Protect, Conserve, Inspire
Protecting elephants to conserve the greater Mara ecosystem
www.maraelephantproject.org

Mara Elephant Project Annual Report 2017

Message from Trustee Chairman Brian Heath:

The Mara Elephant Project (MEP) in its sixth operational year continues to produce impressive results that only strengthen its position as the most important organization dealing with elephant conservation in Narok County, Kenya.

Though the ESCAPE Foundation remains our primary donor, we continue to receive support from other impactful organizations. The Iris O'Brien Foundation continues to provide considerable support in improving governance, executing our strategic plan and fundraising strategy. The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust donated a crucial response vehicle to help with operations and the support of the Mara mobile vet unit in partnership with the Kenya Wildlife Service is invaluable in collaring elephants and treating injured animals. A new helicopter hanger was built on Tracks Trust land where MEP HQ resides all generously provided by Tracks Trust. MEP has rangers from the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Narok County Government embedded with our teams, which improve MEP's effectiveness and ensures collaboration and transparency with other wildlife protection organizations. The exciting new partnership with Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) has not only allowed us to work together tracking collared elephants that move into the Serengeti but has also expanded our collaring operations in 2018.

The MEP trustees continue to be the organization's ambassadors throughout Kenya. We thank Hilary Hurt for her time spent as one and wish her well. C.E.O. Marc Goss is getting the operational support he needs with the promotion of Wilson Sairowua to tracking manager and the hiring of additional support staff, like a communications director, that will help tell MEP's story and communicate with donors. Development Director Victoria Fanthorpe has moved on from MEP, but her tasks will be divided among the current staff and the focus on grant submissions will be paramount in 2018.

The MEP team's continued dedication to conservation in the Mara is the backbone of our success. The elephant situation in Narok County is dynamic and while MEP's main focus has shifted from anti-poaching to human-elephant conflict we continue to have successful arrest numbers as well as ivory and firearm seizures. Undoubtedly, numerous human and elephant lives were saved, and the Mara ecosystem conserved due to MEP's efforts.

Message from C.E.O. Marc Goss:

Mara Elephant Project is proud to say that 2017 was a good year for elephant conservation in the greater Mara ecosystem. Our efforts have decreased the Percentage of Illegally Killed Elephants (PIKE) in the Mara to the lowest percentage in six years at 44% with 13 fewer elephant deaths this year than in 2016 (47 to 34).

We continue to remain vigilant toward arresting and convicting poachers and seizing ivory along with other illegal items like firearms and bush meat. While the number of poachers arrested continues to decline from last year (48 to 24), the amount of ivory seized has increased from 67.5 kilograms in 2016 to 176 kilograms in 2017 meaning our intelligence gathering is leading to more prominent arrests of middlemen.

MEP's more comprehensive approach to mitigating human-elephant conflict (HEC) is what has made the biggest difference in 2017. We responded to a record number of HEC incidents this year, 187 versus 91 last year and had three less elephant deaths as a result (14 to 11). This means the MEP method for mitigating HEC is working to save elephant lives and protect communities.

MEP's 2017 highlights are many. We deployed eight new elephant collars increasing the area monitored into the far stretches of the ecosystem including the Mau Forest and Magadi area. This means we're also collecting data on elephant movements in areas like the Mau Forest that has never been done before. We created a permanent ranger unit in the Loita Hills to address rampant poaching and HEC. We deployed a rapid response unit in the Mau Forest and worked tirelessly with our partners the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Narok County Government (NCG) and Kenya Forest Service (KFS) to root out illegal loggers and poachers in this endangered forest.

The end of 2017 brought welcomed news that MEP was now licensed to operate two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for HEC mitigation. The helicopter continues to be a vital asset to all aspects of operations for our organization and must continue to be funded in 2018. In terms of partnerships, having TANAPA as a new partner in 2017 was a thrilling highlight. What started as a general understanding that MEP was allowed to monitor our collared elephants into the Serengeti has turned into a joint collaring operation of 10 elephants in early 2018 that will further connect the Mara and Serengeti ecosystems. Other operational partners like KWS, NCG and The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust all continue to be essential to MEP's success and in the community, The Maa Trust, continues to be an asset for our organization.

In terms of fundraising, we are focused on continuing our individual donor efforts but are looking to expand our reach both in Kenya and abroad. We hosted an event in April that brought together key stakeholders in Nairobi to learn more about the we do. We also updated our Donate page on the website to engage donors more directly and increase donor confidence. We even hosted a pop star at MEP HQ this year! All of this has led to more brand awareness across Kenya and globally that will turn into great fundraising opportunities in 2018. The ESCAPE Foundation remains one of our most stalwart supporters and we cannot thank them or the Fehsenfeld family enough for their vision. 2017 was a year of progress and I feel Mara Elephant Project is right on the cusp of making a much larger impact in 2018.

MEP at a Glance 2017:

January	* Partnership with TANAPA begins to take root with an agreement to allow MEP to monitor collared elephant Shorty in the Serengeti. * Wilson Sairowua was promoted from Administrator to Tracking Manager.
February	* Loita Hills MEP rapid response unit deployed to combat rampant poaching in the area. * Collared Ndorre in Loita Hills to monitor her herd of 50 and collect important data. * MEP helicopter and rangers responded to a mega herd of elephants that included four of MEP's very own collared elephants that were crop raiding farms in the Transmara. * Our team along with KWS/DSWT vet treated one bull for two bullet wounds as a result of the conflict. * The helicopter hanger was completed, which is essential to keeping the MEP helicopter protected from the elements. * Treated a snared baby elephant that needed to be transported to DSWT orphanage. * The Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) approved the commercial use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in Kenya lifting a two-year ban.
March	* Reconnaissance flights begin in the Mau Forest finding many poaching camps and illegal logging sites starting a long-term focus on this critically endangered area.
April	* Hosted our first supporter engagement event in Nairobi at Tribe Hotel inviting key stakeholders to learn more about MEP and meet the staff and trustees. * MEP pamphlet launches to inform people about MEP's work and appeal for donations. * Celebrated Earth Day by planting 100 seedlings at Ngoswani School for a sustainable woodlot. * Hosted children from The Maa Trust to teach them about conservation. * Created a dedicated rapid response unit in Loita Hills.
May	* Re-collared Mytene in the Serengeti with partners KWS, NCG and TANAPA. * Received a Land Rover from the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust that was stationed in the Munyas area and furnished the chili fence building team and responded to conflict on a near daily basis. * Erected 7 kilometers of chili fences in the Munyas area and trained 160 community members to maintain and build chili fences.
June	* The Loita Hills rapid response unit stopped two illegal logging outfits and recovered a large amount of *podocarpus* timber, which was donated to the local primary school. * MEP collared elephant Chelsea who added a calf to her growing herd.
July	* Arrested a suspect in Loita with 32 kg of ivory. * Collared Hangzhou in the southeastern section of the Mara Conservancy; she and her herd of 14 will give us important HEC data on the top of the escarpment. * Tanzania authorities arrested three suspects based on MEP intelligence with 46 kg of ivory and two firearms.
August	* Established a fence monitoring team made up of two rangers with a motorbike with GPS. They are systematically moving from the most northern extent of the ecosystem east to map fences in the Olkinyei and Maji Moto areas. * MEP received a generous donation from Expert Drones to support the UAV program. * Collared elephant Courtney treated for 12 arrow wounds as a result of HEC.

	* Suspended all aerial monitoring of MEP's collared elephants due to lack of funding.
September	* MEP launched an updated website with a more advanced Donate page. * Lucy's collar broke off and unfortunately, we weren't able to replace it.
October	* The MEP intelligence team led a KWS ranger unit to arrest two suspects with 40 kg of ivory in Meru. * Began assisting KWS, NCG and Kenya Forest Service (KFS) to address the serious illegal logging issues in the Mau Forest. * Received approval from KCAA for the C.E.O. to operate two Mavic Pro UAVs. * MEP and Mara Conservancy established its own Domain Awareness System chapter. * Collared elephant Courtney found dead. * KWS approves MEP to collar two new elephants in the eastern Mau Forest.
November	* Collared Nancy and Wilber in the Mau Forest, they are the first two elephants ever monitored in the Mau Forest and are providing essential data for this little-known area. * Re-collared elephant Limo after his collar dropped off. * Used helicopter to respond to an injured child as a result of HEC and flew her to Tenwek Hospital. * Collared Lempiris in response to the HEC injury of the little girl. * The helicopter had the first pachyderm passenger when a baby elephant needed an airlift to DSWT orphanage in Nairobi.
December	* Pop star Ellie Goulding visits MEP HQ as an ambassador for the United Nations Environment Programme. * Received funding from TUSK Trust as they continue to be a trusted partner. * Started talks with DSWT about funding a permanent ranger team in Mau Forest. * Collared elephant Santiyan dropped her collar, couldn't re-collar her so we collared Earhart in her herd.

