



THE ROMBO PROJECT

MANITOU GROUP
DONOR REPORT

**REPORTING PERIOD:
FEBRUARY 2023 - JULY 2023**

JUSTDIGGIT

INTRO

Dear Arnaud Sochas,

We are happy to share the next progress report of the Rombo Project for the period January – July 2023 with you. Here, you will find the latest updates from the field, our future plans for this restoration project, and of course the dedicated impact we've realised in this area thanks to the support of the Manitou Group!

Our Treecovery program in Central Tanzania keeps on growing. Apart from the 481 villages that are already part of our program, we are currently adding another 15 villages. Together with LEAD Foundation, our Tanzanian partner, we have trained over 200,000 farming households to bring back trees to their farm, which resulted in over 14 million trees being regenerated!

Our programs in other areas are growing as well. The water bunds in Arusha are showing a good response. The little rainwater they received was successfully retained and is now promoting the growth of grass! Similar interventions are being implemented in southern Kenya, in the South Rift and around Amboseli National Park. Both areas are heavily degraded but form a vital habitat for wildlife, whilst being of great importance to the communities that use these areas to graze their livestock. Together with our implementing partners, we have drafted a long-term vision for these areas, which will help to transform them into healthy ecosystems again.

We are thankful for the support of our partners, who enable us to do what we love: working together with local communities to give nature the boost it needs to restore itself and make the future look green again!



**This photo was taken in the Arusha area, not in the Rombo area

IMPACT OF THE ROMBO EXTENSION PROJECT

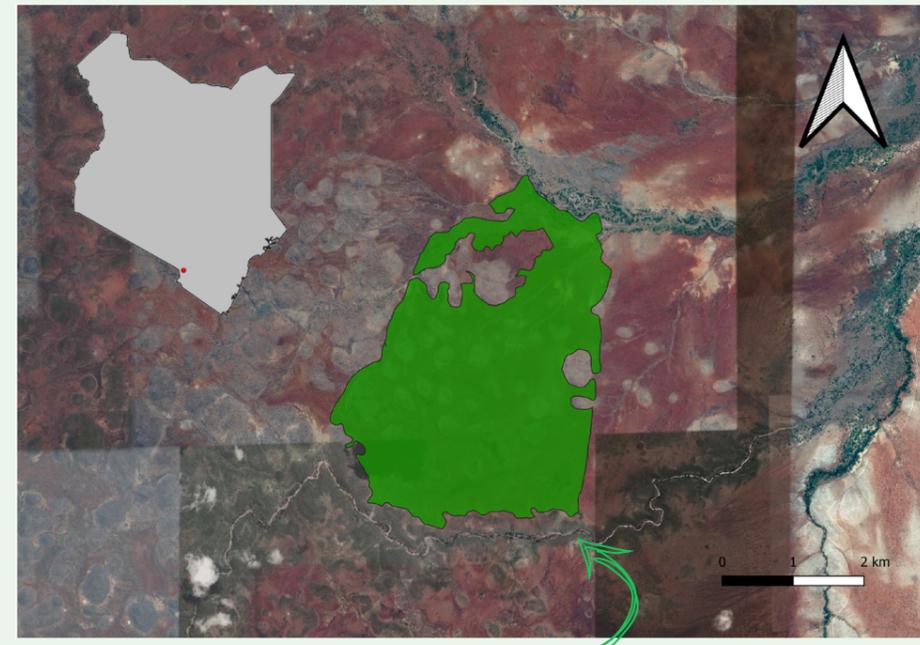


FIGURE 1: MAP OF ROMBO LOCATION IN SOUTHERN KENYA

The restoration project in Rombo Group Ranch in southern Kenya – where your donation has been used – has really started to pick up pace in the last six months. Together with our amazing partner, Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust (MWCT), and a dream team of diggers, rangers, fundis (artisans), and other members of the community we've managed to hit our target for the amount of land that is being regreened. We now have **182** hectares under restoration in Rombo. Within this project area, we've dug a total of **9,000** water bunds that are ready to capture invaluable rainwater!

There are already many people benefiting from this project, either directly or indirectly. A total of **116** people are directly benefiting from the project through temporary employment as diggers, artisans (fundis), or technical team members, of which **53** people are young people and **43** (37%) are women. The number of people that are indirectly benefitting from the project in the wider is four times higher, **464!**

Dedicated impact of Manitou Group

Of course, these great results so far wouldn't have been possible without the help of Manitou. Thanks to your support, we've been able to make a real positive impact on the living environment of many people and animals. We can't thank you enough for helping to regreen and cool down our planet!

This is the impact we've realised so far with your donation:

- 115** hectares under regreening
- 5,678** bunds dug
- 293** people positively impacted
- 3,009,135** litres of water retained

THE PROJECT AREA

Rombo Group Ranch is located within the Chyulu Landscape in the Tsavo-Amboseli ecosystem in Southwest Kenya at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro and the Chyulu Hills. It covers an area of 809 square kilometres and is home to people who largely depend on the land for their livelihood. The majority of them are Maasai. Maasai are traditionally pastoralists who live in scattered semi-permanent villages or bomas, but are also diversifying their income sources. There is extensive land degradation in this region, driven by poor grazing practices and management, and climate change. To restore the land, we implement a restoration program that aims at bringing back vegetation and restoring the productivity of the landscape.

