



State of Wildlife Conservancies in Kenya | Summary Report 2016

Communities at the Centre of Wildlife Conservation

This summary shares key highlights about Kenya's wildlife conservancies today. It is based on the 2016 status report, which was prepared by Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) as part of the implementation of the USAID-Kenya funded Community Conservancy Policy Support program (CCSP) implemented by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and KWCA.

This first State of the Conservancies Report, to be produced biennially, provides a baseline from which future progress will be measured, and aims to increase national and international visibility for the conservancy movement in Kenya.



Conservancies at a Glance

- **Conservancies place communities at the centre of wildlife conservation** by putting decision-making, management and benefits from conservation in the hands of those who live with wildlife.
- **Critical to Kenya's future:** Conservancies protect the 65% of wildlife living outside National Parks, including 72% of Kenya's population of Southern white rhinos and 90% of the world's population of Grevy's zebras, helping to secure the country's natural heritage forming the basis of the tourism industry.
- **Jobs and Income:** Conservancies provide employment to over 2,900 rangers, host over 140 tourism lodges, and provide benefits to over 700,000 community households.
- **Gaining Momentum:** There are now 160 conservancies covering 11% of Kenya's land mass, 89% of which is managed by communities, with a further 2.4 million Ha proposed.
- **Political support:** Conservancies are recognised as a land use under the Wildlife Act 2013, and are increasingly seen as a way to achieve rural development and attain better land management.
- **Key Challenges surround** the lack of funding to manage conservancies, the difficulty of ensuring benefits to land-owners that are comparable to other land uses, and low management capacity.
- **Opportunities to invest:** KWCA is seeking to expand its support to the conservancy movement by improving the enabling policy environment, by building governance capacity, and by catalysing the scaling up of best practices.



The Wildlife Conservancy Movement in Kenya

Conservancies place communities at the centre of wildlife conservation and are critical to Kenya's future:

- They secure connected landscapes linking national parks and reserves, and also critical resources needed by wildlife, 65% of which exists outside of national parks and reserves.
- They build greater benefits for communities from conservation, improving rural livelihoods and ensuring community buy-in to conservation (89% of the land under conservancies is managed by communities).
- They contribute to securing and improving revenues from nature-based industries critical to Kenya's GDP, in particular tourism, artisanal production, and livestock management.

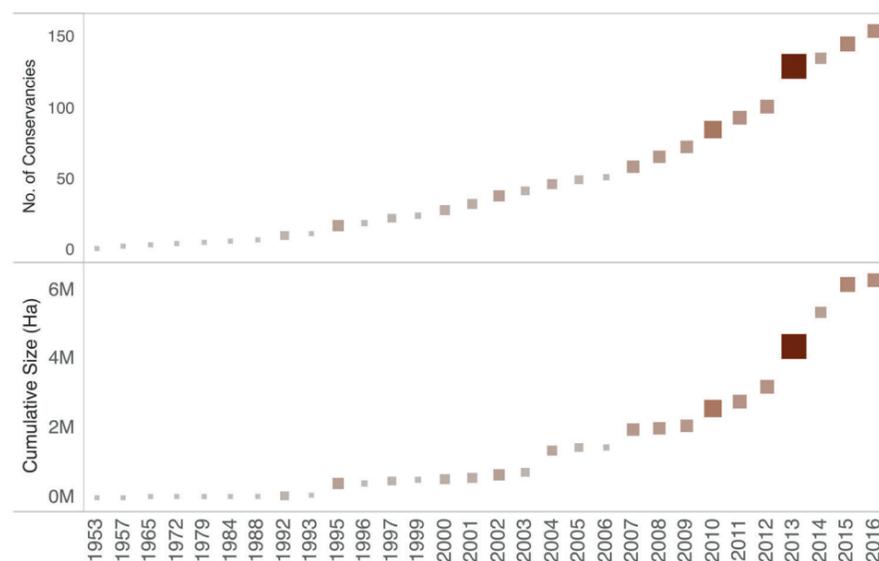
A conservancy is land designated for purposes of wildlife conservation and other compatible land uses by a community, a private land owner, a group of owners, or a corporate body. The term conservancy also refers to an institution that is set up to manage such land. Whilst wildlife conservation is a key objective, conservancies also focus on livelihood development, peace and security, good governance, pastoral movements and grazing, and provide services such as health, water and education.

Kenya's commitments to the International Convention on Biological Diversity includes the aim, by 2020, to improve the status of biodiversity by conserving 17% of key terrestrial landscapes. Currently, Kenya has 12% of its land under conservation in the form of National Parks and Reserves, covering 6.98 million hectares. Conservancies have the potential to allow Kenya to meet and exceed its national target: conservancies already cover 4.3 million hectares, with a further 2.4 million hectares proposed.

