

Pioneering translocations and a boost for ranger accommodation

This past year has been a very exciting time for rhino conservation at Lewa. The Conservancy once again played a pivotal role in securing the black rhino's future in Kenya by facilitating a historic translocation that has now seen the species reintroduced to a native habitat in northern Kenya from where it has long been absent.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

The support from donors across the globe, including funding from the Anna Merz (our co-founder) Rhino Trust, injected the finances to turn this brave venture into reality.

The black rhino (*Diceros bicornis michaeli*), Kenya's native rhino species, once roamed the country, and further across the continent, in hundreds of thousands at the turn

of the century. In 1960, it is estimated that Kenya had 20,000 individuals, but a dramatic upsurge in poaching reduced this population to a mere 300. Today, conservation efforts across the country have seen the population increase gradually, but another challenge besides poaching now threatens

the rhino in Kenya – the lack of suitable and secure habitats to host an increasing population.

Rhino conservation is a costly and risky affair that few are willing to engage in

'Protecting rhino is more than just erecting a fence around a habitat. It involves setting up complex infrastructure, hiring and regularly training anti-poaching teams and patrol units, the use of technology, the establishment of intelligence networks and more. All these activities are expensive while still being very risky - and would be a strain to most without the necessary resources. We are grateful for the funding that enabled Lewa and the Northern Rangelands Trust to move rhino to Sera Community Conservancy and as a result establish the first black rhino sanctuary at Samburu in over 25 years' says Geoffrey Chege, Lewa's Chief Conservation Officer.

This effort is hailed as a game-changer in Kenya's conservation efforts, as it will be the first time that a community is responsible for the protection and nurturing of a rhino population.



Left: Funds from the Anna Merz Trust have funded the upgrade of two ranger camps on Lewa



A motivated ranger force is key

Lewa has only achieved great success in its work thanks to the tremendous dedication of its people, including the rangers who work tirelessly in the field to safeguard rhino. To further motivate this force, Lewa has begun to upgrade housing facilities for its rangers. The Conservancy was finally able to improve the living standards of the ground teams when it received sufficient support from partners, including the Anna Merz Rhino Trust.

The Trust directly funded the upgrade of two camps on Lewa – Fumbi and Mlima Kali. These camps now have three bedrooms each and a shared kitchen. Each bedroom is equipped with an inbuilt locker box and bed. Each camp also has a new 5,000-litre tank on their platforms. The camps have been equipped with new lavatories, and all have been guttered to enable the harvesting of water and promote sustainable water use.

Lewa is grateful for this support that continues to help the Conservancy achieve great milestones as well as keep its staff motivated.

Grants

Thanks to the Anna Merz Rhino Trust, we were able to send \$31,520 to Lewa to pay for the construction of two 3-man guardhouses.



The provision of the new amenities has greatly improved the morale of the team. Everybody is happy with the new standards of living we enjoy, and it makes us motivated to continue working for Lewa and protecting rhino

Francis Kobia | Lewa field ranger

