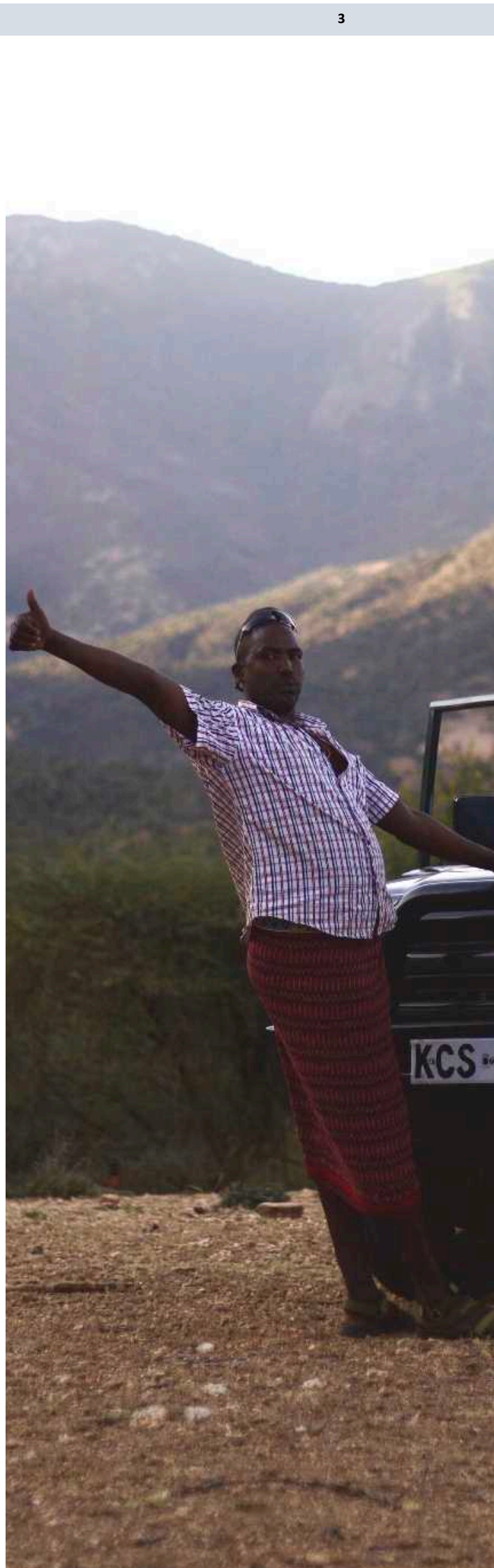
The past year will go into Samburu history as the year when the tribe started the new age group, Lkiseku. The preparations for this are marked by the killing of a white bull on top of mount Nyiro and one year later a new age set is initiated through mass circumcision of boys. Each of the 8 clans of the Samburu come together and form big villages (lorora) sometimes as big as 500 households in one compound. The preparation involves intensive use of vegetation and wildlife resources. The villages are fenced using tree branches, the building of houses, the bows and arrows all require trees to be cut. The ceremony's also need thousands of ostrich feathers and pieces of lion skin. Given today's population, these activities had potential to cause a lot of damage on the surrounding forest and wildlife. We visited the 8 villages within our area of operation and talked to the community about the negative impact of cutting down whole trees. Instead advised them on pruning, we helped those who could not get ostrich feathers to get some sustainably, we collaborated with the Kenya wildlife service to provide lion skins to prevent the killing of lions for the skin. We are pleased to report that the ceremonies were completed with very little negative impact.

The Kenya forest service started moving out people who had settled in the Northern forest reserves. It was very encouraging to attend meetings called by the community to discuss the issue and find out that majority of the people supported the idea. This was a clear indication that they have started to realize the importance of the forests in their life. This portrayed a true picture of the Samburu who are by nature conservationists. We need in the years to come to build on this spirit to prevent people from settling in the forest.

The illegal harvesting of the east African sandalwood in the Matthews has remained a big challenge for us this year. The prolonged drought and the loss of many livestock in 2018 has tempted some community members to engage in the harvest and sell the endangered plant. Our scouts have had a hard time trying to prevent the harvest sometimes almost costing their lives. There is a lot of corruption involved in the trade and our efforts will be futile unless all stakeholders come onboard to put an end to it.

A very big thank you for all the support and all the best in the year to come

**Supukan Lesoloyia**  
**Manager**

# IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO TALK CONSERVATION UNTIL YOU HAVE DEALT WITH THE BASIC NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

## Executive Summary

The trust was founded in 2004 in order to protect the wildlife, habitat and pastoral people's way of life, in this stunning and very remote part of northern Kenya. Our mandate is to pave the way for a fully restored ecosystem, shared by people and wildlife alike. Poaching, deforestation and degradation of land are the main challenges facing flora and fauna in the area. We believe that wildlife and pastoral peoples can live peacefully together without borders, as they have done for so long. The majority of wildlife in the world is living behind fences - it is our priority to ensure that this does not happen. Experience has taught us that the most effective way to conserve is by dealing directly with the communities. The incentive for communities to conserve materializes in the form of education, health, water, security and veterinary projects implemented by the trust. These projects are mostly a direct result of ecotourism. Therefore, giving the wildlife a very high value in the eyes of the communities!! However, you cannot implement infrastructure without considering demographics and sustainable capacities of an area. We use several strategies to ensure that our community projects promote sustainable development.

