Combating Wildlife Crime in Maasai Mara

Mara conservancies embracing technology to protect Kenya’s most important wildlife area
Queen Elizabeth and Kofi Annan are the only White Rhinos in Maasai Mara. This endangered species is secured round-the-clock by a team of rangers. The use of Wild Information Landscape Database (WILD) mobile app is enhancing the Conservancy’s ability to protect them.
Welcome to our Headquarters in Aitong, Maasai Mara

We are delighted to start using our new offices constructed with the generous support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

The new offices will open new opportunities for the Mara Conservancies as we move to establish a fully operational hub, a nerve center to coordinate MMWCA partners and stakeholders within and around the Mara Ecosystem.

This achievement is a great milestone in MMWCA’s 5 year strategy and we are extremely pleased to see the completion of this project within the project period and budget. It will provide a central place to engage our members and timely respond to their needs. Once fully operational, the new facility will enable us to gather all staff in one location and we will reduce our overall costs by eliminating rental expenditures. This will strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency in our programs implementation and collaboration with other critical stakeholders to promote conservation and sustainable management of wildlife and habitats that is crucial to this region’s long term economic growth and development.

The launch of this office would have not been successful without the MMWCA Executive board approval in 2015 that paved way for the purchase of the 5 acre plot that the HQ sits on. What we have today is a fully furnished conference hall, 2 office units with internet, kitchen and six ready for occupancy staff accommodation units, a bio digester, a rain water harvesting system, a standby power generator and a solar powered fence.

We are grateful to the USAID and TNC for the support they continue to provide for MMWCA and member conservancies. We have experienced tremendous progress as a result of the partnership under the 3 year project, Effective Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Improvement by Community Conservancies in the Maasai Mara Region.

Daniel Sopia
Chief Executive Officer, MMWCA
Consumptive Utilization of Wildlife: Debunking Kenya’s most controversial conservation debate
On 26th April 2018, Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary Hon. Najib Balala reintroduced one of the most controversial debates amongst wildlife conservation folks when he unveiled a ten member team to look into consumptive wildlife utilization in the country.

This practice dates back to the hunter-gatherer and pastoralist communities who have co-existed with wildlife and from pre-historic times, their sustainable utilization of wildlife has formed the basis of their livelihoods. In 1977, the late President Jomo Kenyatta, under Legal Notice No. 120, imposed a ban on hunting or/and dealing in wildlife consumptive exploitation due to severe decline in their numbers. However, in the subsequent years, some landowners continued to pressurize Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) lobbying for consumptive use of wildlife. It was claimed that several species had increased beyond the carrying capacity of the lands. In 1990, KWS initiated a pilot wildlife-cropping programme with the object to reduce wildlife-related costs and develop markets that would allow consumptive uses of wildlife to be economically viable.

Against this backdrop, the move by Hon. Balala has received equal share of support and criticism from conservationists and policy makers. The Kenyan Law currently places wildlife conservation on an equal footing with other forms of land uses like crop and livestock farming. Pro-consumptive utilization conservationists reckon that the findings of the taskforce will inform and change conservation strategies in Kenya for the better. And that communities will be actively and meaningfully involved as well as other important stakeholders. Conservationists against consumptive utilization are concerned that the move might open the window to spot hunting and poaching of endangered species. They argue this has been tried before and failed because it is prone to corruption, mismanagement and abuse.

Hon. Balala asserts that the introduction of consumptive utilization will not open up hunting. He explains that keeping wildlife purely for tourism is not productive enough and there is need for the country to explore other options of wildlife utilization for the benefit of communities hosting wildlife. As the debate simmers, a decision for the umpteenth time is eagerly awaited in early July when the final report is expected in Hon. Balala’s in-tray.

Notwithstanding challenges in combating wildlife crimes, Kenya is globally renowned as a champion of conservation. This trend should be maintained at all cost as it is anchored in Article 69(2) of the Constitution 2010, which mandates everyone to cooperate with state organs and other persons to protect, conserve the environment and ensure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources. Section 59(1) of Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, 2013 says that utilization and exploitation of wildlife resources by any party whether individual land owner or in a conservation area, and wherever else shall be practiced in a manner that is sustainable. However, the manner, form, nature and style of the practice must be in conformity with the provisions of the relevant laws, including land use management and planning.

The Maasai Mara, Kenya’s most important wildlife area could offer some vital lessons to this debate. The region purely depends on non-consumptive utilization of her rich wildlife species and is thought to be doing well.

With only 26% of the ecosystem under government protection, private and community land is so important for conservation efforts through the conservancy model where landowners are organized to effectively and sustainably promote biodiversity conservation and improve income generation at household level. Today, community conservancies covers approximately 130,000 hectares an area that play a great role in securing critical corridors and provide a contiguous landscape that supports free ranging wildlife species that require expansive home ranges. These conservancies also support an estimated 13,000 landowners, a population that directly benefit from wildlife conservation in the area through direct income from lease fees, employment, business enterprises and development projects.

In the meantime, the government’s move to evaluate the modalities of consumptive utilization of wildlife is welcome. An efficient, effective and credible report that is cognizant of the fact that communities must be part and parcel of the protection of wildlife is surest strategy to guaranteeing Kenya’s standing as a conservation champion. We look forward to the findings and recommendations of the team tasked with this important responsibility.

