



SORALO

South Rift Association of Land Owners

Strategic Plan

2018 - 2023

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
SORALO'S ACHIEVEMENTS	4
Community Conservation	4
Keeping the Landscape Intact	4
Linking Livelihoods and Culture	5
Grassroots Ownership and Accountability	6
Diverse Partnerships	6
THE CONTEXT	7
THREATS	8
OPPORTUNITIES	9
VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES	11
THEORY OF CHANGE	12
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	13
GOAL 1	14
GOAL 2	15
GOAL 3	16
GOAL 4	17
GOAL 5	18
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	20

INTRODUCTION



This strategic plan charts the next phase in SORALO's development as an organization, including its vision, major goals and priorities, and the internal organizational development needed to deliver on its mission.

- SORALO Landscape
- Maasai Mara National Reserve
- Amboseli National Park

Kenya's South Rift Valley is a landscape where the Maasai people have lived for centuries with their livestock and alongside native wildlife. The area is still home to a remarkable diversity of human culture and biological diversity, but today it is a threatened landscape, confronting a growing population, a society in transition, and land use changes that threaten critical wildlife habitat.

The South Rift Association of Land Owners (SORALO) is a community-based organization that was created in 2004 in order to support and represent the pastoralist communities of this region. SORALO's primary role is to ensure the integrity of this landscape, the culture of its people, the well-being of local livelihoods based on healthy rangelands, and the co-existence of people and wildlife. SORALO has been a leader for the past decade in community-based conservation in southern Kenya, supporting the development of a wide range of initiatives targeting wildlife conservation, cultural preservation, and land use and management.

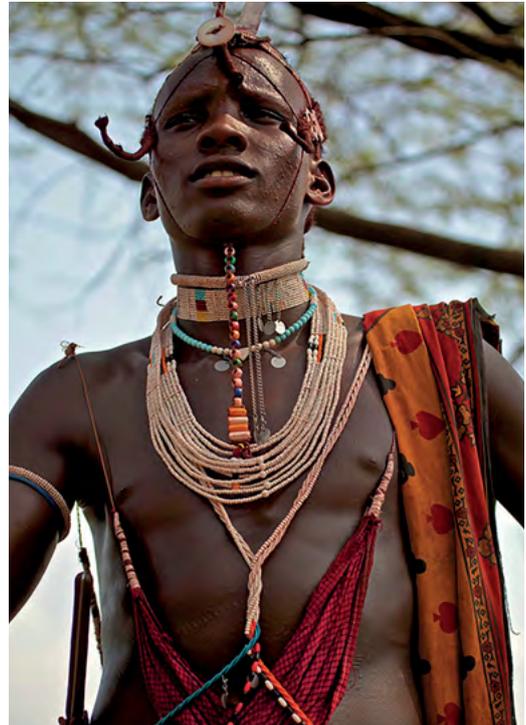
SORALO works across an area of about one million hectares, comprising the western portion of Kajiado County and now the far eastern portion of Narok County, over 16 Group Ranches. This landscape is one of the last remaining areas in southern Kenya where significant communal landholdings remain intact, traditional pastoralist rangelands governance systems continue to function, and livestock and wildlife continue to co-exist across large areas.

The landscape lies within East Africa's most wildlife rich lands, providing a bridge between the Amboseli ecosystem to the east, the Maasai Mara to the west, and Lake Natron and the Ngorongoro highlands to the south, across the border in Tanzania. SORALO's work has played a key role in the continued co-existence of people and wildlife in this landscape, and building on local customs to strengthen natural resource management in the face of new challenges.

Over the past several years, SORALO itself has changed significantly as a result of its own internal development and growth. It has expanded its work to new areas; grown its budget, partnerships, and networks; and refined its governance and organizational structure. This strategic plan charts the next phase in SORALO's development as an organization, including its vision, major goals and priorities, and the internal organizational development needed to deliver on its mission. The strategy focuses on how SORALO can work to maintain the unique cultural and natural values of its member communities, and in particular maintaining the communal land management and tenure systems that are integral to this landscape. It also describes how SORALO can strengthen its organization, becoming more sustainably staffed, resourced, and managed, and attracting the support and partnerships that it needs to deliver.