### Core Conservation

Each community elects a scout. This scout is in charge of conservation for that area, additionally they must act as liaison between the trust and community. Collectively, the scouts are responsible for:

- Anti-poaching
- Mitigating human-wildlife conflict
- Animal rescues
- General health of Milgis ecosystem
- Community relations

### Education

- The Milgis trust aims to provide a well-rounded education that promotes children to be ambassadors of the environment.
- We have built an eco-school at primary level, which is now independently run by the community
- We have built and maintain 4 nursery schools & support many others
- We have a mobile film unit (eco-screen)
- Student sponsorship programme, supporting over 40 students through secondary and some to university and college education

### Sustainable Land Use

Loss of habitat contributes immensely to decline in wildlife populations and biodiversity. By preventing the following we aim to improve productivity and regeneration of habitat:

Wildfires

Overgrazing

Deforestation

### Veterinary

The entire existence of Samburu people revolves around their domestic animals. They face great challenges in this arid environment – our vet programme aims to improve quality of animal health through:

- Rabies, de-worming and other inoculations in dogs
- Spaying of females
- Facilitating KWS vets to come and treat sick or injured wildlife.
- Adaptation to suitable livestock models

### Water

- In 14 different locations throughout the district we produce approximately 43 million litres of clean water. This strategy aims to relieve human wildlife conflict at watering holes.
- We also have a dam unit. Pan - Dams are built by a JCB tractor and harvest rainwater for livestock and wildlife. To date we have built 43 Pan - Dams.

### Healthcare

Access to healthcare has been very limited in the area, and so we help out where we can. Our main focus areas are:

- Family Planning
- Facilitate eye missions dealing with cataracts & trachoma
- Emergency medivacs and treatment

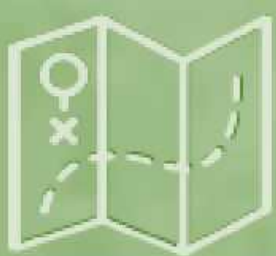




# Milgis Scouts & Lkiramats



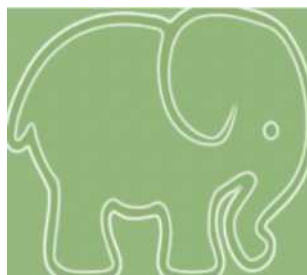
- **72,000** wildlife sighting reports



- **6000** foot patrols



- **120** conservation meetings



- **49** human-wildlife conflict follow ups



- **6** anti-Poaching



- **Liaisons** for **25000** community members





# Elephant Protection Program



Perhaps the most notable success of the Milgis trust has been the restoration of the free-roaming elephant population. Northern Kenya is unique in that elephants and people share the space with incredibly little conflict. However due exponential population growth (both elephant and human) , we have had to build an elaborate program to mitigate poaching and Human elephant conflict (HEC). We are pleased to report that it has been a good year for elephants. The unknown disease that killed so many elephants last year has slowed, and thank to our elephant friendly wells there has been a drop in HEC

- **400-800 elephants moving in and out of the area**
- **Record year for elephant sightings**
- **12 ele-friendly wells maintained**
- **1 baby elephant rescued from a well**
- **2 elephants killed due to human wildlife conflict**
- **3 elephant deaths from natural**
- **3 known elephants lost to poachers (all tusks recovered)**



Young ivory recovered



Baby ele rescued from a well



## Endangered Species

### Grevy's Zebra

The Grevy's have also had a good year thanks to the widespread rainfall. They have been able to venture further east and we have more than 70 individuals moving in and out of our area. Previously during dry times they were restricted to the western Elbarta plains where they were poached for bushmeat. Last year many of their routes to water were intersected by infrastructure projects, thus restricting their water supply. Again thanks to the rain the Grevy's can find water in most of our pan dams and do not need to walk many kilometres to get a drink.

Grevy's zebra's on the Elbarta plains

### Wild Dogs

Thanks to our rabies and distemper vaccinating program, we've had an amazing increase in predators. Especially wild dog. Although the population is transient, Groups of up to thirty individuals are now a common sight.

A Milgis lion

### Lions

The lions are making a very strong recovery due to their ability to breed quickly. There is a lot of food for the lions and they have been making the most of it. Currently there are between 21-25 lions living in the Milgis ecosystem. They have also been preying on livestock recently, which has caused quite a bit of human wildlife conflict, especially in Leamo area.