Frank Mukasa

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**Mandate of the taskforce**

- Evaluate options of consumptive utilization of wildlife in community and private lands.
- Successes and failures of the previous wildlife cropping program
- Evaluate how consumptive utilization can contribute to the National Gross Domestic Product (GDP), food security, employment and livelihoods support with a view of creating peaceful coexistence between communities and wildlife.
- Identify international restriction (if any) that may impact on sustainable consumption wildlife utilization in Kenya among other work.

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**VOICE OF THE MARA**
Our progress at a glance

By Daniel Sopia, CEO MMWCA

Our goal is to ensure that conservancies in the Mara Ecosystem are effectively and sustainably managed to promote biodiversity conservation and improve income generation at household level. This is a summary highlighting the progress we have registered so far.

Securing Land under Conservation:
- A total of 190 leases equivalent to 6,372.94 hectares have been registered in 5 conservancies securing land for wildlife conservation.
- In Pardamat Conservation Area, 76 land owners have signed leases committing their 5,551 acres to conservation for the next 15 years.
- Eleven conservancies’ management plans have been developed and endorsed by Narok County Wildlife Conservation and Compensation Committee. The plans will regulate and standardise developments in conservancies.

Conservancies Governance and Leadership:
- Legal governance structures for 6 conservancies have been reviewed. They will provide for enhanced transparency and inclusivity in conservancy management.
- 50 women have undertaken leadership and governance training and enjoined in Landowners Committees and Boards of 12 of the 14 conservancies enhancing inclusiveness in management of conservancies.

Securing Wildlife:
- 12 managers have been trained in managing and analysing data collected via the Wildlife Information Landscape Data (WILD) mobile application. This is enabling them to make evidence based management decisions such as where livestock should graze, which areas need more ranger patrols as well telling areas with a high concentration of wildlife and conflict hotspots etc. The use of WILD app and analysis of data collected will improve the safety and security of wildlife in the conservancies.
- 36 rangers have been trained on crime scene management and scene of crime management tool kits distributed to 12 conservancies. The training combined with the appropriate tools will improve preservation of evidence by conservancy rangers who are first responders hence increase chances of successful prosecution of wildlife criminals.
- 20 predator-proof Bomas (enclosures) have been installed to protect livelihoods through preventing predation on livestock in Pardamat Conservation Area where there’s the highest human and livestock population in the Mara. With livestock protected at night, incidents of retaliatory attacks against big cats have drastically reduced.

Sustainability:
- Sustainable Livestock Initiative – A pilot phase of the sustainable livestock initiative as an alternative revenue stream for landowners and conservancies has been rolled out in Mara North.
and Pardamat Conservation Area. The initiative is meant to reduce livestock numbers while upgrading the quality and will be up scaled to approximately 10,000-12,000 in Mara North Conservancy and 8,000-9,000 in Naboisho with possibility to replicate across other Mara conservancies. With support from the BAND Foundation, the new livestock management model will be managed alongside freely roaming wildlife to facilitate both effective rangeland management as well as complementing conservancy revenue and landowner household income. In Mara North, 15,000 acres of land have been set aside for the enterprise and 2,000 heads of cattle contributed by landowners. In Pardamat, 5,551 acres have been set aside and landowners have contributed 32 cows out of the targeted 100. Naboisho conservancy will launch the initiative in the course of the year. The stocking ratio is 5 acres per cow with landowners contributing numbers of cattle equivalent to their land size. They will be fattened for a period of 4-5 months and sold for profit sharing between the conservancy and landowner. An experienced livestock manager Mr. Tom Frazer has been recruited to lead the initiative and is already at work currently stationed in Mara North Conservancy.

Mara Management Company (GMM) has been operationalized with Mr. Douglas Braun enlisted as Chief Operations Officer of GMM to lead implementation of a business plan for a coordinated and efficient management across multiple Mara Conservancies. GMM has signed a one year contract with Seiya Limited for the management of Naboisho and Mara North Conservancies whilst efforts are made to bring on board more conservancies.

- Construction of our new headquarters in Maasai Mara at Aitong is now complete. It will provide a central place to engage our members and timely respond to their needs. Once fully operational, the new facility will enable us to gather all staff in one location and we will reduce our overall costs by eliminating rental expenditures. This will strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency in our programmes implementation and collaboration with other critical stakeholders to promote conservation and sustainable management of wildlife and habitats that is crucial to this region’s long term economic growth and development.

Conservation Education:
- We have partnered with 9 schools to nurture 450 learners in environmental conservation. Each school has a wildlife club with a patron
leading the learners in activities such as tree planting and construction of gabions to control soil erosion. In March alone, the wildlife club members in the 9 schools planted over 1,200 indigenous trees.

**State of Mara Conservancies Report:**
- MMWCA is developing the first ever state of Mara Conservancies report, which will act as a baseline of information, state and progress of conservancies in the Mara landscape. The information to be captured in the annual report includes: updated conservancies maps and boundaries, size of conservancies, programmes, number of rangers, number of land owners, tourism partners and an outline of MMWCA support to Conservancies.

