



Sustainable conservation of the water towers, like this one in Mau Forest, requires establishing a balance between agricultural expansion and natural forest conservation.

KENYA

Promoting Self-Reliance and Community Engagement for Water Towers

The Mau Forest Complex, Mt. Kenya, Aberdares, Cherangany Hills, and Mt. Elgon - Kenya's five major water towers – provide an estimated 75 percent of the country's water resources and are central to Kenya's economic and social well-being. Despite their critical importance, these water towers have been seriously degraded and continue to be impacted by irregular and ill-planned settlements, overgrazing, uncontrolled and illegal forest resource extraction, and the conversion of forest land to agriculture. The degradation of these forests contributes to a growing water crisis in Kenya and the larger region. Moreover, the loss of biodiversity and increased carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation are exacerbated by climate change.

OUR WORK

The goal of the Kenya Integrated Management of Water Towers program is to support information-driven strategic planning to strengthen interventions designed to enhance the resilience of Kenya's water tower ecosystems. Together with key partners, the program seeks to advance forest conservation and community development by enabling community members to take the lead in conservation efforts and benefit from their efforts as articulated in Section 5 of the Government of Kenya (GoK) Forest Conservation and Management Act (2016). Ongoing actions are guided by the six overarching interventions identified in the Strategic Framework built through a series of stakeholder consultations, particularly with local communities and county governments. Enhanced participation of these stakeholders in decision-making and benefit-sharing is critical to the long-term sustainability of the water towers.

PROGRAM AREAS

Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) offers an innovative means of generating funds to incentivize efforts to protect and restore watersheds. One of the major challenges with the current approach in Kenya is that the scale is often too fragmented and limited to the local scale to make a meaningful difference at the landscape level. The purpose of the feasibility study is to determine how best to catalyze and guide the rapid scaling-up to ensure that the impact is commensurate with the challenge.

Inclusive participation in landscape conservation and management is a key goal of the KWTP. A common

recommendation of stakeholders is the importance of local communities assuming greater responsibility over the management of natural resources. The KWTP is supporting target communities to develop and implement integrated ecosystem management plans, including capacity building actions for improved governance, financial management, conflict resolution and improve functioning of CFA's.

National Water Tower Management Strategy is a tool that will guide coordination and management of the Water Tower Ecosystems. A key and critical component of this strategy is the involvement of local communities in designing and implementing management, rehabilitation, and conservation activities. Collaborative implementation of this strategy will increase local community self-reliance through livelihoods enhancement.

ACHIEVEMENTS

To date, the project has achieved:

- A comprehensive climate change vulnerability assessment, highlighting the ecological and socio-economic vulnerabilities for the three landscapes, and providing measures to enhance resilience and adaptive capacity of the landscapes and local communities.
- A detailed ecosystem services valuation of the three landscapes. The launch of the report shows the high importance placed on ensuring management policies are based on empirical data.
- Engaged of a broad suite of stakeholders from national, county, and community levels to identify strategic priorities. Stakeholder participation at all levels in ecosystem planning, implementation, and decision-making.

BUDGET: USD \$2.2 million

DURATION: 2015 – 2022

ACTIVITY LOCATIONS:
Cherangany Hills, Mau Forest, and Mt Elgon

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

KEY PARTNERS
Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MEF), Kenya Forest Service (KFS), Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), Kenya Water Towers Agency (KWTA), Water Resources Authority (WRA)

USAID CONTACTS
Enock Kanyanya,
Program Specialist
Tel: +254-20-363-2341
Email: ekanyanya@usaid.gov

PARTNER CONTACTS
John Kerkerling,
East Africa Regional Advisor
United States Forest Service
International Programs
Tel: +1.202.644.4635
Email: johnkerkerling@fs.fed.us

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Email: usaidkea@usaid.gov
Website: www.usaid.gov/kenya
Facebook: USAIDKenya
Twitter: @USAIDKenya