

IMPROVING TECHNOLOGY AND BUILDING MORALE

A command and control centre is crucial to any anti-poaching operations in a conservation area. Lewa's former operations / radio room had served the organisation and the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) community conservancies for more than ten years, acting as the communications hub for a region with a huge radius of more than 300 km.

Wanjiku Kinuthia | Communications Officer, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

This room, equipped with radios for various functions and control and monitoring screens, traditionally used different technologies to facilitate communications and transfer of information across different groups in Lewa and the NRT landscape. The radio room is where field rangers across Lewa called in to report on rhino and other animal sightings, unusual occurrences, and alert the team when they have found injured or unwell wildlife.

Additionally, rangers patrolling NRT community conservancies called the radio room to report incidents such as road banditry, stock theft, raiding, and elephant poaching. Moreover, Lewa's neighbouring communities, on sensing potential danger to wildlife from suspect individuals or during cases of human-wildlife conflict, could reach out to the Conservancy through the radio room.

In partnership with USA-based Vulcan Inc., a Paul G. Allen company, and other conservation organisations in the region – including NRT, Save the Elephants and 51 Degrees – Lewa has now evolved its operations room into a Joint Operations Centre (JOC), a communications hub that will not only help oversee wildlife security operations across the vast landscape, but also combine all the technologies used by conservationists in the region to monitor and protect wildlife.

The new JOC will enhance the efficiency of anti-poaching operations in the Lewa and NRT areas by creating a centralised and integrated system. All the radio operations, wildlife reports, poaching threats and human-intelligence operations will be fully integrated with technology newly developed by Vulcan. Our new technology will be fully secure, with extremely limited user rights due to the highly sensitive information available. As conservation methods and practices continue to evolve, technology demonstrates its ability to help us protect wildlife, and this new Centre and its possibilities are very exciting. They certainly signal a future of collaboration between conservationists,

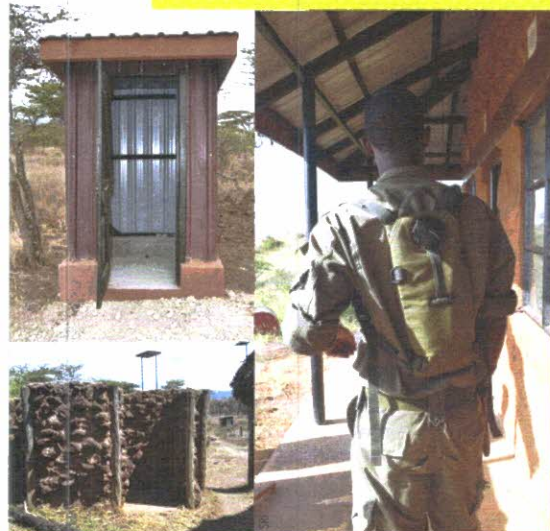
engineers, communities and law enforcement agencies.

While the new JOC will significantly augment the operations and efficiency of our rangers, on the ground, thanks to the Anna Merz Rhino Trust's support, we have also been able to greatly improve the morale of the team by upgrading their accommodation. Our rangers now have clean and comfortable rooms, sufficient cooking areas, and better sanitation due to new water tanks and bathroom facilities.

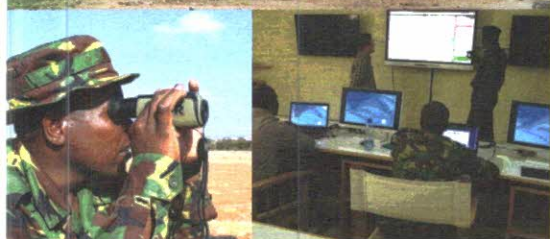
Upgrading our team's standard of living has been a priority for Lewa Conservancy, recognising that little or no success can be achieved if the men and women on the ground are not well taken care of. As a result of a motivated team and many other factors, Lewa has been able to fully protect its rhinos from poachers for the third year in a row – with no successful poaching attempts – and provide support to fellow anti-poaching operations across the vast northern Kenya landscape.

Grants

Since November 2015, we have sent \$25,848 from the Anna Merz Rhino Trust to cover the construction costs of a ranger accommodation and ablutions block, and £20,035 from our Rhino Dog Squad appeal for Lewa's canine unit.



Top to bottom: New ranger accommodation and ablution blocks, fitted with solar power and rainwater catchment tanks have greatly improved living conditions, while the enhanced Joint Operations Centre aids rhino security



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