# State of Forests

There is still a lot to learn about the forests of Northern Kenya, yet some of them may disappear altogether in near future. We are fortunate to be the custodians of some of the more intact forested biomes ranging from Lowland scrub and rising up into the lush cloud forests. They are the main source of water, medicine and food for everybody and everything living in this ecosystem. One of the most important programs of the Milgis Trust is to help the communities understand the implications of habitat destruction and to teach them how to sustainably utilize forest resources. Unfortunately the pressures of overpopulation and urban development are pressuring more than ever. It is to our advantage that the Samburu culture promotes the conservation of these forests, and the communities continue to protect them as they have done for centuries.

## Intact forest coverage under our protection:

**Afro-Montane**  
**26,073 acres**

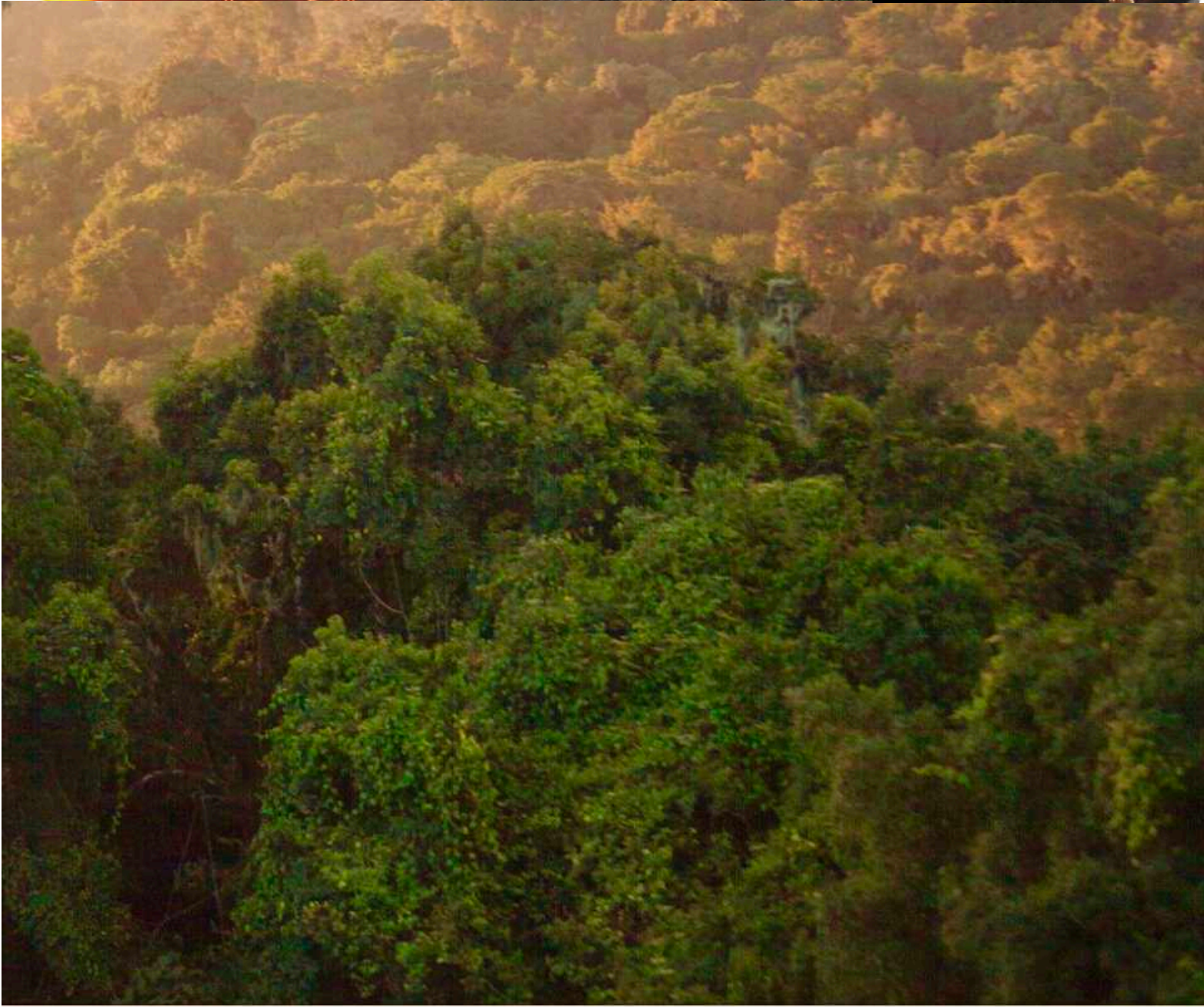
**Riverine forest & deciduous woodland**  
**70,450 acres**

**Lowland acacia**  
**450,670 acres**



# Threats

Fires - Illegal logging. - Urbanization







Eroded Rangeland



Increased population pressure



Backfilling erosion gullies



# Land Rehabilitation

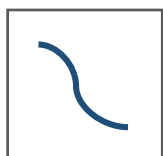
Overpopulation and poor resource management has led to huge tracts of land being overgrazed. The result is the erosion of thousands of acres of rangeland. These erosion gullies are only getting worse every year, and are causing widescale flooding, loss of grazing, and plenty of top soil is being carried away. We have started a large scale land restoration project. The JCB plays an important role in mitigating erosion and helping us rebuild the soil in catchment areas.