We focus on the implementation of rainwater harvesting interventions, improved grazing management, grass seed banks and stone lines. The digging of water bunds for soil and water conservation helps bring back vegetation, makes more natural pastures available to the community and creates a microclimate that in the long term alleviates the prolonged drought faced by the communities. Grass Seed Banks, which are managed by Maasai women groups, play a vital role in restoring degraded lands and revitalising the livelihoods of local Maasai women. These innovative plots serve as areas for cultivating various grass species that provide good quality seeds for restoration and income generation for Maasai women through the sale of grass seeds and hay. The implementation of stone lines effectively mitigates water force, minimises erosion, and fosters a protective environment that enables plant growth. In the Rombo Group Ranch, the Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust (MWCT) takes charge as the field implementing partner, spearheading these transformative initiatives.

THE PROJECT AREA



FIGURE 2: A GULLY AND BARE LAND IN THE LANDSCAPE

Land degradation in the Rombo Group Ranch occurs in a vicious cycle, as is often the case. Natural vegetation is gradually disappearing and is unable to regenerate due to overgrazing, unsustainable grazing management and prolonged drought. High-quality perennial vegetation disappears, leaving only low-quality annual vegetation. During the dry season, these die off, leaving the landscape bare until the first rains arrive. Because of the lack of vegetation cover, the soil hardens and becomes less permeable, significantly reducing infiltration during the next rainy season. More run-off occurs, frequently resulting in massive erosion and further land degradation, leaving less rainwater in the soil and allowing for even less vegetation growth during the following growing season. To address this issue and reverse the degradation process, bunds are being dug in these degraded areas for soil and water conservation, which reduces surface run-off by holding the water during the rains. The bund seeding helps bring back vegetation, making more natural pastures available for the livestock. As you can imagine, land restoration projects such as this one in Rombo have brought hope to the people affected by the devastating drought!

OUR WORK SO FAR



FIGURE 5: DRONE PHOTO OF ROMBO PROJECT SITE, MAY, 2023

We took a few essential steps to ensure a successful and sustainable implementation of our Rombo extension project. In this section, we will summarise all that we've done thus far in Rombo!

1. SITE SELECTION

Together with our amazing partner Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust (MWCT), we thoroughly assessed the site to determine its suitability. This evaluation involved various criteria, such as soil type, area slope or gradient, distance to nearby settlements, extent of degradation, and size of the area. The selected site should strike a balance between being far enough from homesteads to minimise livestock intrusion while still remaining accessible for implementation by the community. The site's soils should also be conducive to vegetation growth and water retention, ideally sandy-loam soil, an equivalent or a better alternative. After a careful evaluation of all these criteria in the field and a last check by our technical team using remote sensing software, we decided that the Rombo site was by far the most suitable location to establish our project.

IMPACT OF THE ROMBO EXTENSION PROJECT



FIGURE 6: THE JUSTDIGGIT AND MWCT TEAM SCOUTING THE ROMBO SITE PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION.



FIGURE 7: ROMBO PROJECT AREA BEFORE RESTORATION INTERVENTIONS

OUR WORK SO FAR

2. CREATING COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING AND BUY IN

Getting the support and involvement of the community is critical in ensuring the success and proper maintenance and sustainability of the project. Prior to implementation, we held a series of community and leaders' meetings to ensure a common understanding of restoration and its purpose, and the interventions proposed for the site. The following steps were involved in the community engagement process:

i. Group Ranch Officials and Leaders' Meetings

At the project's inception, our project team (consisting of Justdiggit and MWCT members) held meetings with the elected Group Ranch Officials and community leaders to express our interest in bringing a new initiative to restore degraded land within Rombo Group Ranch.

ii. Community Meetings

An initial community meeting was conducted to discuss the project's implementation in Rombo. At the beginning of the meeting, the project team created a shared understanding of the area's current state, emphasizing degradation and overgrazing. They explained the need for interventions, outlining physical measures such as water bunds, reseeding, laying contour stone lines, and healing gullies, as well as passive approaches like grazing management and a two-year resting period for the site from grazing. The team linked these interventions to the traditional grazing practice known locally as "Olopololis" (which means grazing reserves) to enhance community understanding. Following a thorough discussion and understanding, the community granted approval to proceed with the project.