SORALO'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Since its formation over a decade ago, SORALO has established a track record as a regional leader in community-based conservation approaches, achieving significant global recognition as well for its work. The South Rift Valley is in many respects a model landscape in terms of enduring co-existence between pastoralist communities and wildlife, building on traditional pastoralist land management systems.



Community Conservation

SORALO has helped three communities establish local conservation areas in the South Rift, including Olkiramatian, Suswa and Shompole Conservancies. SORALO has also facilitated community / tour operator partnerships, including brokering a tourism deal on Shompole Group Ranch that now generates about \$12,000 annually for the community. SORALO is also facilitating the coming together of land owners in subdivided lands who wish to pool their lands into conservancies. SORALO manages a landscape security network of game scouts, providing local employment and protecting both lions and other wildlife as well as livestock.

During the past decade the South Rift has seen key wildlife species, including lions and elephants, travelling across the SORALO landscape and re-populating ecosystems where they had been absent for decades.

A hallmark of SORALO is high-quality research that is used to evaluate and inform local management practices. Recent research products document the success of traditional land and resource management practices in maintaining co-existence between people and wildlife.¹

¹ Samantha Russell, Peter Tyrrell and David Western. Seasonal interactions of pastoralists and wildlife in relation to pasture in an African savanna ecosystem, Journal of Arid Environments

Keeping the Landscape Intact

During the past several years SORALO has focused more on addressing land use change. SORALO has had important impacts in working to stop land fragmentation, through either using the Community Land Act to prevent subdivision or in amalgamating what has already been subdivided into single management units. SORALO has worked with Narosora and Loita communities to start land use planning, a piece of work made possible because SORALO understands the context in which it works and is not seen as an outsider organization; people know that SORALO is of, and for, the community. Using this approach, SORALO has been able to influence land subdivision in Narosora and to secure 116,000 hectares as designated communal land.



Linking Livelihoods and Culture

A key foundation for SORALO's work is the Lale'enok Centre, located in Olkiramatian Group Ranch. Lale'enok has become a centre for producing, supporting, and nurturing conservation leaders – both locally, nationally and internationally. Communities have come to visit the Centre from within Kenya and from as far afield as Mongolia because it has established a reputation for learning and sharing of best practices in linking culture, livelihoods, and conservation. Lale'enok-trained local resource assessors have been hired to take on other leadership positions in other conservation organizations. Lale'enok receives its income from research groups and conservation fees. The Centre directly supports 19 jobs and indirectly supports 210 women who own the centre. This in itself is significant because traditionally Maasai women do not own property, and in this case ownership of Lale'enok is a great source of pride as it cements their identity and contribution in a landscape dominated by male driven activities.

Grassroots Ownership and Accountability

In 2016, SORALO organized successful election of cluster committees and board members for the region. This created full integration between the community and SORALO in the clusters where the organization works and in information flow to and from communities. The new governance structure has already supported SORALO's work and impact, such as in Naroosura, where land use planning is being led by Group Ranch officials after they were given the mandate following a meeting with the cluster committees.

Diverse Partnerships

SORALO's work has been based on diverse partnerships that span the grassroots to international organizations and supporters. From SORALO's creation to its current standing as a fully-fledged organization is in great part due to our founding partnership with the African Conservation Centre (ACC). In addition, the Horn of Africa Environmental Network (HoA - REN) has funded a number of SORALO programs, and, there has been good working relationship with international universities, thus building the capacity of staff on landscape governance. Locally, there are good relationships with a range of organizations, including Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute, Big Life Foundation, Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association, Amboseli Ecosystem Trust, and IUCN. SORALO also continues its long-running partnership with the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, and since 2015 has also embarked on an organizational capacity development partnership with Maliasili.