Improving Elephant Security:

The three activities that MEP engages in to improve elephant security are deploying anti-poaching patrols, rapidly responding to mitigate human-elephant conflict and monitoring collared elephants. In addition to continued successes in those three activities, MEP has also been able to increase our area of operation in 2017 to include the Mau Forest and Loita Hills. These two areas are vastly under regulated and illegal logging, poaching and human-elephant conflict are all extremely high. MEP has been able to expand into these areas by re-deploying rangers from the core rapid response units away from conflict hotspots during the low conflict seasons to the Mau and Loita areas. The helicopter has also proven an invaluable tool in supporting ranger units on the ground and increasing our area of operation while decreasing our rapid response time. Additionally, in late 2017, the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust partnered with MEP to fund a new dedicated patrol and rapid response unit in the Mau Forest. This unit has already had successes with shutting down illegal logging sites, arresting poachers, confiscating ivory and responding to human-elephant conflict.

Aerial view of an illegal logging site in the Mau Forest.

Poison-tipped drop spears and snares recovered by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust/MEP Mau Team.

Anti-Poaching:

This year MEP along with KWS arrested 24 ivory middlemen with 176 kg of elephant ivory in areas as far as Meru and Nairobi. Our intelligence department continues to confirm ivory is still being sought after by poachers and brokers. Additionally, we've recently discovered that the bulk of the ivory recovered is coming out of Tanzania with the Mara Conservancy reporting four bull carcasses in the Serengeti in 2017.

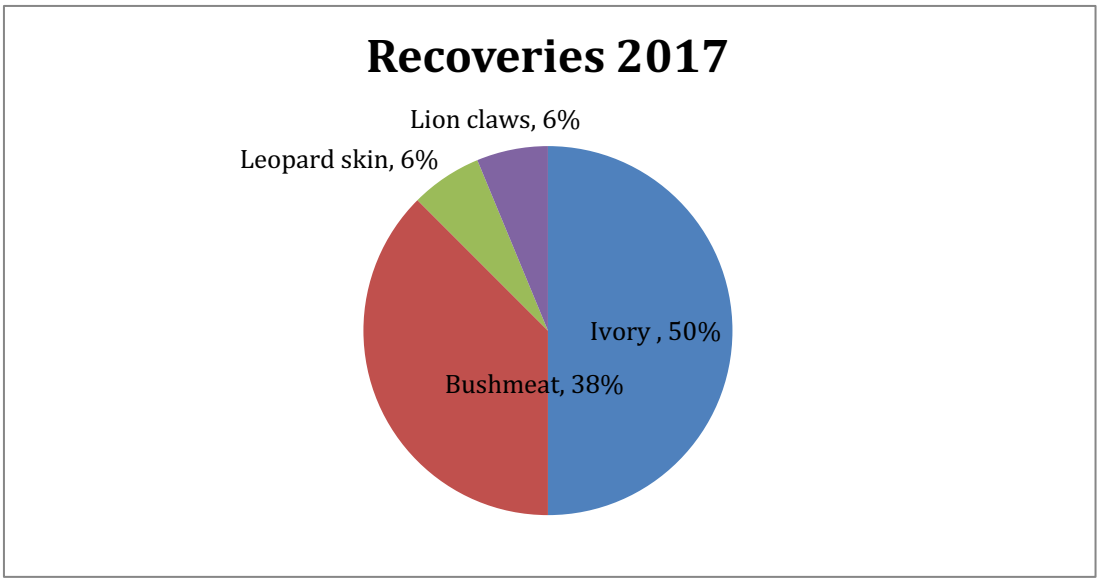
At the beginning of the year we experienced an elephant poaching outbreak in the Loita Forest. In January, MEP found four elephant carcasses with their tusks hacked out by poachers. We initially suspected the influx of cattle herders coming into the area during a dry period; however, with further investigation we were able to identify a poaching gang with a .458 large caliber rifle they were using for killing elephants and rhinos. We're happy to say that during the year we made numerous arrests of middlemen selling ivory coming out of the Loita area, but we have not recovered the firearm yet.

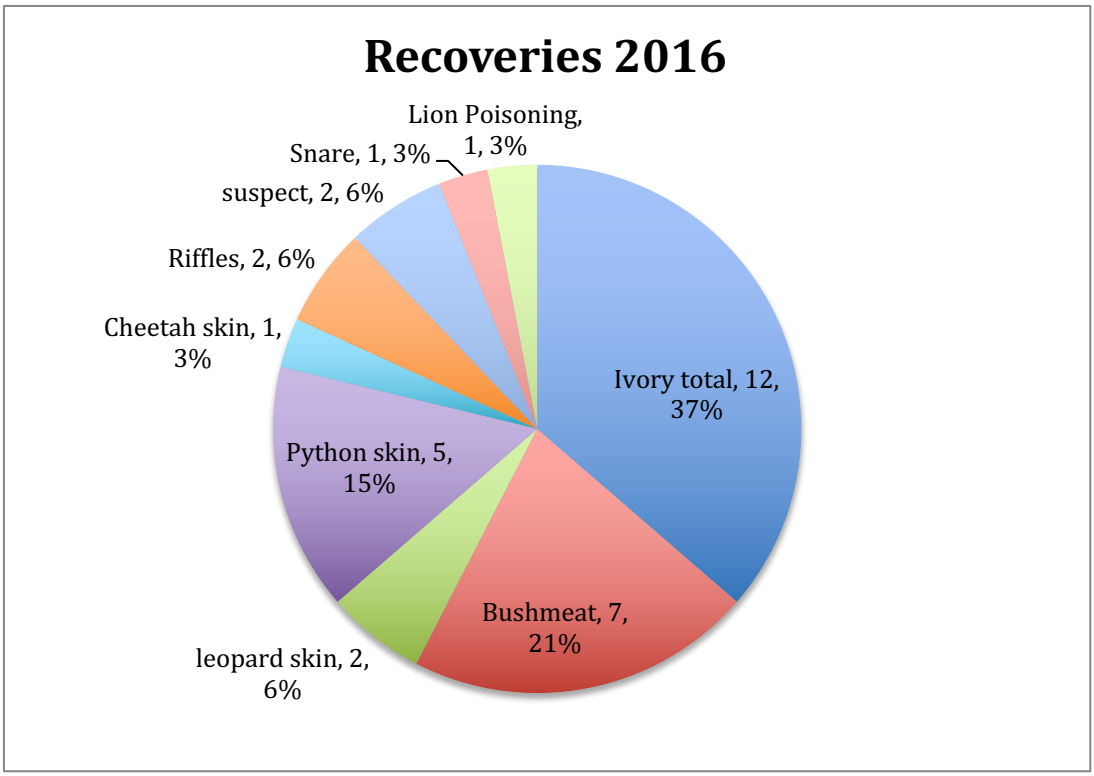
An elephant carcass found during reconnaissance missions in the Loita area.

2017 proved to be a bit of an anomaly as it was an election year. We discovered that during the general elections farmers did not plant their crops, which meant that MEP only had one high human-elephant conflict mitigation season. This enabled us to bolster and re-deploy the rapid response unit in the Mau and Loita areas; during which we had three extensive reconnaissance operations that made significant anti-poaching headway in the Mau. Additionally, the rapid response unit started working with an independent forest patrol unit based in the Emitik area near Olengururone, which allowed them to have local help while operating in the forest.

