



USAID
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ENVIRONMENT KENYA

USAID is advancing Kenya’s sustainable growth by supporting community-based natural resource management, improving ecosystem resilience, and building capacity to implement a low emissions development strategy.

Kenya’s natural heritage is globally recognized for its rich biodiversity and iconic landscapes. Kenya’s economy and people’s livelihoods are highly dependent on these natural resources and nature-based tourism, sectors that are extremely vulnerable to climate change. The arid and semi-arid lands account for 80 percent of the country’s land area and climate variability has led to significant economic losses and increased food insecurity. Other external factors such as wildlife crime, urban expansion, and population growth are threatening conservation efforts in Kenya.

USAID addresses these development challenges through the promotion of community-based natural resource management in biodiversity hotspots across Kenya. With over 60 percent of Kenya’s wildlife ranging outside state-protected areas, sustainable management of community and private lands has proved vital to protecting and conserving Kenya’s natural heritage.

COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

USAID pioneered the community conservancy model in Kenya, a widely recognized approach to conservation that protects wildlife outside state-protected areas, expands economic opportunities for

PHOTO: NORTHERN RANGELANDS TRUST

conservancy communities, and enhances resilience in the ability of people and landscapes to withstand climate variability and shocks. The Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), which was founded with USAID support in 2004, has reduced elephant poaching by 46 percent since 2014 and has improved the livelihoods of more than 550,000 Kenyans spread over eleven counties. In 2015, USAID committed to scaling up support for community conservancies in critical wildlife corridors in northern Kenya, Amboseli, Tsavo and the Masai Mara region.

For over 20 years, USAID has worked closely with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to enhance wildlife management and the enforcement and prosecution of wildlife crimes. USAID's new five-year partnership with the U.S. Department of the Interior is helping to coordinate efforts to address wildlife trafficking in the region, including technical assistance and training on wildlife protection, law enforcement and prosecution in Kenya. USAID's partnership with IUCN/TRAFFIC has also identified priority actions for KWS and other stakeholders in the fight to combat wildlife crime. Through the U.S. National Academies of Science and the U.S. Global Development Lab, USAID supports research grants for Kenyan scientists to explore innovative, multi-disciplinary ways to strengthen wildlife management and the prosecution of wildlife crimes in Kenya.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Given the current threats to Kenya's significant biological diversity, Kenya is one of only three bilateral programs in Africa designated as a Tier I biodiversity country under USAID's Biodiversity Policy. USAID's ongoing support for community conservancies is reversing ecosystem degradation and building resilient ecosystems through more effective community-based planning, management, and monitoring of natural resources. In 2015, NRT initiated the implementation of community grazing plans and rehabilitating degraded areas to restore rangeland biodiversity. In partnership with the International Development Law Organization, USAID is also continuing to work on national-level issues critical to Kenya's biodiversity conservation goals by supporting the ongoing devolution of natural resources management to county governments.

CLEAN ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Transitioning to a low emissions economy is a key component of Kenya's Vision 2030. In support of that goal, USAID seeks to strengthen key institutional and policy frameworks at the national and county level and enhance Kenya's ability to withstand economic losses caused by climate change. Kenya is a flagship country for the U.S. Government's Enhancing Capacity for Low Emissions Development Strategies (EC-LEDS), a program designed to accelerate sustainable, climate-resilient economic growth while slowing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). USAID is working in close coordination with the GOK to implement the National Climate Change Action Plan and meet significant milestones for Kenya's obligations under the UNFCCC by establishing a national GHG inventory team and operationalizing the newly enacted national Climate Change Act 2016. Our work with NRT is developing community resilience strategies, mainstreaming climate adaptation, and increasing access to climate information and decision-making tools. USAID is also supporting a climate change vulnerability assessment and monitoring tools within priority water towers to provide clear, accessible data that inform GOK resource management decisions and adaptation strategies. These activities are ensuring the GOK and communities across Kenya better understand the relationships between land use, economic sectors, and livelihoods; to build resilience and better predict and plan for future climate change impacts.