## Swales

Using the tractor, we are able to dig long trenches (swales) across the contour of eroded hillsides. These slow down all of the run off and helps the water to infiltrate into the ground. Back when we had the Volvo, we put in some swales as an experiment. They were so succesful that the community begged us to come and put some more in. We went there in January and put in another several acres of swales. The difference was amazing in the area that had swales put in 5 years ago – there was a mini forest and lots of grazing

## Bunds

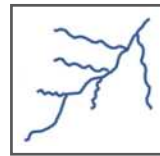
Another technique of preventing erosion is by implementing a bund strategy. This involves digging small semi circle shaped dams in a fish-scale pattern across a steep hillside. This then captures any excess runoff that may be flowing on the hillside and helps the water to infiltrate. Usually bunds are dug by hand, but by using the JCB we are able to make quite large bunds which enable a lot more water to be capture. This not only minimizes runoff but also creates ponds of water that double up as dams during dryer periods.



**3000m of  
swales**



**40 bunds**



**130 erosion  
gullies  
backfilled**

Re-growth in rehabilitated area







Dam under construction

# DAM BUILDING

Our JCB team have been busy making the most of the recent rain. Over the past year they have carried out the following works:

- Built 12 new pan-dams
- De-silted 6 pan-dams
- Renovated 3 dam walls

The success of these dams has been incredible. For at least two months after the rains, there is clean rainwater storage for the community, wildlife and livestock. The dams have allowed Grevy’s zebra to thrive and escape the poaching that goes on in the western Elbarta plains. The dams have also re-opened old elephant migratory routes.



Pan dam in Kurante community, eastern Ndotos



A woman has her eyes screened for cataracts

# Eyes for Elephants

## Masikita Eye Mission 2019

In August 2019 Milgis trust hosted an eye mission in partnership with MEAK. We were able to cover an area of approximately 4000 square kilometres, stretching from south of the Ndoto's north to mount Ngiro and west to Baragoi. This exercise was a conservation effort as much as it was a humanitarian one. All of these communities are living in biodiversity hotspots and co-existing with the resident wildlife. As the saying goes , ' you can't talk conservation until you have dealt with the basic needs of the people' – meaning that restoring eyesight among communities is a big step towards mitigating the everyday life struggles which are known to increase poaching, de-forestation and degradation of natural resources.

The role of the Milgis Trust was to use our community based scouts to identify people with eyesight problems, and then mobilize them for screening and finally transport them to and from the mission based in Masikita. The exercise was a success and we were able to identify treat and rehabilitate many people with horrific eye problems as well as other medical conditions such as burns. A happy bunch of people who will now be able to see the elephants they live alongside.

- **1 week**
- **6 Vehicles**
- **5300 kms covered**
- **136 cataract operations**
- **11 Tracoma operations**
- **150 minor treatments**



