SUSTAINING MARA CONSERVANCIES DURING AND BEYOND COVID-19

The State of Conservancies in the Maasai Mara and How Partners are Coming Together to Ensure Conservancies, People, and Wildlife Survive the COVID-19 Crisis

Presentation: An MMWCA Live Zoom Webinar Moderated by Judy Kepher-Gona

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THE STATE OF CONSERVANCIES IN MARA AND EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON MARA CONSERVANCIES

Daniel Sopia
Chief Executive Officer - Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA)
MMWCA is securing the future of conservancies in the Mara. As the representative body for all Mara Conservancies we see a future where people, livestock, and wildlife prosper.

We are the Voice of the Mara
As a network of conservancies, our biggest challenge is that the Mara ecosystem has lost almost 60% of its wildlife over the last 40 years. Conservancies are helping to change that:

- The Mara Conservancies have doubled the size of land under conservation in the Mara.
- The Mara is home to approximately 25% of Kenya’s wildlife, of which 70% is found on conservancy land.
- 80% of international tourist who visit Kenya visit the Mara.
Effects of COVID-19 on Mara Conservancies

COVID19 → Tourism reduced to zero → Funds for conservancy operations decrease → More vulnerable conservancies

COVID19 → Tourism reduced to zero → Funds for landowner lease payments decrease → More vulnerable communities
MMWCA Mitigation Efforts

MMWCA is ensuring all Mara conservancies remain operational to conserve ecosystem health and the future of community benefits

• Maintain household income through the commitment of 50% payment of lease fees from the tourism partners
• Minimize land-use change
• Maintain positive perceptions of conservancies in the Mara as a solution to development and conservation challenges
• Strengthen collaborations and coordinate action between Mara stakeholders
Objective 1: Ensure that all Mara conservancies maintain basic operations and secure land and lease structures.

Objective 2: MMWCA remains intact and functional as an organization able to deliver on its mission.

Objective 3: Mara communities are well informed on the COVID-19 situation, and are able to respond proactively to support their health and livelihoods.
MANAGEMENT APPROACHES OF CONSERVANCIES DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Francis Nkoitoi
Conservancies Council Chairman - Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA)
Wildlife Conservancies in the Mara

• 15 operational conservancies in the greater Maasai Mara, covering 1,425 Km² and increasing

• The conservancies support the livelihoods of over 14,500 households, or an estimated 100,000 people.

• Lease fees paid to conservancy landowners totaled over US$ 5 million in 2019, demonstrating the potential for wildlife conservation to generate significant local economic returns.
COVID-19 Associated Risks in Conservancies

The risks to conservancies:

• Land sales
• Land conversion
• Illegal activities – poaching, charcoal, logging etc.
• Food security
• Other human and economic costs of reduced income
Conservancies During COVID-19 Crisis

Landowners are with conservancies during COVID19

In the face of zero tourism revenues, landowners have accepted a 50% reduction in lease payments made between May 2020-June 2021.
Importance of Partners Coming Together During the COVID-19 Crisis

We are working together to protect the Mara:

a) **Tourism Partners:** Tourism partners may pledge to continue to meet 50% of the lease payments for the 12 months between July 2020- June 2021, equal to about US$ 2.7M. They face significant losses, and most will need to seek additional investment to endure.

b) **Donors:** Donors, many of which have made significant investments in the Mara ecosystem and conservancies, are coming together to support the operations of maintenance of conservancies during COVID19.
c) **Government:** Discussions with the government are ongoing, led by the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association, to determine what role the government can play in supporting conservancies in the coming months.

d) **Partners:** Our local and regional partners are also working to address issues of food security, health, and livelihoods in partnership with MMWCA to ensure communities stay resilient through COVID19.
CONSERVATION TOURISM IN THE MARA DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Greg Monson
Founder of Kicheche Camps / Chameleon East Africa
Introduction: Conservation Tourism

The Mara Conservancies are defining sustainable tourism.

3 Pillars: Community – Tourism – Wildlife

Tourism partners in the Mara are advancing the caliber of tourism investment by demonstrating financial commitment to the environment and the community through a high-quality tourism product.

We are in it for the long haul.
Introduction: Conservation Tourism

Wildlife need secure habitat

Habitat depends on landowners

Tourism requires wildlife

Landowners require secure livelihoods

Revenue to support livelihoods is generated from tourism
Conservation Tourism in the Mara During the COVID-19 Crisis

• The Conservancy Lease Model
• Tourism Activity
• Cancelled Bookings
• Tourism Partner Costs
• Tourism Partners Commitment
• Tourism Partners Fundraising Initiatives

Tourism Partners are in this for the long run, they strongly believe this is the future of tourism allowing conservation and communities to flourish.
THANK YOU

Q&A

For the Greater Mara

@MaraConservancies  @ContactMMWCA  www.maraconservancies.org