



Lioness and cub in the Maasai Mara. Photo/USAID

KENYA

COMMUNITY CONSERVANCIES SEED GRANT PROGRAM IN MAASAI MARA

The Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem in Narok County is home to the iconic wildlife migration, a world-renowned tourist destination and a critical ecosystem for wildlife conservation. With only 26 percent of the ecosystem under the government protection, community and privately-owned land adjacent to the Maasai Mara National Reserve is important for conservation efforts through the community conservancy model. The socio-economic benefits accruing from conservation for over 14,500 landowners and 100,000 people are numerous. These include increased population and diversity of wildlife species, improved ecosystem integrity, increased income from wildlife-based tourism and other conservation enterprises, enhanced co-existence between wildlife, livestock, and people.

Major threats to conservation in the ecosystem include loss of biodiversity, habitat degradation, and wildlife poaching and trafficking. The conservancy movement in the Mara is faced with the following challenges: lack of a unified ecosystem-wide conservation approach, including ecosystem planning; limited resources, capacities and governance structures to fulfill the mandate of nascent and existing conservancies; inadequate institutional support for sustained growth of the Mara conservancies.

OUR WORK

USAID works with strategic partners from the public, civil society, and private sector to strengthen the capacity and commitment of local organizations. USAID supports community-led biodiversity conservation and improved well-being through the community conservancy model. The goal is to restore ecosystem integrity while increasing the incomes of local communities at the household level. The Maasai community in Mara are dependent on nature-based tourism for their livelihoods.

The programs objectives are to:

- (i) establish an integrated and sustainable conservancy governance model;
- (ii) secure the Pardamat Conservation Area as a mixed-model conservancy for wildlife security, biodiversity conservation, and livelihood enhancement through conservation enterprises; and
- (iii) strengthen Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancy Association as an effective membership organization to lead and coordinate the community conservation model in the Mara landscape.

USAID partners with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) to implement the Community Conservancies Seed Grant program. They work in partnership with local and international stakeholders from the public, civil society, and private sectors, including: Narok County Government, Ministry of Wildlife & Tourism, Ministry of Environment & Forestry, Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA), conservancies, local communities, landowners, tourism parties, non-governmental organizations, and research & academic institutions.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 140,411 hectares of biological significance areas placed under improved natural resources management/showing improved biophysical conditions.
- 2,088 people with increased economic benefits derived from sustainable natural resource management and conservation enterprises.
- Governance, leadership, and capacities for 16 local conservation organizations strengthened.
- 763 people trained in NRM and/or biodiversity conservation.
- 10 management plans for conservancies developed and five gazetted.
- 57.6 km of road rehabilitated to improve access within the conservancies.
- Geographic Information System based ecosystem-wide map for Mara updated.
- First State of Mara Conservancies Report launched.
- Sustainable financial model for Mara conservancies based on an 80:20 per cent revenue sharing ratio between landowners and conservancies developed and under implementation.
- Five alternative livelihoods and conservation enterprise concepts developed.
- Communication strategy developed and implemented, including behavioral change campaign on benefits of Mara conservancies and on land leases and conservancy management models.
- MMWCA developed five organization policies, including a gender strategy.
- MMWCA's Headquarters constructed, equipped, and opened.

Total Project Funding Level: \$5.237 M
USAID Funding: \$5.2 M
TNC Contribution: \$35,000

Duration: Sep 2015 – Sep 2020

Implementing Partners:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA)

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