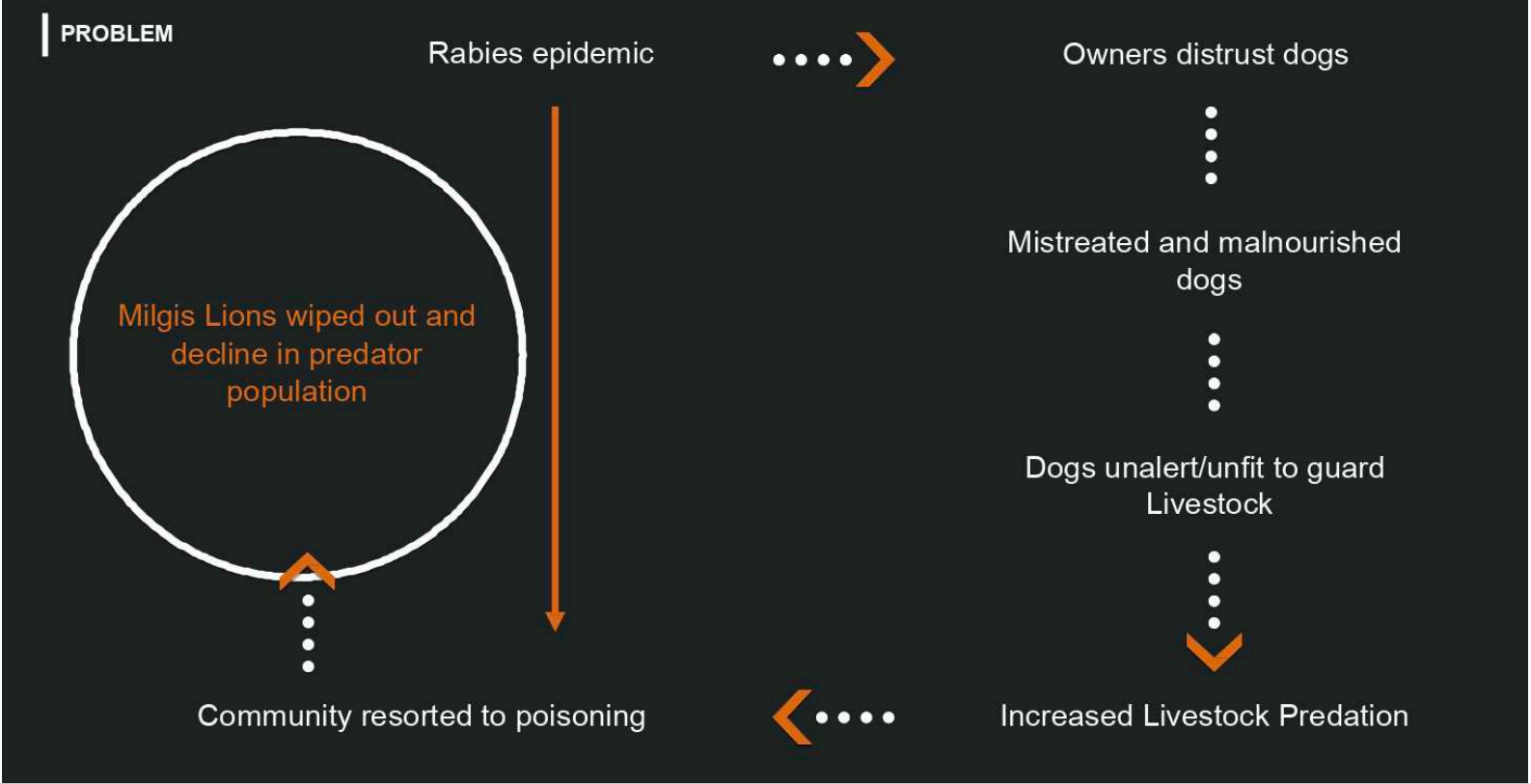


# Rabies Vaccinations Campaign

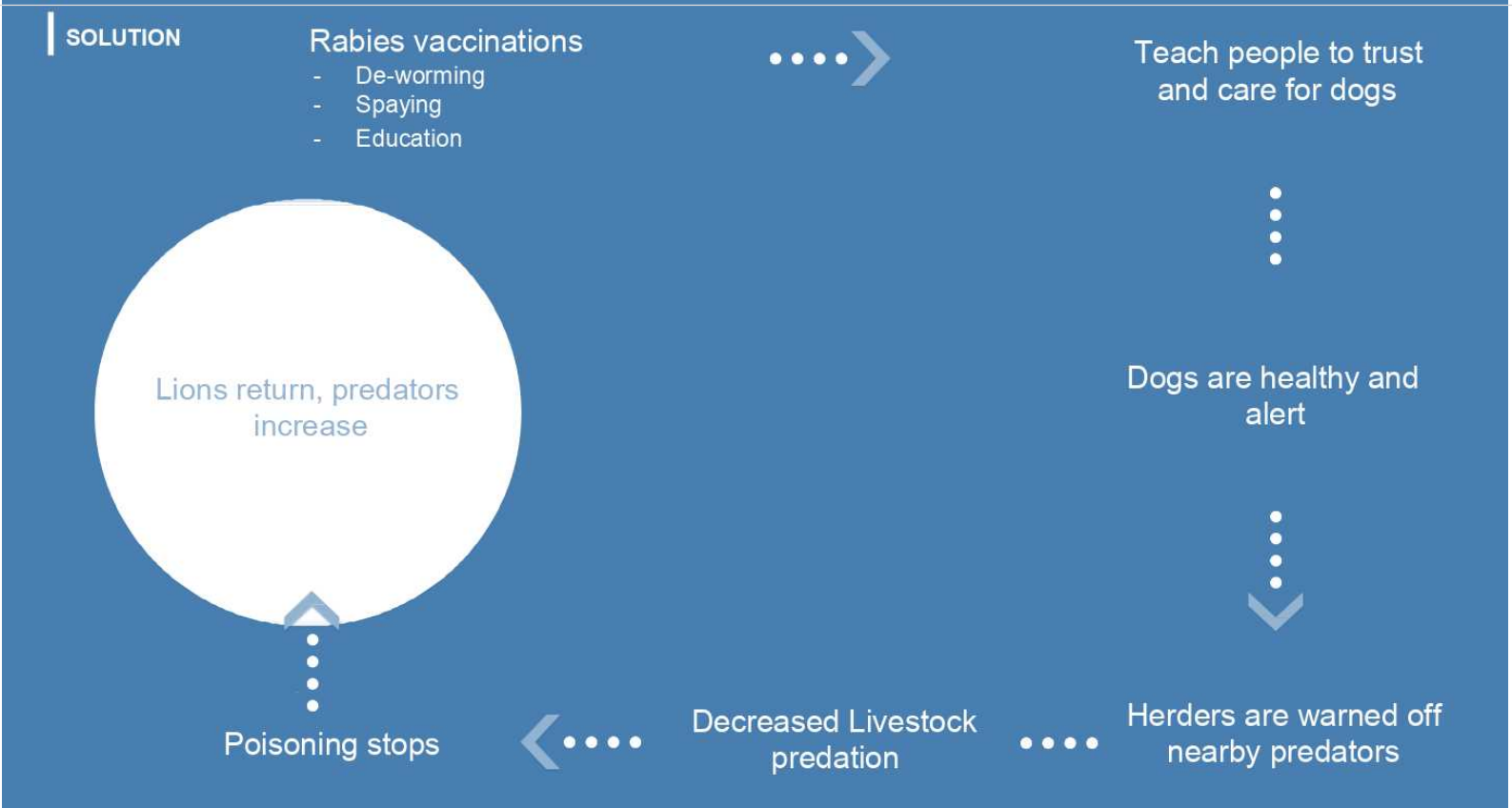


Vet team in action





- 1 Year**
- 2500 Dogs vaccinated against rabies
  - 2500 Dogs dewormed
  - 195 dogs sterilized



# Suruan Pre – School

A school for the mountain folk

Donkeys delivering supplies to the school



Suruan School is situated on the top of the Northern Ndoto massif and serves a small community who live among the afro-montane cloud forests . These people are the guardians of the forest and the focus of the school in to ensure that the children will grow up as forest ambassadors. The future of this forest lies in their hands.

The school was built by the community from fallen trees collected in the nearby forest. The Milgis trust started the school and has been supporting in various ways for many years now. The school is really gaining momentum, with the children having needs beyond nursery level this past year. This past year Suruan now has a 'sister school' in Norway, who have provided incredible support.



- Teachers house completed
- 52 Children attending
- 2 Classrooms renovated
- 2 teachers & 1 cook employed
- Improved teaching resources
- Food deliveries every term





# High School and University Sponsorship

Since becoming involved with education in the area, The Milgis trust realized how difficult it was for students to continue their education due lack of secondary schools nearby and difficulty of finding school fees. So the trust started a sponsorship program which has been a great success. To date, more than 70 students have passed through the program. We have encouraged students to pursue careers that will give them an opportunity to work back in Samburuland. The most popular fields are education, healthcare and conservation. Most of the sponsors for these children came to the area because of ecotourism, and the students feel that in one way or another 'the elephants' have brought them good tidings and they