**Gender Mainstreaming in Natural Resources Management**
In the past one and a half years, MMWCA has been conscious to integrate gender issues in all its programmes and activities. The organisation’s Gender Programme activities include, among others:
- Developed a gender strategy with a three years action plan.
- Conducted a gender analysis across the Mara conservancies to inform the program design and better understand gender dynamics in the community through assessing; Access to resources, Knowledge, Beliefs, and Perception, Practices and Participation, Time and Space, Legal Rights and Status, Power and Decision Making;
- Facilitated the formation of a women leader’s forum representative of all conservancies, incorporated;
- Facilitated training for women leaders on (leadership, governance, conflict resolution, women and girl rights, advocacy and lobbying, entrepreneurship among others);
- Collected baseline data on women and youth representation in the conservancies,
- Conducted community sensitization and awareness on gender issues across three conservancies;
- Appointed and trained gender champions/ambassadors in three conservancies;
- Trained key project staff on gender mainstreaming and the dissemination of information on gender;
- Continuously review planning documents to ensure that gender equality and equity is incorporated into implementation and management tools, work plans and M&E plans.
The tourism industry, which depends heavily on wildlife injects roughly Ksh.100 billion ($1 billion) to the Kenyan economy making the conservation and sustainable management of wildlife and habitats crucial to Kenya’s long term economic growth and development.

Maasai Mara’s iconic annual wildlife migration makes the ecosystem the cornerstone of the tourism industry in Kenya. With only 26% of the ecosystem under government protection, private and community land is important for conservation efforts especially combating wildlife crimes. The good news is that local communities in Maasai Mara clearly understand and have embraced their important role in supporting enhanced biodiversity conservation in conservancies and private lands adjacent to the State protected Maasai Mara National Reserve. Embracing of technology by Mara conservancies to protect wildlife is one such demonstrable show of commitment by the local population. Conservancies have over the last one year proactively used the Wild Information Landscape Database (WILD) mobile application to strengthen existing wildlife anti-poaching and human wildlife conflict (HWC) deterrent efforts in Maasai Mara. The recognition of Mara conservancies by the USAID’s Forestry and Biodiversity Office for their effort in combating wildlife trafficking and case compilation using the WILD App is indeed a welcome confirmation of this unwavering show of commitment. The Mara conservancies were outstanding among the 49 organizations that submitted entries having made to the shortlist of 12 during the Combating Wildlife Tracking (CWT) Collaborative Learning Group in Muldersdrift South Africa on 10th May.

USAID has a long history of support for efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. These efforts are currently being prioritized due to a dramatic increase in the volume and scope of the threat in recent years and the
February 9th, 2017 Executive Order on enforcing federal law with respect to transnational criminal organizations and preventing international trafficking. The training of Maasai Mara conservancies’ rangers to use the WILD App was a partnership with USAID’s Planning for Resilience in East Africa through Policy, Adaptation, Research, and Economic Development (PREPARED) Project.

MMWCA has trained 12 conservancy managers, 159 rangers on the use of the WILD application. A total of 63 ranger teams covering 12 conservancies have been equipped with a Smartphone installed with the WILD application for data collection during their patrols. Conservancy managers have access to the backend of the application to monitor data collection by their respective ranger teams. Additionally, a data manager has been enlisted to help conservancies collect, analyze, store and apply the data to their daily operations.

Developed by @iLabAfrica of Strathmore University, WILD is a mobile phone data collection application and cloud-based database designed to improve collection, sharing, management and analysis of biodiversity information and data of endangered wildlife such as Elephants and Rhinos which are facing threats due to human encroachment and increased poaching activities.

The development and use of the WILD App will continue inspiring rangers like Sayialel Ole Koros who have dedicated their life and time to be the frontline defenders of wildlife. “I now have another weapon in my armoury. Using a mobile phone is making our work easier, enjoyable and effective,” states Sayialel who particularly likes the panic button on the application. “I do not have to blow a whistle anymore because I can now simply tap a button to send a distress signal for immediate response.”

The use of the WILD App in Mara is helping prevent poaching and human wildlife conflict, and improving monitoring, coordination, and analysis of anti-poaching deterrent efforts in the community conservancies. The WILD application tracks a patrol unit’s movement using global positioning software (GPS) using the Smartphone. While on patrol, rangers can record information on incidences that occur, such as poaching, animal mortality, human wildlife conflict, illegal human
Since I started working as a ranger in 1973, the most cumbersome part of my job was the task of collecting data on paper sheets, filing it in cabinets and retrieving it when needed.

James Ekiru,
Senior Warden - MEP
activity, community service, wildlife sightings, climate data and others.

The information captured in WILD is stored in a secure online database that allows administrators to access and analyze information collected by their rangers, and use this information to support evidence-based management decisions, such as re-organizing patrol routes to cover areas with higher incidents of poaching or HWC. WILD can also be used to track the progress and outcomes of counter wildlife trafficking legal cases that the organization is supporting.

James Ekiru, Senior Warden of the Mara Elephant Project (MEP) is responsible for coordinating a team of community rangers entrusted with protecting and saving elephants in the 14 community conservancies of the greater Maasai Mara region.

He is charged with combating ruthless poaching while also fostering positive human-elephant relations. And to do both effectively he needs sufficient data that allows for rapid assessing of threats and will help inform his security operation and patrol in deciding how to best deploy their resources over an area of 339,081 acres of land.

Protecting wildlife across this area is critical as more than 11,791 landowners depend on income from leasing their land and approximately 1,300 people are employed here.

For Ekiru, data collection and analysis – critical to the success of his work – has remained the main challenge over his conservation career spanning four decades. “Since I started working as a ranger in 1973, the most cumbersome part of my job was the task of collecting data on paper sheets, filing it in cabinets and retrieving it when needed,” says Ekiru.