The conservancy movement, though accelerating since the 2000s, is still nascent. At the national level conservancies are now supported as a land use under the Wildlife Act 2013, and are being promoted to protect wildlife outside of protected areas and integrated into national planning, whilst regulations are being developed. Some country governments have recognised the important role that conservancies play as a rural development strategy and are investing resources accordingly. Conservancies have strong support internationally, feeding into the move towards ensuring that communities are more involved in the management of natural resources and gain greater benefits from their sustainable use.



Growth of Conservancies and Relative Expanse Covered



Facts and Figures about Wildlife Conservancies in Kenya

Covering 11% of Kenya's land mass (6.36 million hectares), Kenya has 160 conservancies in 28 Counties.

110 conservancies are fully operational, 42 currently emerging, and 8 more proposed.

76 are on community land, 26 are group conservancies formed from consolidating contiguous private lands, and 58 are on individual private landholdings.

Over 2900 rangers are employed to patrol and monitor conservancies, of which 39% are KWS-trained.

Over 700,000 local community households derive direct benefits from conservancies.

72% of Kenya's population of Southern white rhinos and 45% of Black rhinos; and 90% of the world's population of Grevy's zebras and of Hirolas are found in conservancies.

Conservancies are key tourism destinations: they host 142 camps and eco lodges with more than 2,400 beds.

Conservancies are grouped under 14 regional associations designed to promote an ecosystem approach in conservancy development.



Key Challenges Facing the Conservancy Movement

- **A lack of funding and investment to set up and manage conservancies.** Wildlife conservation is a national government function, but conservancies do not currently receive government support. There is also no national grant or investment scheme for conservancies. International conservation and development funders provide short-term grants for up to five years. Some regions and many conservancies are yet to receive any support.
- **Inadequate Social and Economic Benefits.** If benefits accruing from wildlife conservation are perceived as inadequate, agricultural expansion will continue to be a threat to conservancies – driven by an increased demand to feed the growing population in the rangelands. The most economically viable conservancies rely on tourism revenues, with sales of artisanal products and revenues from improved livestock management important in some areas. Many conservancies either lack tourism potential or capital investment to effectively invest in enterprises that generate benefits to landowners. This is particularly a challenge for conservancies in community land where membership can run into the thousands.
- **Lack of management capacity.** Creating and managing a conservancy is an inherently complicated business given the need to satisfy different stakeholder interests; reconciling the needs of people, livestock, wildlife and tourism is a delicate balancing act. Weak governance is a problem in many conservancies.

Recommendations:

The Way Forwards for the Conservancy Movement

- **Ensure improved incentives for effective management of conservancies.** Greater social and economic benefits need to accrue to landholders to ensure the sustainability and growth of conservancies. Opportunities include: developing and improving benefits from tourism and small artisanal enterprises; developing a national community conservation fund and/ or conservation grant facility; improving returns from livestock management as part of mixed livestock/ wildlife land-use models; investing in improved rangeland management to combat land degradation; investing in reducing human-wildlife conflicts and in efficient compensation mechanisms.
- **Strengthen the capacity to manage conservancies at all levels.** This can be achieved through: providing technical and financial support to developing functional governance structures and improving management planning capacity; leadership and management training courses and support; training and equipping of community scouts; greater support from KWS to policing and surveillance in conservancies.
- **Improve the enabling environment for conservancies.** This involves: supporting the development of KWCA and regional associations; providing sustained government funding to the conservancy movement; formally recognising conservancy lands as a land use; integrating conservancies into wider formal ecosystem management plans and County spatial plans; assessing the social, economic and ecological impact of conservancies and their contribution to GDP to build a case for greater financial and technical support to the conservancy movement.