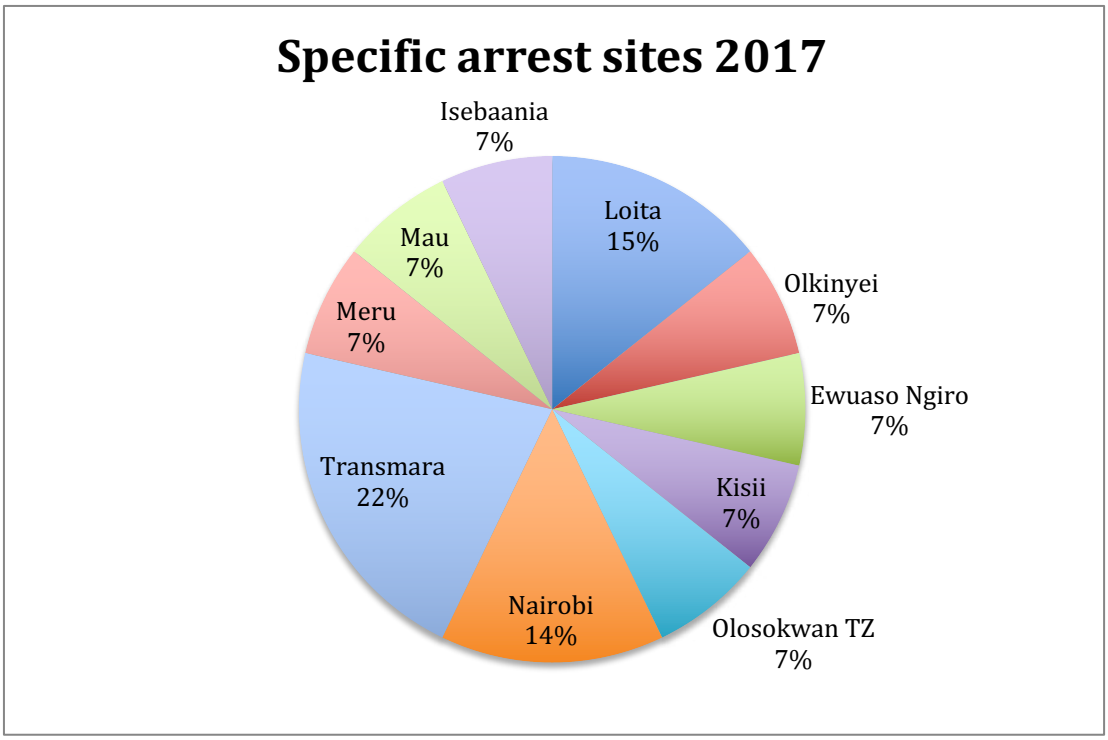
A bush meat poacher being arrested in the Mau Forest.

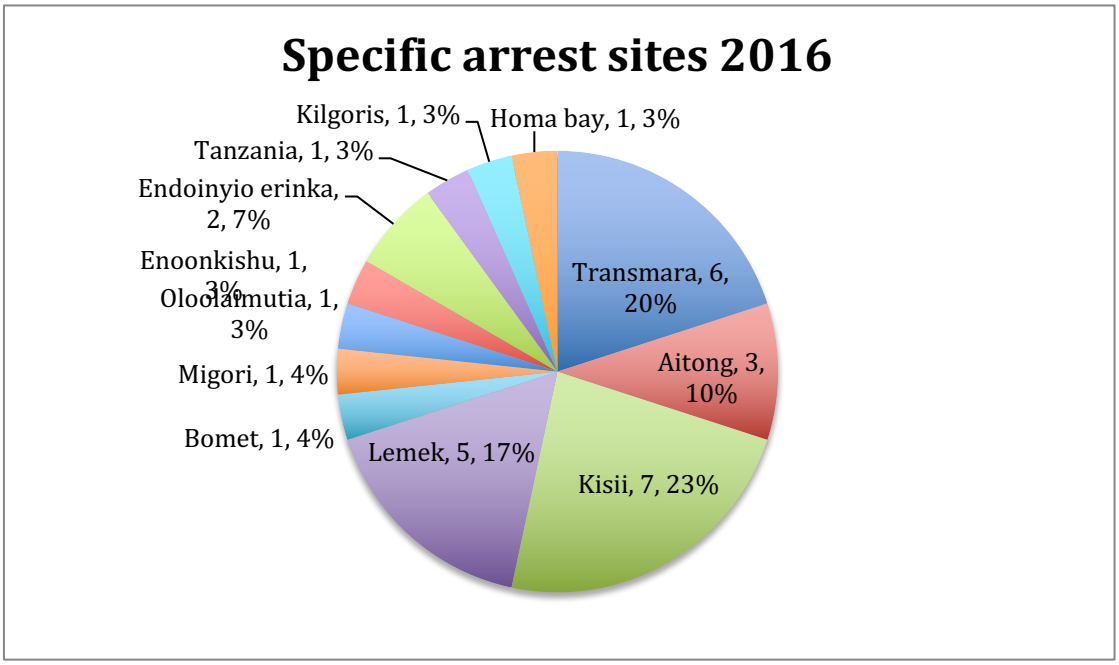
A significant achievement for Mara Elephant Project in 2017 is that we recovered more ivory from arrested suspects than was lost due to poaching or conflict in the Mara ecosystem.





Two suspects arrested in Meru town by KWS rangers using MEP intelligence with 40 kg of ivory.

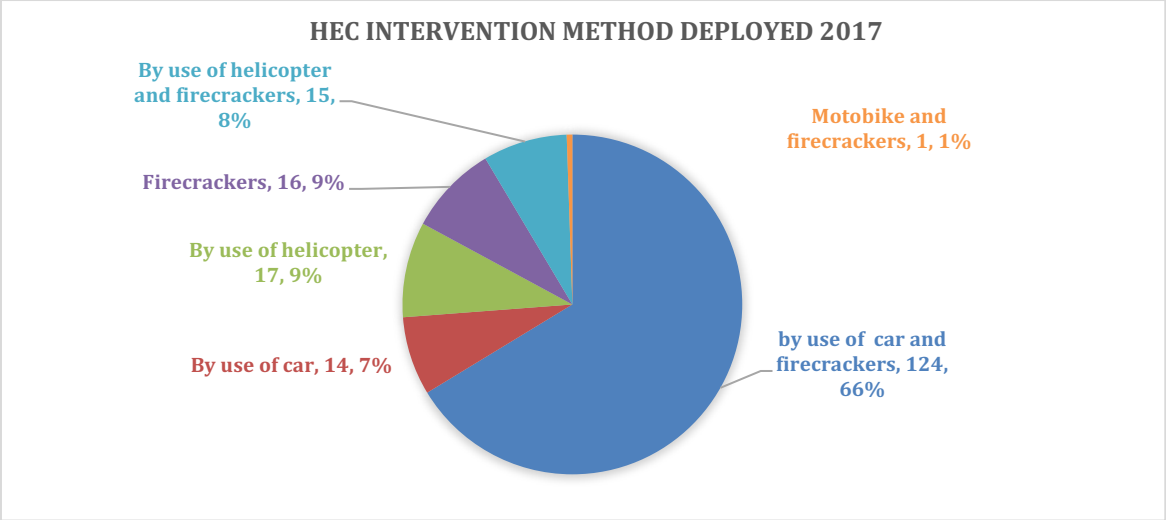


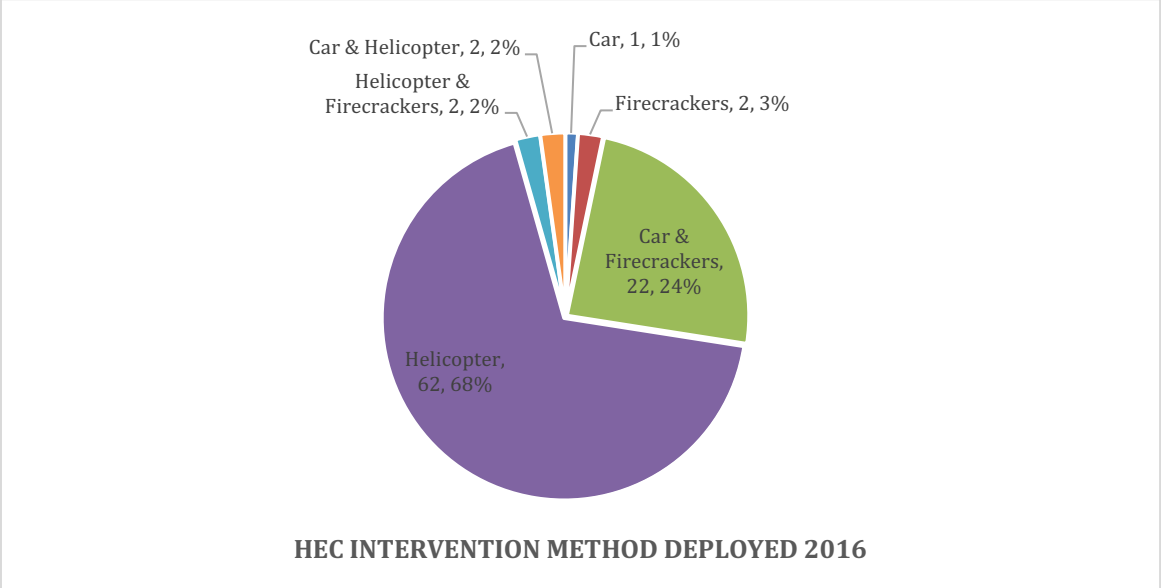


Mitigating Human-Elephant Conflict:

In 2017, MEP had one conflict season due to the elections, April to July, during which the MEP patrol units were operating all night every night for long periods of time. In June alone, we responded to 46 human-elephant conflict cases. The single most significant area where conflict was a daily issue was the southern escarpment area in Transmara because large herds of elephants were moving up the Ololololo Escarpment from the Mara Triangle portion of the

Reserve and into farms as darkness broke. MEP is focusing on better data collection and part of that effort is to better characterize human-elephant conflict and our mitigation effect on elephant behavior. In order to do this, we have developed two new data collection forms that are filled out in hard copy format in the field and then re-entered onto the Domain Awareness System (DAS) once submitted at HQ.