Ekiru and his team helped with the development of the app over three years by testing out its applicability. Ekiru believes involving conservancies and rangers to help develop the WILD app was essential. “We like it, especially the choice to use Kiswahili for those not conversant with English and using of icons for an illiterate person.”
Livestock have always been an important part of Maasai culture and lifestyle. But the Maasai grass banks have changed over the years. Following Kenyan Government’s tenure policy, previous common group ranches have been subdivided into private plots.

Mara North Conservancy (MNC) serves as a partnership between twelve camp-owners and 800 landowners and collaborates closely with the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA). In return for renting their land to conservancies, landowners obtain a stable monetary compensation to conservancy members. Livestock, however remain an important source of income.

MNC has installed livestock management plans, together with settlement restrictions and limits on fencing which serve to reduce overexploitation of grazing lands and to maintain a rich wildlife – livestock cohabitant. However, with a growing population, as well as climate changes leading to frequent draughts exchanged with periods of flooding, the availability of grass continues to be a problem.

To explore these issues further, a researcher from Aarhus University, Denmark, and part of the Maasai Mara Science and Development Initiative undertook a series of interviews with Maasai livestock owners in November 2017. The purpose of these interviews was to gain enough insights about the dynamics of Mara North livestock issues to be able to develop a board game illuminating these issues.

For grass areas to sustain, there has to be a balance between grassing and growth of grass. To understand the balance between grassing and growth of grass, the researchers built a system dynamics model (see e.g. Sterman, 2000; Larsen and Lomi, 2001; Håkonsson, Klaas, & Carroll, 2012).

Based on this model, they developed a card board game named: The Livestock Game.
In February 2018, the researchers returned to the Mara to play the Livestock Game with Maasai livestock owners. Over a period of 10 days, the game was played by over 200 Maasai.

One of the board games was played by 24 Aitong Livestock owners. The game was organized by Daniel Ole Muli, Regional Coordinator of the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association. He had at an earlier stage worked with Professor Dorthe Døjbak Håkonsson on the development of the board game and was now curious to test it in a real life setting. "The Livestock Board Game was very interesting and useful to landowners. It educates, directs and proves to them the real case scenario happening in terms of a commonly shared resource which is now scarce and being depleted from overstocking due to lack of planning together," says Daniel Ole Muli and continues, "The board game has also helped the landowners to understand the new concept and importance of determining carrying capacities of the conservancies for sustainability of rangelands and livestock keeping."

"We are very happy that our research project in this way can support conservation of the ecosystem and sustainable development of the livelihoods of the community," says Professors Erik Larsen and Dorthe Døjbak Håkonsson from Aarhus University. "This is exactly our vision for the Maasai Mara Science and Development Initiative".

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1 The Livestock Game was developed by Professors Erik Larsen and Dorthe Døjbak Håkonsson, Aarhus University. Pernille Kallehave, Aarhus University, Domic Saningo Kuluo, Benedict Walabengo, and David Noosaron enabled the data collection sessions with translations, actual conduct of the game, employing the computer system, and setting up the meetings.
Figures 1-4 illustrate the outcomes of one of the 12 games played.

**Figure 1**

![Cows and Calves for Each Area](image1)

**Figure 2**

![Grass Level](image2)

Figure 1 shows participants’ allocation of cows and calves to each of the three areas on the game board (marked as red, blue and grey in the Figure). As appears from Figure 2, when many livestock are allocated to one area, the grass level goes down.

Further, Figure 2 shows how, once a grass area has been overexploited, it takes a long time for it to regenerate – even when grazing is limited in the subsequent periods. Figure 3 shows how death is related to grass levels – the less grass, the more deaths. Figure 4 shows how birth is limited when grass levels are low.

While these results pertain to just one participant group, the pattern was very much the same across all games. Further data analysis is currently undergoing, but the preliminary results are obvious: without collaborative structures relating to grassing, grasslands are subject to what is known theoretically as the Tragedy of the Commons (see e.g. Hardin, 1968; Ostrom, 2008).

The Tragedy of the Commons predicts that that individuals who act independently and rationally according to their self-interests, will behave contrary to the best interests of the whole group by depleting some common resource (in this case the grass areas of the Maasai Mara).

*The gain from letting one extra cow grass is gained today. And the costs are borne by everyone. The long-term consequence however is that the commons is destroyed.*

*To achieve harmonized land use planning and decision making - awareness, collaboration and continued dialogue is required.*
The tragedy is not only related to the fact that the commons is destroyed, but also to the fact that its detriment stems from the fact that each livestock breeder acts rationally: The gain from letting one extra cow grass is gained today. And the costs are borne by everyone. The long-term consequence however is, that the commons is destroyed.

The grass areas in the Maasai Mara may no longer constitute a true common in the sense that they can be used by everyone and that there is no management of them, but nevertheless they are being commonly exploited, and rely on communal management – a management system that is currently undergoing substantive changes.

What can be done?
To solve the challenges related to livestock grazing, and to achieve harmonized land use planning and decision making - awareness, collaboration and continued dialogue is required. Parties interested in using the Livestock Game are welcome to contact Benedict Walubengo (see ‘Livestock Board Game as an education tool for conservation’ for more information).