KWCA and the Conservancy Movement

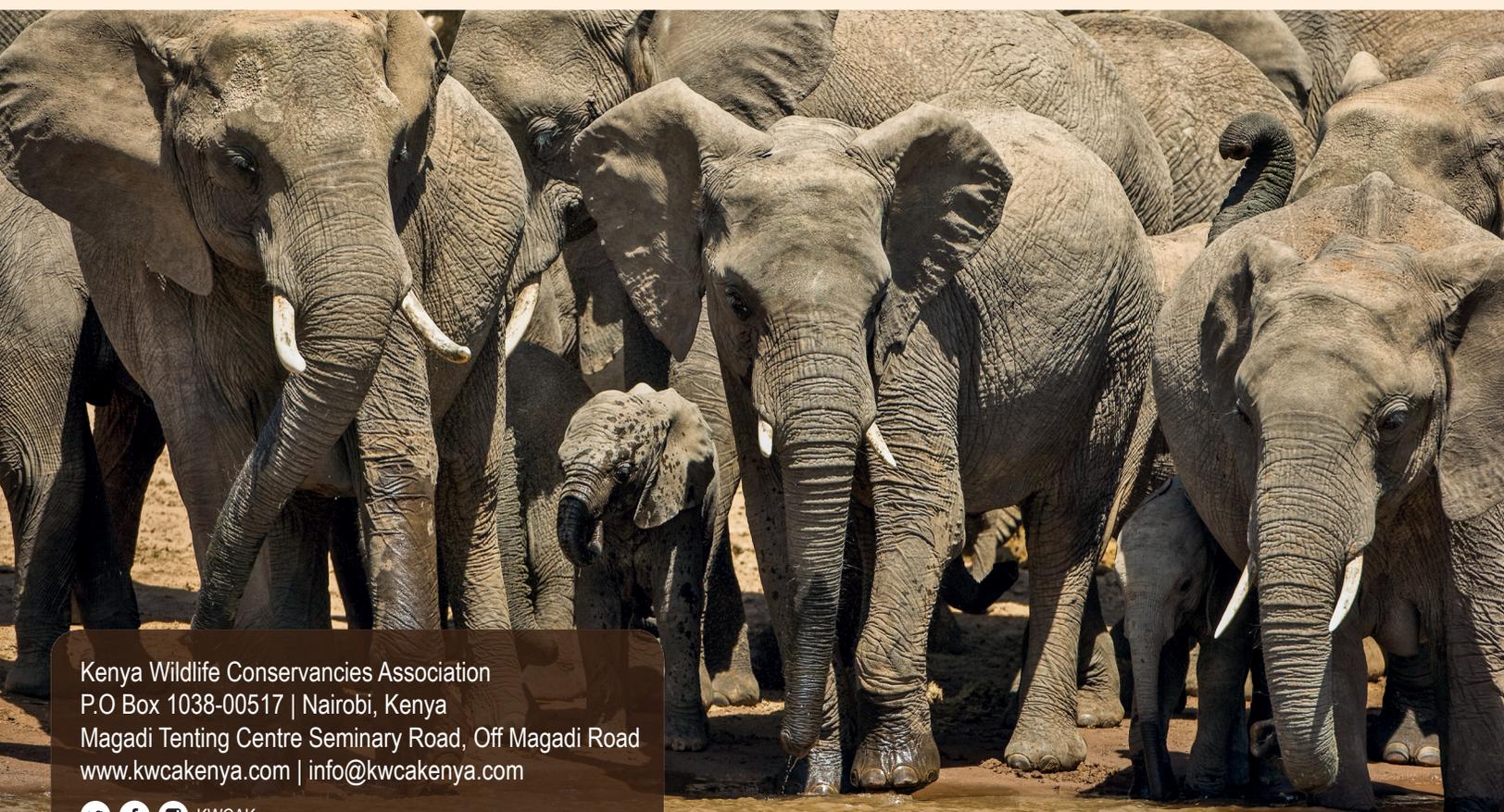
The Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association enables conservancies to safeguard wildlife and deliver benefits to local communities. We believe conservancies go far beyond just wildlife conservation and instead have the potential to improve lives, unite communities, strengthen local democracy, and preserve cultures and traditions. As a membership organization, our role is to help conservancies realize this vision. We give them a voice to influence policies and regulations, a platform to exchange information and best practices, and support to grow and enhance their efforts on the ground.

Our key achievements since our inception in 2013 include:

- **Securing national recognition** as the voice of the conservancies through entering into memorandums of understanding with KWS and other conservation actors. KWCA is represented on the KWS Board, is a member of the National Wildlife Strategy Steering committee, and an accredited member of the CITES Rural Community working group.
- **Entrenching conservancies in the national policy framework**, including the Wildlife Act 2013, Wildlife Policy 2017 (draft), Wildlife Regulations 2016 (Draft) and Community Land Act 2016, and catalysing community inputs into the ongoing development of the National Wildlife Conservation Strategy.
- **Developing platforms for learning and sharing best practices** between conservancies, including the Conservancies annual general meeting, the Conservancy managers' conference, and the national rangers meeting - coupled with regional workshops.
- **Producing key tools** to support conservancy growth and harmonize management: a Conservancy Establishment Guide, a Conservancy Managers Handbook, a Community Scouts Standard Operating Procedures, and now this biennial Conservancies Status Report.
- **Doubling our membership**, which now stands at 113 active members.

Investing in the Conservancy Movement

- KWCA's capacity and that of its regional level associations requires further strengthening to continue to nurture the growth of the conservancy movement. A capacity-building programme is also required at the level of individual conservancies. Financial and technical support is needed to fill current governance and management capacity gaps.
- A targeted conservancy-level investment plan is required to provide seed funds for viable conservation-related enterprises in order to reduce donor dependency and the risk of conservancies collapsing when donor support ends. A national conservation fund or conservancy grant facility can provide the necessary long-term investment that will ensure that the conservancy movement meets its full potential.



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