THE CONTEXT:

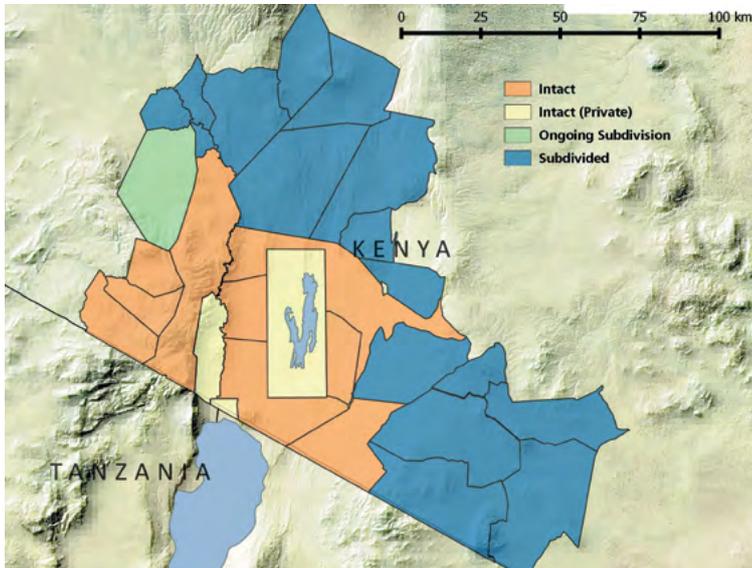
RANGELANDS OF THE SOUTH RIFT VALLEY



East Africa's rangelands are currently undergoing a period of intensifying change. Across the region, growing demographic pressures from a rising human population are resulting in greater pressure on land and other natural resources. This is compounded by climate change, enduring weaknesses in land tenure and local governance institutions, and social and political competition for control over land and other valuable resources.

Kenya's South Rift is, compared to other pastoralist landscapes in the region, relatively intact. Nevertheless, changes are looming in this landscape as well, in terms of existing land tenure and ownership patterns, cultural values, and traditional livelihood systems. These processes of change, and the threats and opportunities they create, are critical context for SORALO's work and strategy.

THREATS



Map of the South Rift showing subdivided and unsubdivided Group Ranches.

Land fragmentation

The primary threat to the integrity of the South Rift Valley landscape is land fragmentation driven by sub-division and the attendant land use changes that come after the land is sub-divided. In the last few decades, fragmentation and degradation have been the major drivers of the breakdown of landscape integrity and resilience across Kenyan rangelands. Some areas, such as the lands in the western part of Narok County, have been entirely subdivided into individually owned plots of around 100-200 acres.

At present, over half (9 of 16) of the Group Ranches in SORALO's landscape have gone through the subdivision process. The remaining seven ranches are still intact communal lands. However, pressure for subdivision is continually growing as a result of urbanization, speculative land purchases and associated rising land prices, and breakdown of traditional Maasai cultural values, with more individual social norms rising with younger generations.

Extractive Industry

The government is prioritizing industrial-style development, and Kenya's South Rift has been described as a new frontier for megaprojects. Already there are oil exploration blocks being explored by the National Oil Corporation in four Group Ranches as well as geothermal wells and wind farms mapped in the landscape in Magadi and Suswa.

Cultural Change

Maasai culture and its pastoralist lifestyle has maintained its integrity in the face of the massive changes of the past century through a powerful sense of collective identity and internal cultural cohesion.

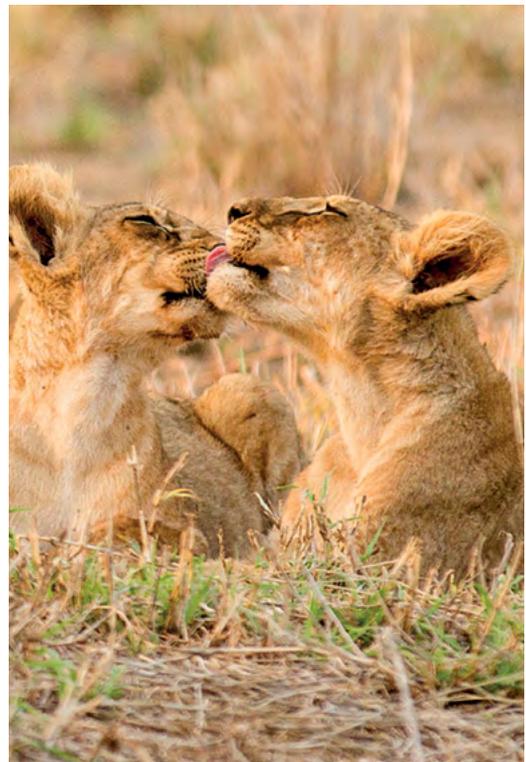
This cohesion is now challenged by an emerging shift from collective to individual values (from "we" to "me"), and a shift from traditional forms of leadership to modern institutional leadership. Traditional leadership emphasized the social role and prestige of the leader, whereas modern, formal leadership positions- as in elected local government- often is more about securing access to power and money. Finally, an increasing rural-to-urban migration is stripping the landscape of the communities' labour force.