One of the ways that MMWCA works with grazing issues is via the establishment of grazing zones and local grazing committees’ decisions on livestock grazing patterns. In addition, MMWCA is involved in the establishment of a Single Management Entity across multiple Mara Conservancies. This single Management Entity is meant to avoid isolated management of the Mara Conservancies, which deal with interdependent human-wildlife issues.

REFERENCES


Livestock Board Game as an educational tool for conservation

The Maasai Mara Science and Development Initiative (MMSDI) is an African-European interdisciplinary network of researchers, NGO’s and the local communities in the Maasai Mara, founded in 2014. MMSDI contribute to conserving the Maasai Mara ecosystem, its rich wildlife and culture through interdisciplinary research and development initiatives.

The livestock board game is one of the initiatives developed by MMSDI to contribute to solutions to the many challenges of the Maasai Mara.

Land management issues and grazing plans are at the top of the agenda all over the Mara. The Livestock Board Game has proven to be an effective tool to creating an understanding of the consequences of overstocking amongst the Maasai livestock owners. During the game, livestock owners are asked to make decisions relating to number of cows to sell, and calves to buy, and to assign their livestock to different grazing areas on the board game. The board game in that sense represent some of the broader ideas of livestock grazing – particularly relating to grazing and subsequent growth of livestock and regeneration of grass. The game consists of twelve decision rounds, equaling a period of time (e.g. month, years, or season).

For each round, players need to make decisions on where to let their livestock graze, and how many they want to sell and buy. The twelve decision rounds enable the researchers to track changes in decision behaviors as a consequence of feedback from previous decisions. Each game session ends with a discussion of the problems represented by the underlying simulation model, and a broader level discussion of sustainable management.

Where should I take my cattle to graze today? Should I go to the market to buy some calves or sell some cows? Questions well known to every Maasai livestock owner. Each decision made is important to every family in the Mara.

With climate change and a growing number of cattle, the decision of the individual Maasai has an increasing impact of the whole Maasai community and the fragile ecosystem. This is the core dilemma of the Livestock Board Game that Aarhus University has now handed over to the Karen Blixen Camp Trust in Mara North.

Interested groups of livestock owners or conservancies can contact trainers and book a game session by sending an email to Benedict Walubengo at teacher1@karenblinxencamp.com.
The Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) has a core mandate of integrating and mainstreaming gender in management of natural resources.

In March, 44 women leaders drawn from 14 Mara conservancies were taken on an exposure tour to Sera and Kalama conservancies for cross-learning, knowledge and experiences sharing on: women development enterprises, wildlife conservation, land protection and, women leadership in natural resources management.

The two-day tour presented an opportunity for the Mara women to learn from their counterparts in the Northern Rangelands Trust. Chair of Sera Community Wildlife Conservancy Pauline Lolng’ojine took the women through the various challenging steps the conservancies and women in the north have undergone. Some key benefits helping women include healthcare provision, peace keeping initiatives, market for handmade beaded products and school bursaries.

The Community Manager at Sera Conservancy strongly emphasized that the success of conservancies in the north are dependent on women empowerment and peaceful coexistence of people and wildlife as well as communities living adjacent to each other.

The tour has proved to be an eye opener to the women. They are motivated to continue with the initiatives that have proved fruitful and beneficial. The open mindedness observed after the tour has been so far impressive. The women leaders have requested for continued support to awareness initiatives about wildlife conservation and women development. They cite the tour as an important learning opportunity.
Doris Nairesiæ Nabaala

Born and bred in Lemek, Maasai Mara. She is trained in Community Development. She is a beneficiary of revenues accruing from wildlife conservation. Doris has worked for the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association under the OBEL Family Foundation delivering an Education Project in Mara North Conservancy.

She currently serves as a Manager at Olchorro Oirowua Conservancy, which is the pioneer community conservancy in the Mara. We celebrate her brilliant transformative leadership skills. Doris is truly an icon as she is the first ever and only Lady Manager in the Mara conservancies’ movement. She is tasked with mentoring and guiding girls in the community with the hope to inspire them that, they too can contribute actively to the wellbeing of the Greater Mara Ecosystem.

Penina Taki

Penina Taki is the Chair of Mara Conservancies Women Leaders Forum. She is a trained teacher and the founder of Pardamat Junior School, an institution she supervises with currently over 80 learners enrolled. Part of her responsibility in education is Chairing Olkurroto Primary School Board. She also conducts adult literacy classes for women whom she says their inability to read and write is the biggest hindrance to their meaningful participation and benefit from natural resources. She has been commended for her positive contribution to the welfare of the landowners of the Mara and Narok West Constituency in general through her role as a member of the Narok West Land Control Board. Penina plays a critical role in
Naisuyiasui Kumum

She goes by many titles and you will recognize her signature broad smile at any meeting in the Mara. Mama Kijiji, as she is popularly known is a trained Solar Engineer. With support from the Basecamp Foundation Kenya, together with other three women she underwent a 6 months Basic Skills training in Solar manufacturing, bulb manufacturing and solar installation at the Barefoot College in India. Eng. Naisuyiasui serves as a church leader at the Community Christian Church and is tasked by the government of Kenya to spearhead conflict resolution and peace building at Endonyo Eirika village in Aitong Location. Her charisma, outgoing demeanor, grasp of wildlife conservation issues and passion for the gender agenda has endeared her to the populace in Maasai Mara as a trusted champion of communities’ interests.