OUR WORK SO FAR

3. TRAINING

Prior to beginning the project, initial training was held for the whole implementation team. One day was reserved for the training of artisans (called "fundi's") and technical team, and another day for the diggers. The training included:

- Background to land degradation and restoration
- Water bunds as an intervention
- Structure and layout of the water bunds
- Water bunds dimensions and drawing
- Water bunds digging
- Seeding
- Laying stone lines
- Gully healing



FIGURE 9: IN THE FIELD TRAINING OF THE FUNDI'S AND DIGGERS

4. BUND DIGGING, SEEDING AND STONE LINES

After the training, it was time for the most important part: the digging of the bunds. We had 100 diggers, digging 6 bunds every day, and working 6 days a week. We also had 10 artisans (fundis), one head artisan from Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust and 6 technical team members on the ground each day to supervise the work and ensure the correct spacing and quality of the bunds were achieved. A large land restoration project like this requires real teamwork!

OUR WORK SO FAR



FIGURE 10 & 11: LEFT; STONE LINES AND RIGHT; DIGGING OF BUNDS AT ROMBO, FEB-2023.



FIGURE 12: BUNDS HOLDING WATER AFTER ONE RAIN SHOWER, APRIL 2023



FIGURE 13: GRASS SPROUTED AND GROWING INSIDE THE BUNDS AFTER APRIL 2023 RAINS

CURRENT PROJECT STATUS AND SUSTAINABILITY

In February 2023, the Rombo Extension project successfully completed the digging and seeding of 9,000 (!) water bunds in anticipation of the March-April rains. Unfortunately, the region experienced insufficient rainfall during this period, with the Rangers reporting only one rain shower for the area. Despite this climatic challenge, the grass did sprout, which shows the effectiveness of the bund digging approach in bringing back vegetation cover and reducing surface run-off. These positive outcomes reinforce the project's commitment to sustainable land restoration and demonstrate the potential for further success as the project progresses. Have a look at the photos below to see these promising results!

After the bunds have been dug, the project is currently in the early maintenance phase. This means that we are closely monitoring the site and slowly preparing the communities for sustainable use of the areas after vegetation has come back. Grazing committees play an important role here by facilitating better recovery. They are formed by respected community members and are responsible for creating community grazing plans, that state exactly where people are allowed to graze their livestock in each period of the year. Moreover, a ranger's post is established, facilitating continued dialogues between the rangers and the community/herders for continuous monitoring of the project sites.



FIGURE 14 ROMBO BUNDS IN ANTICIPATION OF MARCH-APRIL RAINS

CURRENT PROJECT STATUS AND SUSTAINABILITY

To foster ongoing community buy-in and support, continuous meetings will be held with the grazing committees and community members to ensure the project's sustainability. We have developed a comprehensive grazing tool with the help of a consultant. This tool will be used by the grazing committees, who will receive training on its proper implementation to ensure the grazing areas remain productive in the long run. The pictures below were taken during one of the meetings with the grazing committees.



FIGURE 15 & 16: PHOTOS DURING A GRAZING COMMITTEE MEETING

EXTRA INCOME IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Bunds digging has been essential in supporting livelihoods during these difficult times. We've received several testimonies from project participants about this additional income and how it has helped their households, particularly with the purchase of food and paying school fees for children. The digging allowed 116 community members to participate and earn money.

DIGGER TESTIMONIAL

Kamanke Susan "I am a 28 year old Maasai Woman and a mother of 4 kids, I worked as a casual labourer at the Rombo bunds site. I gained knowledge on land restoration which I had never heard of before the bunds project. I saw grass seeds for the first time in my life during the bund digging and seeding. I plan to put my family's land under restoration since I am now skilled to do so. The income earned was very vital for my family and especially the younger ones whereby we bought food and gained relief from the drought season."

ANTICIPATED FUTURE BENEFITS

Before the project interventions, the area was very dry with no vegetation cover. In a few cases where there was some vegetation, it was poor-quality annual grasses with stunted growth that could only reach a few centimetres above the ground. Through the bunds intervention, we expect that the site will be covered with good-quality vegetation including perennial and palatable grasses, shrubs, and trees. We also anticipate that gullies will stop expanding and begin to fill up, and no new gullies will form. Soil erosion will be controlled and in the long term, there will be availability of pasture for the livestock and wildlife and an increase in productivity of the land.

Communities will gain more knowledge and understanding of the importance of land restoration and different restoration interventions. Adoption and replication at the individual level will also be promoted through education and outreach. In the long term, the projects will provide pasture for both wildlife and livestock, which will increase the livestock value thus fetching good money in the market as well as providing milk and meat to the families. The project will also contribute to healthier pasture and habitat for wildlife, potentially increasing the tourism footprint and in turn the income earned by the community through tourism.

NEXT STEPS

The following activities will take place in the next phase of the project:

1. Grazing committee meetings

Meetings and capacity building for grazing committees are planned for the following quarter. These aim to increase the support from herders and ensure sustainable utilisation of the restored resources.

2. Community meetings (informal meetings between rangers & herders)

There will be a quarterly community gathering to raise awareness of restoration and inform the community of the project's progress.

3. Site visits

There will be scheduled site visits to evaluate the project's progress and meet with the site rangers to discuss issues, spot gaps and potential areas for improvement, and gather feedback from the community.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will be conducted by our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team and the MWCT team.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR
CONTINUOUS SUPPORT!