Climate Change

In the landscape that SORALO works, there have been more frequent and cyclic droughts that is now a threat to the way of life of its residents. Rainfall throughout East Africa has become more unpredictable and erratic. The impacts of climate change are being felt throughout pastoralist societies, and are compounding shortages related to land use degradation or water shortages.

OPPORTUNITIES

A key enabling condition for SORALO's work in the South Rift landscape is a prevailing condition of relative peace and security, in contrast to other areas in Kenya such as northern Kenya where rangelands are much more impacted by drought, violence, and social conflicts. The semi-arid landscape of the South Rift is also well suited to pastoralism as the most appropriate land use, as this area is not suitable for rain-fed mega-agricultural practices, as is the case in much of Narok District to the west.



The abundance of natural resources such as wildlife in the South Rift creates an opportunity for the development of complementary alternative livelihoods, for example eco-tourism and agro-pastoralism.

The landscape is still relatively intact, with 7 out of the 16 group ranches where SORALO works still retaining communal land holdings and not having embarked on subdivision. This stands in contrast to other Maasai areas in southern Kenya where subdivision is much farther advanced. Despite cultural changes and new social pressures, the communities in the South Rift retain strong local leadership and social cohesion, and the leaders of the Group Ranches are supportive of SORALO's work.

Given the fundamental importance of communal land tenure and land use to SORALO's mission and work, a range of institutional and legal changes in Kenya during the past decade have created new potential opportunities which are key to this strategic plan. Devolution of government under the 2010 Constitution gives county governments greater authority for developing spatial plans that should regulate land use decisions within the counties.

The passing of the Community Land Act in 2016 presents a key opportunity for SORALO to draw upon legislation in preventing land from sub-division, through legally mandated processes for registration of community lands and land use plans. The way that SORALO and its constituent communities engage with this process in Kajiado County may also be key to influencing future land use patterns in the South Rift communities.

The growth of conservancies in Kenya over the past five years, including through support by the 2013 Wildlife Act, also provides opportunities in terms of resources, legal and policy support, and new networks and relationships that can support SORALO's work. New models of conservancies in subdivided lands, as in the Maasai Mara, present opportunities for application to areas where SORALO works, to overcome land fragmentation through new institutional arrangements.



Summary of Key Opportunities in the South Rift:

- Semi-arid landscape that is not suitable for agriculture but provides ample opportunities for pastoralism and wildlife to thrive
- Legal reforms- Community Land Act has brought legitimacy and legal support for communal land holdings
- Devolution and working with county governments has facilitated decision-making at the community level
- Strong traditional natural resource governance systems and supportive Group Ranch leadership
- Seven Group Ranches still remain intact, creating an opportunity to show-case the benefits of intact and interconnected landscapes. It is a landscape approach that aims to connect two world famous ecosystems in Kajiado and Narok Counties, with the primary purpose of securing land for pastoralism by allowing for free migration of livestock and wildlife
- High tourism investment potential in the SORALO region; the Group Ranches provide a key wildlife connectivity corridor between Amboseli National Park and Maasai Mara National Reserve.

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Vision

A healthy and intact landscape that sustains pastoralist communities and wildlife.

Mission

To maintain a healthy connected landscape for people and wildlife in Kenya's South Rift.