Kaaka Naurori

Kaaka Naurori is a women empowerment champion and a great orator. Her role as a committee member in the Mara Naboisho Conservancy Grazing committee and board member of Naboisho Conservancy has greatly benefitted the conservancy landowners and encouraged women in the Mara. Having undergone governance and leadership training organized by MMWCA, Kaaka has continued to inspire many women and used her skills meaningfully in decision making in her conservancy. She is keen on ensuring that women continue to access clean water and opportunities for women engaging in various entrepreneurial activities in the Mara.
Maa women joined the international community in celebrating the International Women’s Day 2018 on March 8th at a colorful event at Aitong center, Maasai Mara.

MMWCA partners, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Narok County Government participated in the event to give women from the Mara a chance to celebrate their gains in their role to conserve natural resources as well as pursue political and social economic emancipation.

Speakers at the event attended by over 600 women included TNC Kenya Country Programme Director Munira Bashir, Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) CEO Dickson Kaelo and MMWCA CEO Daniel Sopia. The event provided a rare opportunity to articulate the successes registered in promoting the women’s role in Natural Resource Management, reflecting on the challenges and avenues for cooperation and solutions to problems facing women in the Maasai Mara ecosystem.

Keeping to the theme Press For Progress, women and girl’s rights, the constitutional two-thirds gender rule, women leadership in conservancies also took center stage. “We encourage more women to take a central role in conservation not to just contribute ideas but to earn income and benefit from protecting their natural resources,” Munira Bashir challenged the women.

There exists a disconnect between access to resources, decision making and benefits. For a long time, women have had access to resources only
We value and recognize the role of Maasai women in conservation and celebrate with you on this auspicious International Women’s Day. You are doing it because of your future generations and we urge you to remain strong and focused.

Celina Butali, MMWCA Gender & Sustainability Specialist who’s led the initiative believes women hold the key to climate change mitigation. “Women’s roles in a pastoral community set up such as herders, cooks and cleaners makes them interact with nature more than men. In Mara, we are pushing for not only, inclusion of women in leadership but also their active and meaningful participation in decision making,” explains Celina.
CONSERVANCIES BENEFIT PEOPLE, WILDLIFE, AND OUR ECONOMY

SECURITY, ENTERPRISE, GOVERNANCE, HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS.

Today, there are 15 CONSERVANCIES in the greater Maasai Mara, COVERING 1,394 KM² and increasing THE REGION’S CONSERVATION AREA FROM 33% TO 64%. AREA FROM 33% TO 64%.

The conservancies support the livelihoods of approximately 13,500 HOUSEHOLDS, or an estimated 100,000 PEOPLE.

Lease fees paid to conservancy landowners totalled $3.5 MILLION IN 2017, demonstrating the potential for wildlife conservation to generate significant local economic returns.
250
EMPLOYED RANGERS
The Mara conservancies have employed over 250 rangers.

3,500
ELEPHANTS CROSS
A total of about 3,500 Elephants move across the Mara ecosystem, and the population has grown in recent years.

1,600
RESIDENTS EMPLOYED
1,600 people - mostly residents of the Mara - employed at nearly 50 conservancy-based tourism camps. 60% - 70% of the staff working in camps and conservancies are drawn from the local community.

14%
HIGHER LION DENSITY
Researchers have recently documented that lion densities in the conservancies are 14% higher than within the Maasai Mara National Reserve, and are some of the healthiest lion densities anywhere in Africa.
Wildlife conservation set for improvement as 11 conservancies complete Management Plans

By Lawrence Ole Mbelati

MMWCA is supporting the conservancies to develop the management plans pursuant to the Kenya Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013 that stipulates that every national park, marine protected area, wildlife conservancy and sanctuary should be managed in accordance with a management plan.

A management plan is an invaluable document for wildlife conservation in Kenya as it regulates and standardises any developments within the demarcated boundaries. This is especially important in the Maasai Mara ecosystem which is home to approximately 25% of the Kenya’s wildlife and one of the world’s great tourism destinations, with roughly 70% of the ecosystem’s wildlife living outside the Reserve on private lands. It is also home to pastoralist communities whose way of life has allowed wildlife to thrive for centuries in both the 14 established conservancies and the Maasai Mara National Reserve. The conservancies now cover 1,394 km² that has increased the region’s conservation area from 33% to 64%. According to Evans Sitati the Manager of Siana Conservancy, having the 11 Mara conservancies’ management plans approved by Narok County Wildlife Conservation Compensation Committee (CWCCC) is a huge leap toward development the protection and sustainable development of the Mara ecosystem.

“The management plan will be instrumental in our work. We can use it to fundraise for resources based on the identified programmes and harmonise activities for each stakeholder thus minimising conflicts between landowners, tourism partners, the conservancy management team and other partners. Additionally, management plans will help prioritize the essential components a conservancy can utilize to develop work plans,” explains Sitati.

The Narok County Wildlife Conservation Compensation Committee (NWCCC) has approved management plans for 11 conservancies in the Maasai Mara.

The plans for Lemek, Olare Motorogi, Mara North, Ol-Kinyie, Naboisho, Olloisukut, Olchorro Oirua, Olderkesi, Siana, Olarro and Paradamat Conservation Area are now awaiting endorsement by Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) and will thereafter be gazetted by the Minister for Tourism and Wildlife.
The MMWCA work to develop conservancies’ management plans started in 2016 with support from Tusk Trust, USAID Kenya and East Africa, African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and World Wide Fund (WWF).