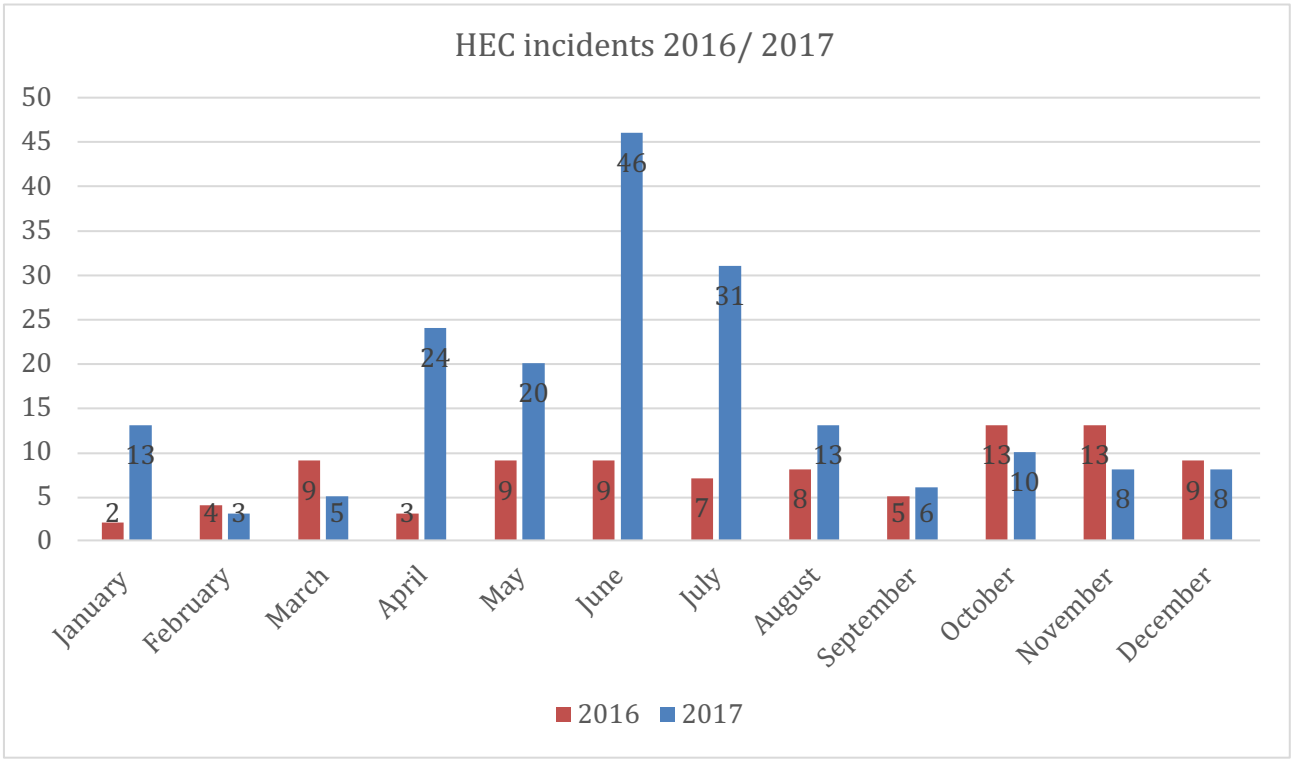


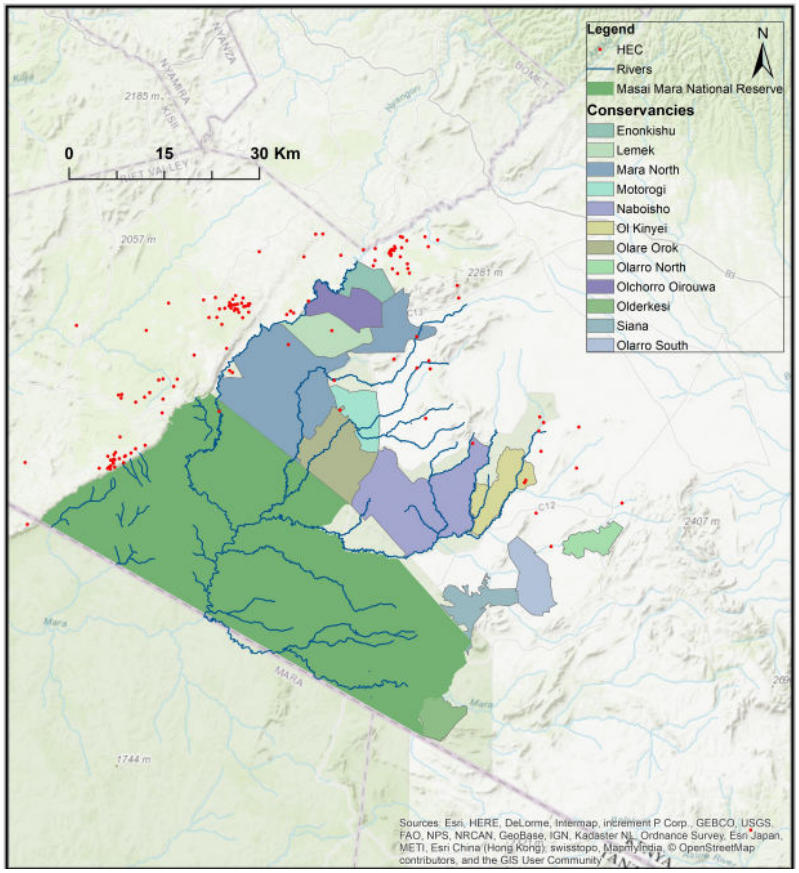
The charts above illustrate the tools used to mitigate conflict in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

While MEP's current human-elephant conflict toolkit has a multitude of methods that we consider best practices for mitigating conflict, most require a lot of man power and funding. One solution to this problem is the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which are a low-cost effective solution for mitigating human-elephant conflict. In 2017, MEP C.E.O. Marc Goss received a license along with permission from the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority to operate two

UAVs in conflict mitigation. MEP is going to continue building their program and is hoping to be given permission for all six of their ranger teams to use a UAV. This tool would be a game changer for MEP.

Crop raiding elephants in June 2017.





Map illustrating the 181 cases of HEC MEP responded to in 2017.

Tracking Elephants:

In 2017, MEP monitored 20 collared elephants. Monitoring elephants involves following each of our elephants remotely, on the ground and by air using the Karen Blixen Camp Ree Park Safari helicopter. The close monitoring of collared elephants ensures improved security and the collar data collected is instrumental to defining how elephants use and move about the ecosystem. This year we expanded our tracking program to the Ngurumani area, east of the Loita Forest, and to the Mau Forest, which is the watershed for the Mara River. MEP has continued to monitor the seven World Wildlife Fund (WWF) deployed collars on a pro-bono basis. While these collars are GSM based and are coming to the end of their lifespans the data collected is valuable in better understanding the eastern portion of the ecosystem. Monitoring elephants has a significant cost to MEP, which we hope WWF will contribute to as a tracking partner; regardless MEP will continue to re-collar and monitor elephants in these areas.