will hopefully one day return the favor. Unfortunately the challenges associated with coronavirus have been a significant setback for this program. Although luckily the university students have been able to keep going with their education via online learning. We look forward to secondary schools opening as soon as possible.

- **A total of 85 students passed through our sponsorship program**
- **Currently 23 secondary school students under the program**
- **Currently 8 university students under the program**





## Emergency Healthcare

Another greatly succesful program has been helping people to get emergency healthcare solution. Thanks to incredible supporters for this program, we fund approximately 20 people annually to have major operations/treatments. These problems including burns, cancer, snakebites , and some even worse. Most of these patients do not have the means to pay for and facilitate their own treatment. Most have never been to a city, and do not speak Swahili – they would find it nearly impossible to get the help required.

Those who are most desperate may even resort to poaching or other forms of exploiting resources to fund their treatment. Most of us will go to any length to save our lives. This makes it even more of a priority to provide a solution that will prevent this from happening. Over the past 12 months, we have identified 24 people who needed emergency treatment. Our program coordinator has worked around the clock to get them to the right hospital and deal with all the doctors, ensuring they are cared for properly.

The results have been staggering, with nearly all patients having life-changing procedures/treatments. Many have made a full recovery, and are living a relatively normal life back at home. For Milgis, all of these cases are an essential part of forming a personal bond with the people who are the custodians of the area's wildlife. The more eyes and ears we have to help us, the safer the wildlife and habitat will be.