Management plan development process is detailed with several activities as stipulated in law. It calls for a core planning team to oversee the process and high level public participation to authenticate the process and the final document. The process also entails field reconnaissance to get the inventory of biodiversity, infrastructure and vegetation maps, tourist facilities and conservancies’ boundaries. Stakeholders are then involved to develop the vision, goals, objectives and activities of the conservancy before it is presented to before it approved and published in the Kenya gazette by CWCCC, KWS and Minister responsible for Wildlife Conservation in accordance with Section 44 subsection 1-5 of the Kenya Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013.

In developing the Mara conservancies’ management plans, MMWCA diligently adhered to the process. Landowners, tourist partners, government institution such as the county departments of environment, land, tourism and wildlife, Deputy County Commissioner, Chiefs, research institutions, among others were involved. Moreover, MMWCA partnered with KWS through their planning unit to guide and advise process, hence our confidence that KWS and the Minister will approve and publish the 11 management plans.

Thanks to MMWCA for facilitating and pushing through the final approval of the conservancy management plans. It has been a learning process for all involved more so a great achievement for the Mara conservancies to be some of the first in Kenya to have worked very hard to complete all the requirements and steps involved and to be proudly submitting their plans to the Cabinet Secretary via NCWCCC and KWS to hopefully be gazetted.

Lucy Cameron, Mara North Conservancy Administrator
Efforts to improve the road infrastructure in Mara conservancies have commenced with repairs and maintenance works on selected priority roads across five conservancies.

Selection of priority road networks was guided by a number of factors including stakeholder views, availability of building materials from nearby sources, and available budgets.

The work commenced in February and will see 57.6km repaired and maintained at a cost of $350,000 in Lemek, Mara North, Olare Orok, Motorogi and Olchoro Oirowua conservancies. At 142,000ha, the Mara conservancies almost equal the 151,000ha Maasai Mara National Reserve, and therefore require utmost attention in terms of infrastructure development and improvement.

In addition to road maintenance and repair works, MMWCA with support from USAID purchased machinery including a water bowser, a tractor, and a trailer to support the maintenance work with most of the other requisite road maintenance machinery to be sourced from conservancies.

The improved road network will lead to easier and more comfortable mobility for the community and tourists alike, resulting in increased business opportunities, more revenue for communities, and an improved perception of the value of conservation by communities and other stakeholders.

The current road network is largely poor, with road users creating alternative and illegal roads which are deemed more motorable—in most instances inside conservancies. The unplanned
roads lead intrusions into private conservancy land, destroying biodiversity, encouraging soil erosion and degrading the land leading to a negative effect on the general magnificence of the Mara conservancies.

Bad roads also make game drives uncomfortable and less satisfying, in addition to contributing to vehicle breakdowns and increased operational costs for tourism operators. Response times by rangers to reported cases of poaching and human wildlife conflict can also be considerably slowed down by poor roads. Rainy seasons provide the most challenging experiences, as some key roads are usually completely cut off, disrupting the movement of traffic, and as a result negatively impacting on tourism and community livelihood.

MMWCA realises the importance of an established and well maintained road network, and will continue to seek new partnerships with stakeholders, to raise more resources for constructing new roads, and providing for all-time maintenance works for the existing roads.
Training Programme Helping Women Overcome Societal Limitations

In a patriarchal society like Maasai’s, uneducated unemployed women face multiple problems. However, the societal limitations imposed on these women also bring out the best in some of them. Naisuyiasui Kumum a woman leader from Endonyo Rinka village is a prime example.

“After attending training sessions organized by Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA), I felt challenged and initiated a women group to facilitate our empowerment,” says Kumum.

The purpose of the MMWCA trainings is enhancing women’s capacity to make meaningful contributions to the governance and leadership of community conservancies. “The training program covered various topics but income generation and business training was what interested me and most of us,” explains Kumum.

Deep seated cultural prejudices coupled with illiteracy have limited Maasai women access to, and control over natural resources as well as restricted them from making decisions on their family resources such as livestock. Kumum asserts: “Women are keen to solve the day to day social and economic challenges they face in their roles as mothers, wives and bread earners amid the myriad societal limitations.”

The income generation and business training covered topics...
on common businesses among women in conservation areas, models of women enterprises, how to start a business and financial management - budgets, records and reconciliation. Kumum found the training very informative and was inspired to reach out to other women to establish a social welfare group. “We are now 25 members with each one of us contributing at least $2 weekly translating to a minimum of $200 every month.”

Since the group started in June 2017, they have raised and disbursed over $1,000. “We have purchased furniture for each of our houses and now started purchasing cooking gas cylinders,” states Kumum. “Besides equipping our households, we also lend money to help our members in case of emergencies such as hospital bills or for costs such as school fees. Such borrowing does not attract interest on repayment. We will soon start lending capital to our members to start income generating activities. We have already agreed to charge one percent interest rate so that we can grow the kitty and have women self-reliant and able to support their families.”

The training Kumum attended with 47 other women drawn from 14 conservancies is part of MMWCA work to advocate for inclusion of women in the leadership and governance of community conservancies in the Mara region. Under the USAID’s Effective Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Improvement by Community Conservancies Project, MMWCA is conducting trainings on Governance, Leadership, Business and Women Rights in order to apprise women of their roles and responsibilities and enhance their performance on the boards of conservancies.