Developing the Evidence Base:

Collaring:

MEP replaced two elephant collars in 2017 and deployed six collars on new individuals. This year we concentrated on finding and collaring elephants in the Mau Forest, which is a large montane forest covering four counties including Narok. Collaring in this environment was challenging due to the vast area of thick forest cover, high altitude and limited road access. We sent our rapid response unit ahead of the collaring to find elephants on the ground, follow

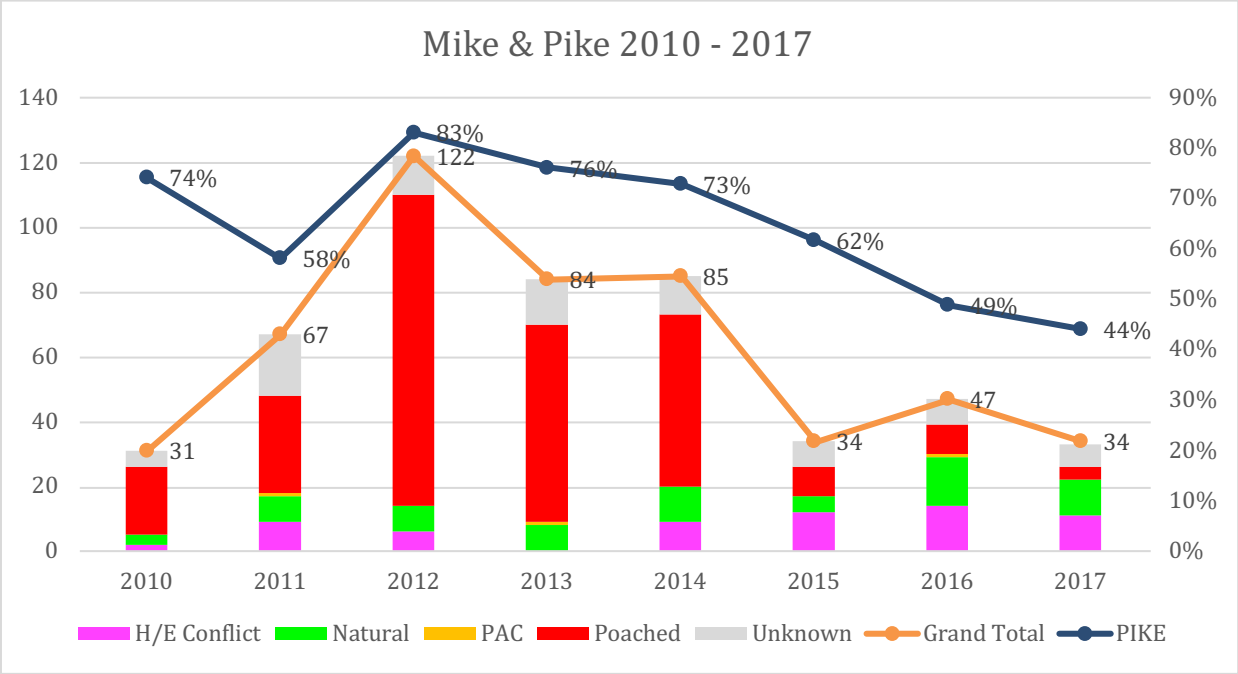
them, and find an appropriate staging area for the helicopter and vet to access the elephants. After several months of close ground monitoring we were successful in collaring both a male and female elephant. On both operations the ground team was instrumental in finding the elephants and following them until they moved into a more open area that was safe for collaring. We then used the helicopter to get the vet in position to dart, follow the darted elephant until it went to sleep, and guide the ground team in. When we collared the male elephant "Wilber" he was staging for raiding crops on the forest boundary. The female elephant "Nancy" is part of a large herd of over 60 elephants. These two elephant collars are the first ever deployed in this area and the data we're already collecting on these elephants has proven invaluable in our ranger deployment.

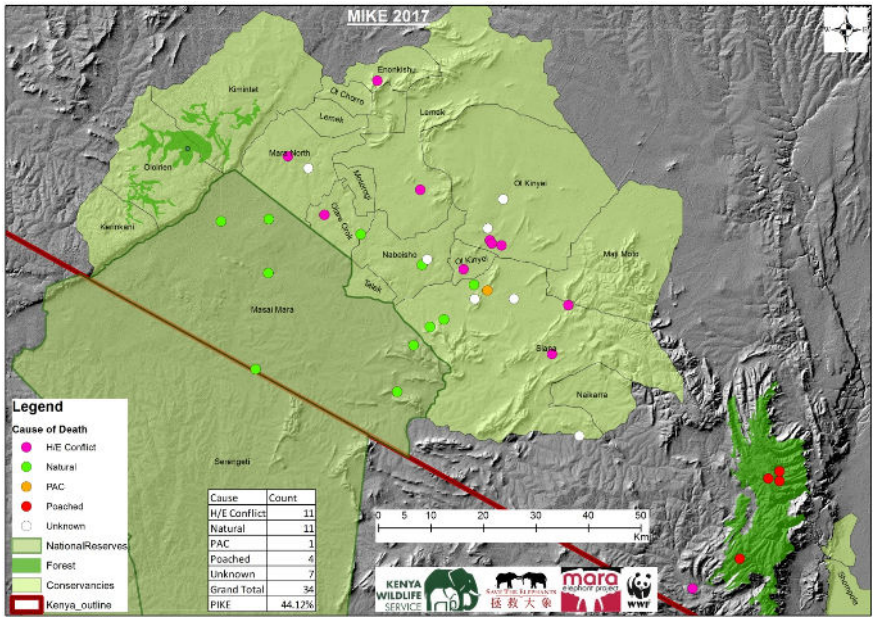
MEP collared bull elephant, Fred.

Collaring Wilber in the Mau Forest in November.

MIKE Data:

MEP continues to collect and analyze Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) data in the greater Mara ecosystem. We are proud to report that the Percentage of Illegally Killed Elephants (PIKE) decreased from 49% in 2016 to 44% in 2017. The total number of dead elephants decreased from 47 in 2016 to 34 in 2017. Though always troubling, due to MEP's efforts, poachers only took three sets of tusks out of all of the elephant's carcasses MEP uncovered in 2017. MEP's target set in our three-year strategy of a PIKE figure at or below 50% in 2017 was achieved earlier than expected.





Map of elephant mortalities in 2017.

Collecting Data:

Previously MEP rangers had been recording MIKE and human-elephant conflict data manually with text message updates sent daily to HQ via mobile phones. They were also using written reports that were recorded daily using a report book and brought to the HQ at the end of the month. Additionally, photographs were also submitted at the end of the month and patrol tracks recorded by GPS were downloaded every two weeks. What we found was that extracting the necessary information from the six books, patrol logs, cameras and GPS was extremely time consuming and left large margins for error.

So, in 2017, MEP set out to efficiently collect better data. MEP rangers are now required to use the WILD app daily to improve the collection, sharing, management and analysis of their data. Daily use of the smartphones and populating the WILD patrol reports was not happening previously as we would have liked so in 2017, during the staff meetings and refresher courses, we reiterated the importance of data collection though WILD and its ability to monitor ranger performance.

Using the WILD app, we have been able to quantify ranger patrol distances and improve daily reporting of the ranger teams to HQ. All ranger stations are now recording data daily on their smartphones and sending to HQ every evening. This data collection is what guides MEP in directing our resources to the areas they are needed most.

GPS tracking data collected by MEP is stored in a state-of-the-art cloud database system being jointly developed by our primary partner – Save the Elephants (STE) – and Vulcan Inc. based in Seattle, Washington. Called the *Domain Awareness System* (DAS), the system is designed to facilitate the joint analysis and visualization of multiple tracking data sources in relation to relevant operational data (e.g., poaching events) and landscape spatial variables (e.g., conservancy boundaries).

All managers and officers at MEP have now been equipped with iPhones and the STE Tracking App for iOS – a specialized and secure platform for visualizing real time elephant movement within the Mara-DAS. The app also quickly highlights streaks, day and night movements and has a comprehensive base map. Managers can now easily relay coordinates to field teams and track the elephants on the ground and by air.

The Mara-DAS system was also recently expanded to include Spydertracks data from the MEP 5Y-REE helicopter. Helicopter movement data can now be analyzed to quantify aerial patrol effort and patrol distribution to better understand the effect of the MEP helicopter as a tool in human-elephant conflict mitigation. We hope to further integrate movement data from both individually tracked patrol teams and patrol vehicles for similar purposes.

The Mara-DAS system has incorporated STE's Standard Analytical Reporting Framework (SARF) tool to quickly generate quarterly outputs on elephant movement, range density hotspots, corridors and streak events and range expansion into new areas. These outputs are included in MEP quarterly reports.