**One of this year's highlights is the story of Ltusharan. He's a young boy who was found with a terrible spinal disorder. Three years ago when we came across him, he could only walk on all fours and was in a lot of pain. Today, after a lot of rehabilitation, he is very pleased to be able to go out and herd his livestock. Imagine the relief for the young lad, and his mother!**

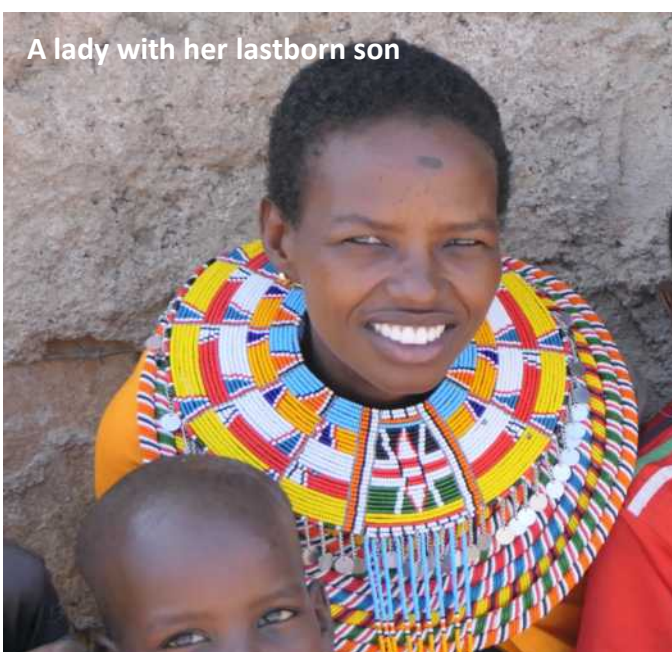






## Ramat e Losho (Preservation of the Society)

We have spent several years developing our Ramat e Losho (Preservation of the society) program. This initiative carries out interactive workshops within remote communities, providing a wholistic approach to family planning. Utilizing a variety of media based resources, we have been able to showcase the population explosion and all the horrors that come with it. Through this program, many men & women have been relieved of the burden that comes with caring for large families. The focus has been reproductive health, family planning and the long term impact of population on our environment. We work together with Communities Health Africa Trust (CHAT) who have developed a referral system that enables women to access FP services with ease. Using a backpack strategy, our team works from the ground up, travelling on foot from household to household. Consultations aim to result in a referral to the MOH facility where commodities are available.



A lady with her lastborn son

### 1 Year

- 2763 people reached
- 6 school visits
- 350 fp bracelets distributed
- 200 repro-rulers distributed
- 26 different communities visited





# Water Projects

## The Challenge

- Samburu is a very dry region, and there is little access to drinking water. People walk many kilometres to wells in the dry riverbed in order to get only a few litres of water at a time.
- Hand dug wells are the main source of clean water, and are often damaged by elephants who are also in need of water.
- Schools and Medical facilities also lack access to water, leading to poor hygiene and learning conditions.

## Our solution

- Our solution is to install 14 solar powered water projects that provide over 40 million litres of clean drinking water annually to 19 communities.
- The water is then pumped to tanks and will supply the local school. The water is also supplied to the medical dispensary and community standpipe. We also build troughs for livestock, and for the local wildlife.
- This has relieved human wildlife conflict in wells. The community don't need to walk far to collect water, which has freed up time for more productive work and education!

## 1 Year Summary

- 1 new borehole & solar installation in the Keleswa area
- New 4 km pipeline and renovated water supply for Mpagas school, dispensary and community standpipes.
- 14 water Projects ongoing maintenance
- 43 million litres clean water delivered





# Bee-keeping

The future is not bright for the honeybee. In Kenya, bees are being wiped out by the widespread use of harmful pesticides. Whilst destruction of a habitat and disease are making it an even more difficult environment for these essential pollinators to survive in. There are only a few pockets left in the world where bees can thrive!! Northern Kenya is one of these.

Traditional beekeepers go to extreme lengths to get honey – They will climb the tallest trees, and risk their lives just to acquire a few kilos. Wild hives are usually destroyed, everything removed from the hive and nothing left for the bees. Open fires are used to smoke out the bees, and a careless beekeeper will often set fire to huge expanses of pristine forest. Each year, these northern water towers lose hundreds of hectares of forest because of fires – destroying thousands of colonies of bees as well as many other endangered species.

The Milgis Trust has a beekeeping program that is working with more than 40 beekeepers. The project aims to train up beekeepers to have the capacity to look after their own hives and to produce marketable honey and other bee products. Currently many of the hives are already producing honey. It is proving to be a viable social enterprise.

The training also covers how people can harvest their traditional log hives in a more sustainable manner , and encourage bees to remain resident during the dry months. It is not without its challenges, and wax-moths, honey badgers and varroa mites have caused a few problems, especially during the dry season when bees are weaker.




