



Lioness and cub in the Maasai Mara
Photo Credit: Nadine L. Sunderland

KENYA

Community Conservancies Seed Grant Program in Maasai Mara *The Nature Conservancy and Maasai Mara Conservation Association*

The Maasai Mara ecosystem is home to the iconic wildlife migration in Africa, a world-renowned tourist destination and a critical ecosystem for tourism and wildlife conservation in Kenya. With only 26% of the ecosystem under government protection, private and community land is becoming important for conservation efforts through the conservancy model. The benefits of Mara conservancies to wildlife and people are numerous. These include: enhancing the potential for greater and more-diverse wildlife population through protecting key wildlife species and dispersal areas, law enforcement across the entire region, reducing human-wildlife conflict and supporting community livelihoods of estimated 3,000 landowners, and 24,000 people. The conservancies in Mara face three key challenges: (i) lack of a unified Mara-wide conservation approach, including ecosystem planning; (ii) lack resources, capacity and structures to fulfill the mandate of nascent and existing conservancies; (iii) inadequate institutional support for the development and growth of the Mara conservancies.

USAID is supporting enhanced biodiversity conservation in conservancies and private lands adjacent to the protected Maasai Mara National Reserve. This will increase employment opportunities for the local communities and income diversification among all conservancy members whose main livelihoods are anchored on a healthy ecosystem. A healthy ecosystem will guarantee biodiversity and wildlife conservation and the prosperity of the Maasai population as well as promoting recreation and revenue generation through the tourism industry for Kenya.

The goal of the Effective Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Improvement by Community Conservancies in the Maasai Mara project is to ensure that conservancies in the ecosystem are effectively and sustainably managed to promote biodiversity conservation and improve income generation at household level.

The project objectives include: (i) establishing an integrated and sustainable conservancy governance model; (ii) securing the Pardamat Conservation Area for improved biodiversity and wildlife conservation; and (iii) developing a well-established Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancy Association (MMWCA) to provide leadership and coordination for the conservancies.

OUR WORK

USAID is partnering with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservation Association (MMWCA) to develop a Mara ecosystem level conservation approach that will enable effective biodiversity management at the community conservancy and ecosystem level through strong governance. A Mara Conservancies guide and toolkit will be developed by MMWCA and member conservancies, and an outreach communications campaign will be implemented to mobilize conservancy members.

Secondly, the project will develop the Pardamat Conservation Area (PCA) into a mixed-model conservancy, protecting its rich wildlife and biodiversity and establishing a livestock enterprise initiative. This effort will include mapping and development of a management plan for PCA, the movement of settlements and removal of fences, predator-proof bomas and the establishment of a Pardamat Conservancy Area Committee. Thirdly, the project will enable MMWCA to become a functioning and sustainable Mara conservancies' membership organization, encouraging the success of conservancies across the ecosystem through best management practices. USAID funding will develop the organizational capacity of MMWCA and support creation of a Mara base at Aitong area in the Maasai Mara region. MMWCA and TNC will work in partnership with landowners, tourism parties, conservancy management bodies, African Wildlife Foundation, Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association, Kenya Wildlife Trust, NGOs & CBOs, Kenya Wildlife Service, County Government, researchers and scientists.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Economic viability assessment of the Mara Conservancies completed.
- Training of Conservancy Management Committees on governance issues, development of a draft assessment of the land trust mechanism, and registration of land from agriculture to conservation for both Ollare Motorogi Conservancy and the Mara North Conservancy.
- More women and youth are now meaningfully involved in the Pardamat Conservation Areas Committee.
- Development of a livestock enterprise initiative in the PCA.
- A community anti-poaching program, involving training scouts from the Mara Conservancies has been rolled out with 40 graduating from Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Manyani College in March 2016.

Total Project Funding Level
\$4.1 million

Total USAID Kenya Funding Contribution:
\$4.1 million

Duration:
September 2015 - September 2018

Implementing Partner:
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Key Partner:
Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservation Association (MMWCA)

USAID CONTACT:
Ben Wandago
Biodiversity and NRM Specialist
Environment Office
USAID/Kenya and East Africa
Tel: +254-713-601 431
Email: bwandago@usaid.gov
www.usaid.gov/kenya/environment

TNC CONTACT:
Munira Bashir
Kenya Program Director
Tel: +254 738350350
Email: munira@tnc.org
Website: www.nature.org

MMWCA CONTACT:
Daniel Sopia
MMWCA Chair
Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies, PO Box 984, Narok 20500, Kenya
Tel: +254 717 806260
Email: sopia@maraconservancies.org
Website: www.maraconservancies.org

SOCIAL MEDIA:
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