Analyzing Data and Producing the Scientific Evidence Base:

MEP is also currently working on scientifically analyzing the nearly 700,000 recorded GPS positions that have been collected from 40 elephants tracked in the Masai Mara since December 2011. These data are a valuable contribution to our understanding of the movements of the elephants within the greater Mara ecosystem and establish a baseline of movement patterns on which we can also monitor changes over time. Concomitantly, we are collecting information about the set of factors believed to influence elephant movement, such as vegetation, terrain, water availability and the level of human presence as observed by road and settlement densities, so that we can analyze movement in relation to these covariates. Our study, led by Dr. Jake Wall (STE & MEP Science Board member), will help to answer questions about the why, where and when of Mara elephant spatial behavior.

Sustainable Development:

This year we have been working to develop communities, as a large portion of the rangeland is unprotected for wildlife informally and formally as a government park or reserve. Outside the protected areas and conservancies, communities do not earn income from having wildlife present on their land. This leads to conflict and negative attitudes toward wildlife. MEP works with partners to change attitudes of communities living with wildlife through sustainable income generating projects and conservation education projects and clearly linking these projects to elephants and wildlife conservation. Research by partners shows that there is a clear need to link community development projects with wildlife conservation.

Community Engagement and Conservation Education:

This year MEP has developed a strategic partnership with The Maa Trust who works with communities living on the borders of wildlife conservancies in the Mara. The Maa Trust supports a number of community development projects including primary school bursaries, water harvesting for schools, community water points, school infrastructure development, supplying text books, wildlife education projects, and heath projects. A core message of The Maa Trust *"Esiaai Tenkaraki Ing'uesi"* – "Work because of the wildlife" meaning that for all projects they engage in, it is clearly communicated that the project is happening because of the wildlife. The Maa Trust has developed conservation compatible social enterprises such as Maa Beadwork and Maa Honey which engage more than 500 women surrounding the Olare Orok Conservancy earning additional income for women who are not often given income generating activities in a male dominated culture. During the development of the partnership, The Maa Trust has expressed that one of the key reasons they have not expanded is because of the geographical limitations from their headquarters in the Olare Orok Conservancy. MEP plans to catalyze this though our HQ facility and strategically placed outposts.

MEP works in the Rekero, Ol Donyo Erinka and Ole Moncho areas, which have been some of the worst poaching hotspots and continue to be human-elephant conflict hotspots. In these areas are three primary schools: Ole Moncho Primary School, Rekero Primary School, and Ngoswani Primary School with a total of 1,117 children. All three schools share some basic needs including potable water, security, energy for cooking, lighting, classroom space, sanitation facilities, classroom furniture and textbooks for all the children. As MEP addresses the poaching

activities and human-elephant conflict incidents, we plan to influence the community's attitude toward wildlife by developing projects which we tie directly to harmoniously living with wildlife and the benefits that accrue to the local community as a result of the wildlife and associated tourism.

Developing Habitat Protection Projects:

MEP understands the clear linkage between better protecting the conservancies and keeping the elephants in the conservancy areas. Through a grant of $300,000 provided by a donor, MEP has worked with the conservancies to address the threats to the habitat namely settlement and over grazing. The grant was provided to develop livestock management plans, move settlements from inside the conservancies, and better police their natural resources for elephants. This project was completed at the end 2017 and Mara North Conservancy reports that they have made significant headway to better manage their conservancy.

In the past MEP has been a strategic advisor for organizations and governments to stop habitat destruction. MEP realizes that we need to partner to fulfill this advisory role continued with the new influence we have gained to expose illegal logging in the Mau Forest and Loita Forest. Our collar data from the Mau will also start to illustrate the connectivity between the different sectors of the forest and how to keep some of these areas open through the purchase or leasing of land.

Agro-Forestry Projects:

MEP has gathered evidence which shows that elephant habitat and specifically trees are being harvested for firewood, charcoal and building materials. As an example, the Ngoswani Primary School uses firewood-based burners to cook lunch for 400 children daily. To keep up with the supply of firewood children are required to bring pieces of firewood to school each day. While the cleanest although not renewable source of energy is LPG, the transport infrastructure and cost of filling tanks is still prohibitive for families and institutions.

MEP has already begun working with one school, helping to erect an electric fence around the property to prevent human wildlife conflict and planted 400 seedlings. MEP aims to extend this pilot project to all other schools who own land totaling 160 acres. If this pilot project is a success we will expand to 11 schools across the dispersal area with the aim of planning and managing 18,000 trees. On this land MEP plans to work with the school wildlife clubs and partner with Woodlands 2000 Trust to develop sustainable woodlots, which generate sustainable sources of firewood, charcoal and timber. The school's wildlife club will work with the woodlot attendant to engage in the forestry project and learn about the process of maintaining the woodlot. Each school is required to provide some of the cost towards the overall cost of the project. This may be in the form of sweat equity by the parents of the pupils. The sustainable woodlot cycle is aimed at both providing alternative energy sources to schools but also as a learning tool for children to propagate at home.

MEP Tracking Manager Wilson Sairowua celebrated Earth Day 2017 by planting seedlings at Ngoswani Primary School with the children.

Informing Policy and Building Support:

MEP has been working closely with KWS, Kenya Forestry Service and Narok County Government to bring to light some of the serious habitat destruction in key habit areas. These areas include the Mau Forest, Loita Forest and Nyekweri Forest. MEP developed a report from aerial reconnaissance flights with officials from the different agencies. The report was submitted to the Narok County Governor. This resulted in large government ground operations in all three forests. Bringing this work and our rapid response unit work into the forest areas of our ecosystem also developed support from the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust who have partnered with MEP to start a dedicated team in the Mau Forest. This team will have a vehicle and appropriate equipment to stay in the forest for longer periods of time.

County Spatial Planning:

WWF has taken a lead with developing the County Spatial Plan with Narok County Government. MEP has developed outputs from the collar data indicating elephant usage across the county which is made available to county decision makers via presentation hard copies and electronically. The county spatial plan draft has not been completed to date and there is still an opportunity to influence the plan. Issues remain in terms of scientifically understanding the critical habitat for wildlife connectivity and conservation organizations approaching the government with a united voice backed by good science.

Communications Strategy:

We launched an updated version of the MEP website in the summer of 2017. This included updated figures, information, programs and graphics. The biggest upgrade to the website in 2017 was the Donate page. We now have a more comprehensive Donate experience for the user that doesn't take them back and forth between different platforms. They can now make a single or recurring donation without ever leaving the MEP website. In addition to this added feature, the MEP Donate page's language has been more streamlined and we've received a new accreditation from Guide Star that will hopefully increase donor confidence. We've also added a lock and security language that assures donors their donations are secure and verified.

In 2017, we had 48,822 sessions (actively engaged users) on MEP's website. We had 70,488 page views (time spent on any page of the MEP website) and a new user rate of 89.81%. The USA, UK, Kenya, France and Germany are among the top 10 countries that most often visit our website. Google is the most common way people navigate to our website, which is a result of our Google AdGrants account. Direct traffic to the website and Facebook round out the top three ways people are navigating to our website.

The 2017 Tech Report Survey has not been released as of yet to compare our numbers to other organizations; however, based on 2016 numbers we're still doing well in terms of website traffic for the size of organization we are. What matters most is: that we are getting traffic from countries that are donors to MEP; that we aren't spending money to get people to visit our website; that we have a lot of people visiting and that most are new.

We've grown leaps and bounds on our Facebook page this year. We've started spending money to promote posts that are gaining major traction. We've also had several posts "go viral" and have had a reach far and wide. Overall, we have 700 new Facebook likes/follows for 2017 bringing our total to 11,858 likes for our Facebook page. This is significantly more than industry average for an organization our size. The most significant month to report is November where between November 15 – December 15 we had a reach of over 60,000 people with almost 14,000 post engagements (that's someone liking, commenting or sharing our posts). This correlated with Trump's announcement about lifting the ban on ivory imports to the USA and Ellen DeGeneres' #bekindtoelephants response to that. Then, we had #GivingTuesday and our marketing efforts that incorporated The Maa Trust, Elephanatics and Expert Drones, all three organizations promoting MEP's work. This all helped increase our exposure.

Our baby elephant transport video that was posted in December continues to grow with National Geographic recently featuring it on their website and Facebook page.

Google AdWords is the advertising platform on Google. So, when you Google something usually the first websites that are presented to you are paid for. This is the number one way to use the world's largest search platform to direct traffic to your website. It's also expensive. In May 2017 MEP applied to qualify for a FREE Google AdWords account because we qualified under our 501(c)(3) status. So, in June 2017, we were awarded a Google AdGrants account that qualified us for $329 a day in FREE Google advertising. This has been the number one resource for directing traffic to the MEP website. Unfortunately, in 2018, Google has created very difficult benchmarks for NGOs to meet in order to stay qualified and we are now working through the best ways to address these and keep this account active.