Beekeeping Training



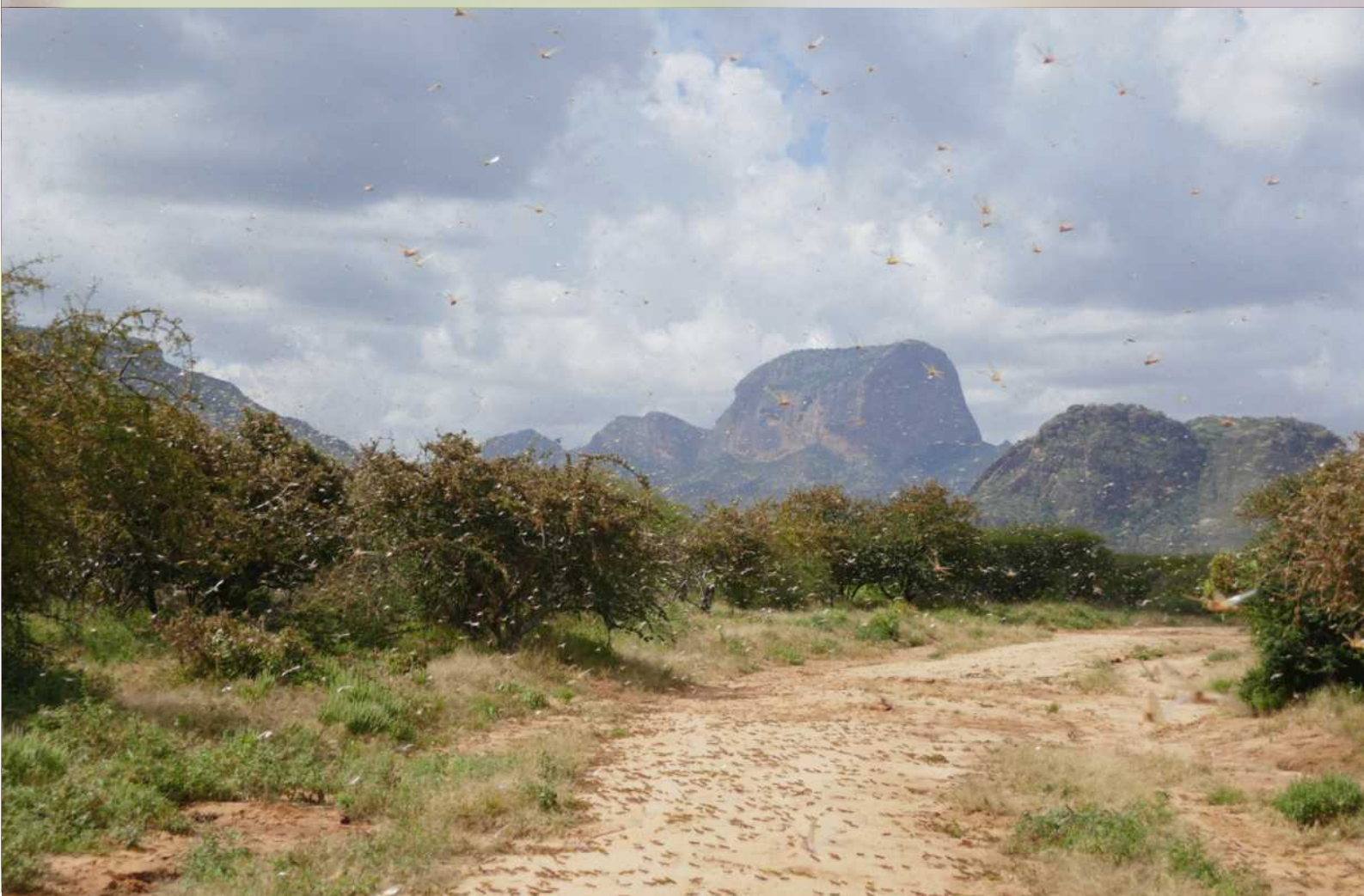
Traditional Beekeeper





## Locusts & Bees

The Milgis ecosystem has been a locust hotspot in the last 12 months, particularly the Northern Ndoto's. Efforts to contain the locusts have involved widespread aerial spraying of pesticides. In area's being sprayed, the honeybees have taken a big hit, let alone all the other species that get caught in the crossfire. Many bee-keepers started losing 'their' bees. We knew that we had to act quickly, and have since been working with communities to better coordinate spraying activities. Where possible, communities have been issued with knapsack sprayers and work in the early hours of the morning to spray before the locusts take to the air. Many people rely on beekeeping as their primary income so responsible spraying practices mean the world to them. Sadly there is still a very long way to go in order to come up with a more sustainable solution to this problem.





## A very big Thank you to all our wonderful supporters



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Kristine Furuholmen  
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- Gilfrid Powys
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- Frazer Douglas
- Maryjka Beckmann
- Private Journeys
- Jeremy Block
- Fuzz Dyer
- Sir David and Lady Newbigging
- Bruce Corrie
- Pirjo from Finland



Milgis Stiftelsen  
(Norge)



AID FOR  
SAMBURU



VOSS







**Milgis Trust  
P.O BOX 93  
Naro Moru  
10105  
Kenya**

**Tel. 0716344118  
0722812587**

**Email:  
[helendd@uuplus.net](mailto:helendd@uuplus.net)  
lesoloyiamoses@gmail.com  
digsdufresne@gmail.com**