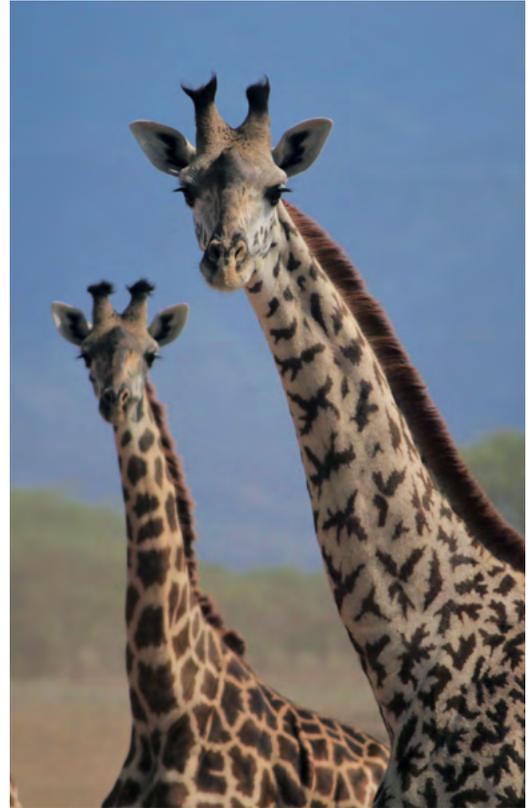
To achieve its vision, SORALO's work centres on three interrelated spheres:

1. Sustaining healthy and connected landscapes;
2. Wildlife that co-exists with local cultures and communities, and
3. A vital pastoralist culture and livelihoods in the South Rift.

THEORY OF CHANGE

SORALO believes that delivering its vision of healthy, intact landscapes that benefit people and wildlife requires addressing four key areas of intervention:

- Improving rangelands governance by securing communal lands, water and natural resources through appropriate local tenure arrangements.
- Improving natural resource management and conservation to monitor, manage and protect wildlife and other resources.
- Generating benefits and increased income through sustainable natural resource-based enterprises that improve local livelihoods and create incentives for conservation.
- Promoting cultural values and practices that promote co-existence of people and wildlife.



Governance: People are able to secure rights over communal lands, water, and resources.

Management: People are able to monitor, manage and protect wildlife and other resources.

Livelihoods: People are able to generate benefits and income from natural resources.

Culture: People retain the cultural values that promote co-existence and communal resource uses.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

SORALO's primary geographic focus, and the priority for its staffing and resourcing, will be in the seven group ranches where land is not yet subdivided. All efforts will be made in the next several years to ensure that these areas are maintained as intact communal lands.

In areas that are already subdivided, SORALO's focus will be on developing new land management and land use arrangements that will enable subdivided lands to be managed as larger land holdings. SORALO's focus will be on developing and testing the most effective arrangements for these lands.



The following strategic framework will therefore guide SORALO's work and efforts in its geographic focus area over the next five years in service of its mission.

Goal 1

Secure and strengthen community rights to land through strong and effective local governance institutions

Goal 2

Support natural resource management practices and institutions that enable people and wildlife to co-exist across the SORALO landscape

Goal 3

Promote cultural values that foster co-existence and communal land management

Goal 4

Support the development of sustainable resource-based enterprises for improved livelihoods and enhanced connectivity

Goal 5

Grow and strengthen SORALO into an effective organization capable of delivering on its mission

GOAL 1: SECURE AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RIGHTS TO LAND THROUGH STRONG AND EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS

A critical goal for SORALO over the next several years will be to use a range of mapping, land use management, spatial planning and legal tools to strengthen governance of communal rangelands in Group Ranches that are not yet subdivided. SORALO will focus on securing the integrity of the unsubdivided Group Ranches and maintaining communal land use and tenure, but will also work to develop new models such as group conservancies for pooled, collective land management in subdivided areas.

Objective 1.1:

Support the development and implementation of land use plans and other appropriate measures that secure communal land through participatory processes.

Key Strategy: Develop land use management plans / strategies and ensure local institutions (group ranches and conservancies) have the capacity to implement

Objective 1.3:

Support creation of new management models such as group conservancies for pooling subdivided lands back into collective management units.

Key Strategy: Pilot new group conservancy or similar model in Maparasha and other high-potential areas, and then expand pilot model to other subdivided areas.

Objective 1.2:

Support the integration of community land use plans into existing and proposed national and counties spatial plans.

Key Strategy: Facilitate processes to incorporate the community land use plans for Narok and Kajiado into the County and National Spatial Plans.