MEP sent out six emails in 2017 to supporters. We sent a fourth quarter newsletter in January that achieved a 57% open rate. The first quarter newsletter was sent in May with a 51% open rate, the second quarter newsletter was sent in August with an open rate of 45%. We sent an email for World Elephant Day on August 12 that included an appeal for support of the helicopter. It had a 40.5% open rate. The third quarter newsletter was sent in October and had a 40% open rate and finally we sent an email out for #GivingTuesday on November 28 that highlighted the above-mentioned partners and had a 38% open rate. We need to expand our email list in 2018 in order to start making these emails more impactful.

ESCAPE and Well Told Story:

We're pleased to report that following the suggestion of Trustee Richard Roberts, a comprehensive research study has now been completed by Well Told Story on youth attitudes toward wildlife and conservation in Kenya commissioned by our core funder the ESCAPE Foundation with participation by MEP rangers and trustees. The findings of this research were used to inform a film, *MABINGWA*, executive produced by Trustee Trey Fehsenfeld with portions shot at MEP HQ in the Mara.

The key findings of this research are:

- The wildlife conservation industry is confusing for Kenyan youth; the relationships between conservancies, communities and wildlife are often conflicting; the ways for youth to engage and the resulting rewards for doing so are not obvious; this results in youth feeling detached and disengaged
- Young people have varied levels of awareness about wildlife and conservation; depending on their levels of awareness, youth vary drastically in their attitudes and beliefs about what constitutes conservation efforts, who the stakeholders are and their roles, what constitutes poaching, etc.; youth who have exposure to wildlife as well as academic knowledge about wildlife are more likely to be motivated to engage in conservation efforts
- There appear to be four segments of youth determined by their proximity to conservation zones and level of exposure to wildlife; two of the segments are highly motivated to contribute to wildlife conservation – one may be interested in direct

engagement and the other one in advocacy and fundraising efforts; the other two segments do not see a benefit to being involved

- Engaging young people requires a well-planned strategy, targeting each segment with individual relevant messages and rewards in terms of emotional, social or financial capital offered in exchange for interest and engagement

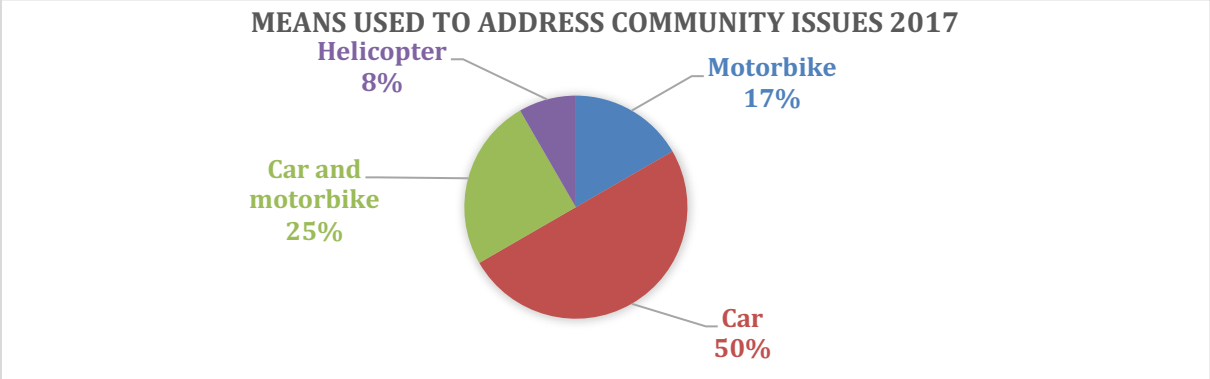
Both the film and research are available on MEP's website. MEP will continue to collaborate with the ESCAPE Foundation and local partners in 2018 as they seek to catalyze a new conversation in Kenya about conservation and will incorporate the findings into the work we do in local communities and schools.

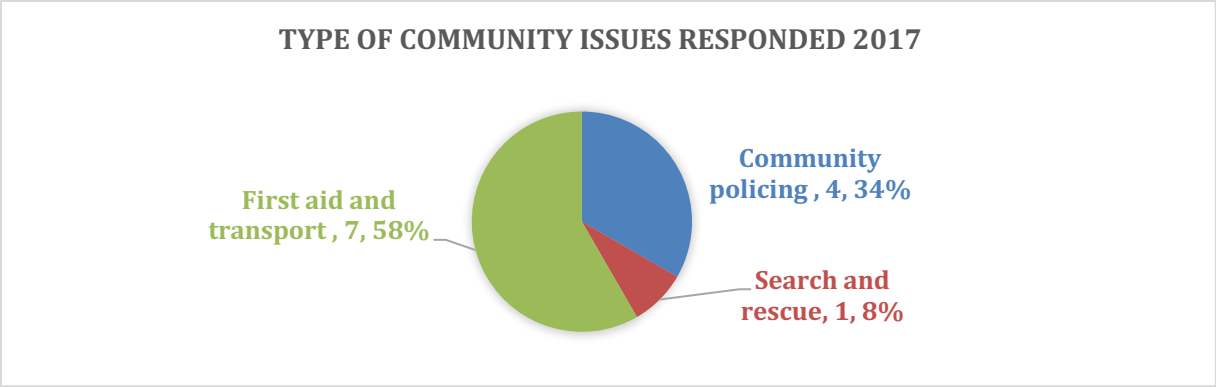
Conservancy Support:

Mara North Conservancy (MNC) was granted funding from MEP in 2016 and the project was completed by the end of 2017. The project activities included: moving settlements, implementing a transparent revenue collection system, purchasing three patrol vehicles, building a ranger station, developing road infrastructure, registering leases and purchase of ranger equipment. In essence MEP has been building the capacity of MNC to better protect their area for wildlife. This will have a direct knock on effect to retain elephants inside the conservancy so that they are not going into conflict areas in search of resources. MEP looks forward to continuing the relationship with Mara North Conservancy and all the community conservancies in the Mara.

Community Response:

MEP deploys well-trained rangers over a large area and as such we react to a number of community related calls for assistance. This is mostly for medical transport and first-aid. The MEP patrol medics have been busy in the community helping injured or sick people in remote areas.





MEP responds to 12 community incidents in 2017. MEP vehicles are the primary means of responding to community incidents. Additionally, the majority of issues responded to involved providing first aid and evacuating people to a nearby hospital.

MEP ranger John with a field medical kit he used to provide first aid to a man that had a wound on his leg from an encounter with an elephant.

Organizational Development:

MEP has continued to expand its partnerships, a key focus of the organization as we continue to grow and develop. In 2018, we added new operational partners like the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and TANAPA and with the support of the ESCAPE Foundation, MEP has also

added a part-time communications director to help increase brand awareness and more effectively communicate fundraising goals and operational successes. This, along with the development director position funded by the Iris O'Brien Foundation, has enabled MEP to increase our profile and expand awareness of the work we are doing. In 2018, we produced a pamphlet on MEP which is used at local tourism camps to spread the MEP message; we also held the first MEP supporter event in April in Nairobi; updated our website and increased the regularity with which we post new information about our activities and news from the field to the website, Facebook and Instagram. All of these actions, which we plan to continue and build upon, are resulting in an increase in the number of followers we have, which is translating into a growing number of individuals from around the globe supporting the efforts of MEP.

In November, we said farewell to the development director, Victoria Fanthorpe, who was at the end of her contract. We'd like to thank the Iris O'Brien Foundation for its support which has enabled MEP to undertake a review of our governance approach and resulted in a new governance manual and policies, develop a fundraising strategy and begin the process of implementing this. We are pleased with the results the fundraising strategy has produced in 2017 and we look forward to building on these in 2018.

During the course of the year we have reviewed MEP's strategy and made changes that reflect the developments in the field where MEP's services are required if we are to be successful in achieving our overall objective of securing a viable and sustainable population of elephants in the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem. Using the data collected in the field, we have identified critical areas where MEP needs to expand its presence on the ground to address both poaching and human-elephant conflict. We have also identified the urgent need to increase our internal capacity to analyze the data being collected, both to better inform our operations and the decisions of key stakeholders in the ecosystem. These and other developments are reflected in MEP's updated Strategy 2018-2021. There will be a significant increase in the funding required if we are to implement all of the elements of the MEP strategy, but MEP will continue to adopt a pragmatic approach to growth and will only expand into new areas once funding is secured for existing operations.