There are now 50 women members on the boards of various community conservancies. Their inclusion has unearthed steadfast conservation champions. Their ability to engage community members and give feedback from the board meetings is evidently transforming the communities’ perceptions toward conservancies as well as encouraging other women to take a proactive role in natural resources management and their sustainable use.
Lemek Conservancy

Background
Lemek Conservancy was initially part of the Koiyaki Lemek Community Wildlife Trust established in September 15th 1995. Later, Lemek members felt the need to break away from the Trust and formed Lemek Conservancy, registering it in 2009. Over the years, Lemek Conservancy was managed through a board of elected members responsible for ensuring efficient and transparent revenue collection and equal distribution to members. Challenges and disagreements over management and benefits sharing led to the splintering of the conservancy leadership with over 10 management entities competing to control the conservancy.

Ecosystem
Lemek Conservancy is one of the high wildlife density areas with Great Plains offering pleasant scenery and best wildlife viewing areas of the Maasai Mara ecosystem. It is home to the big cats namely Lions, Leopards and Cheetahs and occasionally large herds of Elephants can be

“Lemek is the cornerstone of conservation by the Mara community. Lemek has retained its pristine, natural environment and landscape. We are fortunate enough that we have maintained high wildlife numbers. I am hopeful that Lemek will do much well than before during this term of leadership.”
Robert Korriata,
Chairman Lemek Conservancy

Know the Conservancies in Mara

We are focused on conserving the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem through a network of protected areas. The map below shows details of each established conservancy. A total of 39 of the 60 camps and lodges in the conservancies support monthly land lease payments for 336,191 acres belonging to 13,236 land owners. In this edition we feature Lemek Conservancy.

Lemek Conservancy

LEMEK CONSERVANCY
Area acres: 18,000
Land Owners: 480
Camps: 5
No. of Rangers: 22
No. of Jobs: 34
spotted. Others include Hippo, Warthog, Buffalo, and several species of Antelope, and numerous bird species. The Conservancy comprises open savannah and a tree-lined section of the Mara River with high concentrations of plains game and the wildlife numbers are particularly intensified during the annual wildebeest migration.

Guests who choose to stay in the conservancy enjoy the many benefits of off-reserve safari experiences, such as night game drives, nature walks and off-road wildlife viewing. Game viewing in the open grasslands is an unforgettable experience for every visitor who explores this conservancy. Just like it is the case in other conservancies in the Mara ecosystem, there are limited camps and lodges so that visitors can enjoy every moment.

What you can do in Lemek Conservancy
At Lemek Conservancy, you can enjoy morning, afternoon and night game viewing excursions in the beautiful plains. Other exceptional experiences in this conservancy are bush dining, hot air ballooning, guided walks and bird watching expeditions. Additionally, you can engage in cultural visits to understand the way of life of the Maasai community and walking safari to understand the intricate ecosystem of the Mara. The camps and lodges are: Saruni Wild Camp, Naserian Mara Camp, Losokwan Camp, Mara River Lodge, Mara Concord Lodge.

The Future
With assistance from MMWCA and partner organizations, Lemek aims to progress in the coming years. The object is to promote the tourism product, sustainably promote natural and cultural resources in the area, equal benefit distribution and sharing and environmental conservation. The conservancy is strengthening its governance model and partnership between Landowners and tourism parties.

So far the conservancy has accomplished the following:
• The size of the board of directors has been trimmed down to 15 from a bloated 60 members
• Board members have been undergone training in roles and responsibilities of board and conflict resolution
• The conservancy governance and legal structures have been re-organized with office bearers democratically elected by conservancy members
• Mara Lemek Conservancy Limited has been duly registered as a company limited by guarantee and is tasked with management of the conservancy
• Infrastructure development
• Rangers trained in partnership with WWF and use of WILD

Where to stay in Lemek Conservancy:
Saruni Wild Camp, Naserian Mara Camp, Losokwan Camp, Mara River Lodge, Mara Concord Lodge.
ACHIEVEMENTS
WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR:

MMWCA works to strengthen the conservancy model, particularly governance and management of the conservancies and the generation of economic opportunities.

+ 46% TOTAL AREA
The number of conservancies almost doubled since 2014, expanding conservancy area from 970km² to 1420km², an area almost the same size as that of MMNR itself.

10,625 MORE LANDOWNERS
The number of landowners in the conservancies has increased from 3,000 in 2015 to 13,625 in 2017. This means land under wildlife conservation remains secured.

SECURED WILDLIFE CORRIDORS
MMWCA helped secure two major wildlife corridors supporting wildlife movements and healthy populations.

13 MORE TOURISM PARTNERS
From 2015 - 2017, tourism partners increased from 36 to 49, providing a much needed livelihood lifeline to landowner households.

100 MORE RANGERS
Since 2015, we’ve seen ranger numbers increase from 178 to 278.

57.6 KM ROADS REPAIR & MAINTENANCE
We’re repairing 61 km of roads that connect conservancies, helping to improve mobility for communities and tourists.

Conservancies are the solution for the Mara, and the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) is supporting them to grow and thrive.
Thank You, Our Partners
Welcome
To our Headquarters
Aitong, Maasai Mara

A glimpse of our new base in the Mara.