GOAL 2: SUPPORT NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND INSTITUTIONS THAT ENABLE PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE TO CO-EXIST ACROSS THE SOUTH RIFT LANDSCAPE

SORALO will strengthen local rangeland and wildlife management capacity by working with group ranches, conservancies, game scout networks, and other local community management institutions to strengthen their ability to manage, monitor, and conserve their natural resources, including protecting wildlife and other natural resources from illegal use.

Objective 2.1

Enhance understanding of behaviors and movement of major conflict wildlife species across the SORALO landscape through effective monitoring systems that are linked to local management bodies.

Key Strategy: Monitor wildlife movements and establish community feedback and information sharing mechanisms that link data and information to active local management and conservation measures.

Objective 2.2:

Strengthen existing and emerging local natural resource governance and management institutions such as Water Resource User Associations, Conservancies, and Grazing Committees.

Key Strategies:

- Find ways to connect customary (e.g. Council of Elders) and formal local natural resource governance institutions such as conservancies, WRUAs and Grazing committees.
- Build institutional capacity of WRUAs, conservancies, and grazing committees.

Objective 2.3

Enhance capacity of institutions to respond to human-wildlife conflicts and illegal wildlife and natural resource use.

Key Strategies:

- Establish and maintain existing game ranger networks and rapid response units.
- Establish an effective communications network to support rangers and other wildlife management bodies.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE CULTURAL VALUES THAT FOSTER CO-EXISTENCE OF PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE AND COMMUNAL LAND MANAGEMENT

SORALO recognizes the critical importance of local indigenous cultural values in enabling continued co-existence of people and wildlife within their landscape, and will actively promote traditional knowledge, values, and culture in ways that reinforce those values and assist their perpetuation in the face of social change.

Objective 3.1:

Support communities of the South Rift to use appropriate traditional mechanisms to maintain open and connected landscapes that promote co-existence.

Key Strategies:

- Document history and current traditions and practices within local communities that support co-existence.
- Provide opportunities that will validate the community culture and way of life.
- Create space for dialogue on cultural values.

Objective 3.2:

Establish pathways for perpetuating cultural values in the face of social change

Key Strategy: Formation and implementation of the Pastoral Cultural Conservation Leadership Program

GOAL 4: SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE BASED ENTERPRISES FOR IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS

SORALO will strengthen local incentives to maintain communal rangelands and intact landscapes by facilitating the development of natural resource-based enterprise that improve local livelihoods and economic returns broadly linked to conservation. SORALO will improve its own capacity to deliver on this livelihoods work, starting with a review of its existing livelihood programs and their design and impact, and develop key partnerships that enable it to improve delivery to its constituents.

Objective 4.1:

To increase tourism investment/revenue across the South Rift landscape

Key Strategies:

- Review SORALOs wildlife tourism engagement within the landscape.
- Source for and link the South Rift region with potential investors in the wildlife tourism sector.
- Promote the South Rift as a tourism destination.

Objective 4.2:

To develop and pilot a livestock production and marketing program across the South Rift landscape

Key Strategies:

Review SORALOs livestock production and marketing within the landscape, including exploring links with meat processing and export business sector and opportunities for value addition.

Objective 4.3:

To develop viable small scale women's and youth enterprises linked to sustainable rangeland management

Key Strategy: Review SORALO's women enterprise program and develop forward plan for facilitating women and youth enterprise and livelihood program.

GOAL 5: GROW AND STRENGTHEN SORALO INTO AN EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION CAPABLE OF DELIVERING ON ITS MISSION

To effectively implement this strategy and fulfill its mandate, SORALO will need to have the right organizational structure and systems in place, including clarity on roles and responsibilities and how the team works together to deliver results. Through improved communications about its work, strengthened partnerships, and more effective fundraising, SORALO will double its overall budget during the course of this strategic plan.

Objective 5.1:

To have a representative and effective board that can provide the organization with the necessary leadership and skillsets.

Key Strategies:

- Add technical and professional skills to the board that will support organizational growth and development, and complement the strong grassroots and representative capacity of the board.
- Fully operationalize the board representation at both the cluster and regional level.