In support of our efforts to increase the funds we are able to raise, we have also begun the process of applying for tax exempt status with the Kenya Revenue Authority and expect to have a final decision during the course of 2018.

Staff Development:

- Wilson Sairowua was promoted from administrator to MEP tracking manager.
- Wilson Sairowua, Zakayo Lenaeku Ziporah and Jackson Maitai attended intel training in Voi at Tsavo west national park HQ.
- Dickson Njapit was promoted from corporal to sergeant. John Mchiri was promoted from private to corporal.
- Claire Bolles joined MEP, on a part-time basis funded directly by the ESCAPE Foundation as communications director.

Governance:

In 2017, the MEP board continued to meet on a quarterly basis. The board has found the governance policies developed in 2016 to be a helpful resource in undertaking its duties and informing decisions. The communications committee has met on a monthly basis and with the support of Claire Bolles has been focused on implementing new communications strategies for MEP and advancing the fundraising objectives. The establishment of the audit and risk committee has been a positive development in providing the C.E.O. with advice and oversight during the course of the year. The governance committee has provided critical advice and support in preparing and negotiating a lease agreement with Tracks Trust for the land and facilities which constitute MEP HQ in the Maasai Mara. Key priorities for the continuing development of the board in 2018 include the recruitment of two new board members and beginning the process of reviewing the policies. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Hilary Hurt for her support and advice over her years of service.

Board Structure:
Chairman: Brian Heath
Vice Chairman: Moses Kamau
Secretary: Hilary Hurt
Treasurer: Marc Goss
Members Stepping Down: Hilary Hurt
Committees:
Audit and Risk: Marc Goss, Richard Roberts, Brian Heath, and Brian Kearney-Grieve (special advisor)
Fundraising and Communications: Beatrice Karanja, Trey Fehsenfeld, Claire Bolles and Richard Roberts
Governance: Moses Kamau, Colin Church
Management:
Marc Goss: C.E.O.
Wilson Sairowua: Tracking Manager
James Ekiru: Senior Warden
Victoria Fanthorpe: Development Director (contract completed November 2017)
Claire Bolles: Communications Director

Operational Plan and Budget for 2018:

Drawing on the MEP Strategy 2018 -2021 and associated budget, the operational plan and budget for 2018 was submitted by the C.E.O. to the board for review and adoption. The operational plan seeks to maintain and increase the level of activity under each area of the existing operations and, funding permitting, implement a phased expansion into three new areas of operation – the Mau Forest, Loita Hills and western Serengeti. In addition, we are seeking to increase our research capacity and level of community engagement during the course of 2018.

Funding and Finances:

MEP's continued success is completely dependent upon our generous supporters and funders. Key among these is our founder, Suzie Fehsenfeld, and the ESCAPE Foundation whose on-going commitment and generosity continues to secure the core operations of MEP. We are also thankful to our other funders and supporters who continue to provide us with much needed funding and in-kind support and are listed below:

Foundations, Companies and Organizations:

Benevity Community Impact Fund
Ecanto School
ESCAPE Foundation
For Rangers
Generosity
Iris O'Brien Foundation
Mara River Lodge & David Livingstone Limited
SAFARIS UNLIMITED AFRICA LTD
Tracks Trust
David Sheldrick Wildlife Foundation
Elephanatics Conservation Education
Expert Drones
Fred Mehlert Fehsenfeld Jr. Irrev Trust
International School of Kenya
Karen Blixen Camp/REE Park
Richard's Camp
Sawa Active Wear
US AID

Individuals:

John Baldwin
Jay Beason
Jennifer Bikkál Horne
Claire Bolles
Alejandra Bula
Aiesha Chandradhas
Christopher Commons
Sylvia Cunningham
Kathryn Della Terza
Kayla Dunscombe
Anu Gavini
Amalia Geller
Karen Caroline Goss
David Heath
David Huffman
Michael Huffman
Dana Jones
Stefan Klopfel
Leah Marshall
Margaret and Michael McCormick
Kelly Merris
Paul Mustarde
Pablo Necochea
Mara Perfido
David Pierotti
Lori Price
Susan Barrett
Eric Becker
Ian Blaskey
David Bonnourvrier
Rita Cabases
Trevor Chargois
Brian Conradt
James Davenport
Rajesh Druvi
Clare Dyas
Maron Zewdie Gebeyehu
Stefano Giuliano
Lauren Hall
Jennifer Horne
Melanie Huffman
Margarette Johnston
Brian Kearney-Grieve
Carla Knight
Lisa Martin
David McErlain
Donald Miles
Juan Necochea
Frankie Palmer
Sherry Phelan
Christina Platou
Seetha N Reddy

Gail Richard
James and Mary Anne Rogers
Steve Russell
Frank Schaer
Jodi Shaw
Batholomeus Stevens
Susan Thomas
Peter Tye
Tim Webb
Lawri Williamson
Alice Yu
David Robbins
Caroline Ruffin
Ling San Cheung
Rebecca Schwartz
Dr. Frank Sommerfeld
Alejandro Suero
Robin Turnbaugh
Ella Walsh
Tim Webb
Brian Woody

To all our funders and supporters, we are thankful for their belief in the work of MEP.

Key Highlights from the MEP Accounts:

MEP continues to diversify its funding base as can be seen by the number of foundations, trusts, organizations and individuals supporting us. In 2017, $613,551 was received to support the core operations of MEP. When the restricted funding received to support the Mara North Conservancy is removed from this total; the 2017 amount is slightly lower than in 2016. However, the funding for MEP is received from a more diversified range of donors. A key focus of 2018 is to continue to diversify and grow the funding base. Total expenditure in 2017 is slightly lower at $632,710 compared to $654,537 in 2016. This reflects the end of the PREPARED Project funded by USAID and the organization's continued conservative approach of only incurring costs once funding has been secured.

While we experienced an overall deficit of $249,755 for the year, this arose due to the timing of funding received in 2016 to support the development of the Mara North Conservancy which was only spent in 2017 and is reflected in the prior year adjustment in the accounts. For the core operations of MEP, a small deficit of $16,903 was incurred in 2017 which was covered by funds retained from 2016. At year end MEP held reserves of $169,385, $156,350 of which is being retained in a restricted account to cover the costs of replacing the helicopter which is proving to be a critical asset in mitigating conflict across the elephant rangeland. This fund has been built up through the hourly operating costs of the helicopter. The audited accounts of MEP are available on the MEP website.

Summary Financial Accounts:

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
For Year Ended 31 December 2017

	2017	**2017**	2016	**2016**
INCOME	USD	**KSH**	USD	**KSH**
Grants Received	613,551	**63,195,703**	1,003,516	**101,407,574**
Other Income - Interest Income (Net)	2,256	**820,105**	1,782	**179,933**
	615,807	**64,015,808**	1,005,298	**101,587,507**
Prior year adjustment	(232,852)	**(23,481,848)**	(68,524)	**(7,134,100)**
Total Income	382,955	**40,533,960**	936,774	**94,453,407**
EXPENDITURE				
Project Expenses	(594,958)	**(61,280,628)**	(587,318)	**(58,764,381)**
Other Operating Expenses	(37,752)	**(3,888,387)**	(67,219)	**(6,976,638)**
Total Expenditure	(632,710)	**(65,169,015)**	(654,537)	**(65,741,019)**
Deficit/Surplus for the year	(249,755)	**(24,635,055)**	282,237	**28,712,388**

BALANCE SHEET
As at 31 December 2017

ASSETS				
Non-Current assets				
Property, Plant and Equipment	78,186	**8,053,124**	87,342	**8,821,500**
Current Assets				
Cash and Bank Balance	169,385	**17,446,632**	380,924	**38,473,348**
Receivables & prepayments	39	**4,000**		
	169,424	**17,450,632**	380,924	**38,473,348**
TOTAL ASSETS	247,610	**25,503,756**	468,266	**47,294,848**
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Retained Earnings				
Balance B/F as at 1st January	466,393	**46,914,848**	184,156	**18,202,460**
Surplus for the year	(249,755)	**(24,635,055)**	282,237	**28,712,388**
	216,638	**22,279,793**	466,393	**46,914,848**
Liabilities				
Payables and Accruals	31,301	**3,223,963**	3,762	**380,000**
Total Equity and Liabilities	247,939	**25,503,756**	470,155	**47,294,848**

NOTE: The MEP accounts are preapred in KSH with USD figures provided using a combination of actual rates for the preparation of the Income Statement and spot rates in the Balance Sheet.