Objective 5.2:

Strengthen SORALO human resource capacity through recruitment, training, and improved clarity around organizational structure, roles, and responsibilities.

Key Strategies:

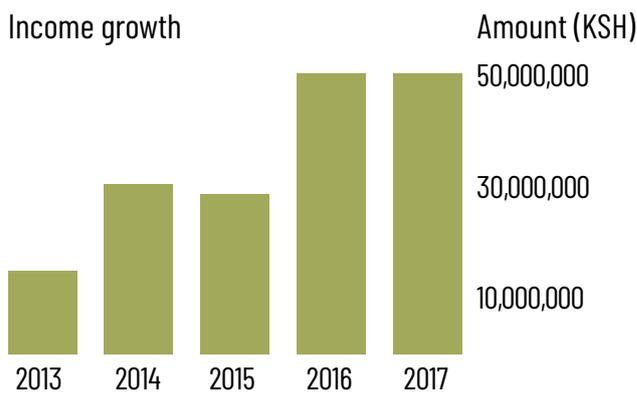
- Implement new organizational structure with clarity around roles, responsibilities, and lines of accountability, including clear formal job descriptions and organogram.
- Improve human resource management systems, including development of official HR manual that reflects SORALO's own values and culture.
- Strengthen investment in SORALO staff to retain and develop staff and improve internal capacity.

Objective 5.3:

Create a financially sustainable organization, with diversified and increased revenue sources, resulting in an overall doubling of SORALO's budget.

Key Strategies:

- Develop a fundraising strategy to identify opportunities to generate increased revenue through a diversified range of sources, partnerships, and networks.
- Develop core communications products that showcase SORALO's work and impact in order to support fundraising.
- Leverage the board and entire SORALO team in fundraising, including from community and county government partners.



Objective 5.4:

Develop effective communications tools and platforms to reach communities and local constituents, funders, and key partners and networks with appropriate messages and products.

Key Strategies:

- Develop improved communications products and platforms to support fundraising, including new logo and updated web site and other core products.
- Establish a clear communications protocol for sharing information with different audiences.
- Develop a branding strategy for SORALO.

Objective 5.5:

To institutionalize organizational management systems through effective management tools.

Key Strategies:

- Develop a Monitoring & Evaluation System, with baselines established, to monitor and document progress in relation to organizational goals.
- Develop organizational Human Resource management tools and systems.
- Refine and adopt financial management policy and protocols.
- Develop improved information management systems- online and paper management- for storing data, reports, and all information.
- Ensure full implementation of all organizational systems for Lale'nok Centre and other local offices.

Objective 5.6:

To develop and maintain effective partnerships that support SORALO's work, growth, and resourcing.

Key Strategies:

- Strengthen partnerships around land rights, tenure, land use planning that can strengthen SORALO's capacity to deliver on its strategic goals, both in terms of field delivery and in terms of resourcing and technical knowledge.
- Improve partnerships through development of clear rules and systems to manage partner relationships in ways that support SORALO's work and development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the staff of SORALO and the dedication of our board members in giving their invaluable time and inputs in this process. We would like to also thanks the Maliasili team for their energy, insights and time for making this strategy one we feel will guide us strategically into the future. Maliasili's facilitation of the strategic planning process was supported in part by funding from the BAND Foundation. Thank you to our donors, and in particular the Liz Claiborne Art Ortenburg (LCAOF) foundation for the financial support for this process.

Photo Credits: front and back cover: Guy Western, page 4: Anna Campbell, page 5 top image: Samantha du Toit, Daniel Silver, pages 6-7: Daniel Silver, page 9: Guy Western, pages 10-13: Daniel Silver

The logo for SORALO features the word "SORALO" in a bold, dark red, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is replaced by a stylized silhouette of a traditional African hut with a conical roof. The background of the entire page is a warm, orange-toned collage of silhouettes: a herd of cattle in the lower left, a person in the upper right, and a giraffe in the upper left. A large white circle is centered on the page, containing the logo and text. Three smaller circular icons are placed around the central circle: a giraffe and a child in the top-left, a person with a staff in the top-right, and a cow in the bottom-right.

SORALO

South Rift Association of Land Owners

We want to see a healthy and intact landscape that sustains pastoralist communities and wildlife.