

MAASAI MARA WILDLIFE CONSERVANCIES ASSOCIATION

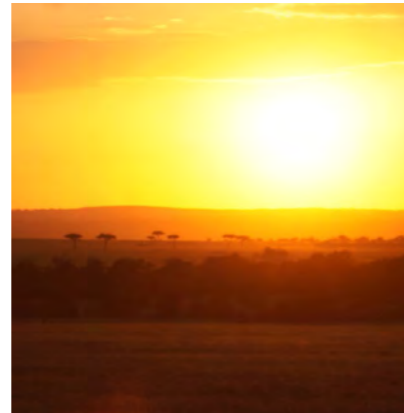
STRATEGIC PLAN
2026-2036



WILDLIFE CONSERVANCIES

For The Greater Mara





Abbreviations

- GMMEMP** - Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem Management plan
- CHP** - Community Health Partners
- HPF** - Human Practice Foundation
- GOK** - Government of Kenya
- WEF** - Women Enterprise Fund
- NGAAF** - National Government Affirmative Action Fund



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Letter from the Chief Executive Officer



Over the past decade, the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) has grown from an idea into a strong movement that unites landowners, communities, and partners around a shared vision. Together, we have expanded conservation areas, improved governance, strengthened institutions, created jobs, and enhanced livelihoods. These achievements were made possible through the commitment of our membership, staff, and the unwavering support of our partners, and others who have walked this journey with us.

In 2023, we celebrated 10 years of progress. It was a moment to reflect, to celebrate the resilience of our communities, and to acknowledge the lessons that have shaped us. We have learned that strong governance, clear land rights, and empowered leadership are the foundation of lasting conservation. We have seen that when landowners receive tangible benefits, when women and youth have a voice, and when conservation delivers tangible benefits, both people and wildlife thrive.

This 10-year strategy (2026 to 2036) is our response to those lessons. It focuses on what matters most to our members: strengthening governance, diversifying community livelihoods, securing conservation land, and ensuring long-term financial sustainability. It is also about building deeper, longer-term partnerships that bring predictable investment into the Mara and create lasting impact.

Looking ahead, I am excited by what the next decade holds. We are entering a new chapter defined by innovation, collaboration, and self-reliance. Our conservancies are charting their own course toward sustainability. We are exploring new financing models beyond tourism, and we are deepening partnerships that link conservation with enterprise, equity, and opportunity.

To all our members, board, staff, and partners, thank you for your trust and commitment. This strategy belongs to all of us. It is a promise to protect the Mara, uplift its people, and ensure that this remarkable landscape continues to inspire Kenya and the world for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Sopia'.

Daniel Sopia,
CEO, MMWCA

Introduction

At the heart of Kenya's natural heritage lies the Maasai Mara, an awe-inspiring landscape where wildlife roams freely across vast savannahs, and where communities and nature have coexisted for generations. This iconic ecosystem, home to the Maasai people and 25 percent of Kenya's wildlife, including the world-famous wildebeest migration, is not only a global symbol of biodiversity but also a living example of harmony between humans and wildlife.

Yet the future of the Maasai Mara is far from guaranteed. Rising pressures on land and resources mean that the survival of this ecosystem depends on proactive stewardship, ensuring its protection for the communities who call it home and the wildlife it shelters.

Over the past two decades, community conservancies, locally led models that protect habitat while generating real economic value for landowners, have emerged as a powerful solution to the rising pressure on land and resources. This approach is vital, as nearly two thirds of Kenya's remaining wildlife now lives outside national parks.

Founded in 2013, the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association was born from a shared vision: to unite community efforts, amplify conservation impact, and ensure that both people and nature not only survive but thrive. What began as a coalition of committed landowners and conservation champions has grown into a powerful, landscape level movement representing 25 conservancies and thousands of landowners across the Greater Mara. MMWCA has led the transformation of grassroots conservation, strengthening governance, championing inclusivity, and guiding conservancies through complex social, environmental, and economic challenges.



Nowhere is this model more alive than in the Greater Maasai Mara. Here, Maasai landowners, tourism investors, and conservation partners have united to create 25 conservancies spanning over 180,000 hectares around the Maasai Mara National Reserve. United under the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA), these conservancies represent a bold, collective commitment to stewarding the land.

MMWCA brings together more than 17,000 landowners, including women and youth, with 52 tourism partners. These tourism partners collectively invest over US\$7million annually in lease payments for access to community land and wildlife, directly supporting community prosperity.

The conservancies generate over 3,200 tourism jobs, employ over 510 community rangers, and protect 83 percent of the Mara's wildlife. Since the inception of conservancies in the Mara, they have more than doubled the area under community-led conservation in the Mara, setting a new global standard for people-centered conservation.

Executive Summary

The Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) has built on more than a decade of experience to strengthen and scale community-led conservation across the Mara. This 10-year strategy responds to growing ecological and socio-economic pressures while positioning conservancies as critical platforms for biodiversity protection, climate resilience, and community development.

Despite notable progress, conservancies face internal challenges of weak governance, limited capacity, and insufficient structures that constrain their full potential. These vulnerabilities, coupled with fragmented land use, declining wildlife populations, and uneven economic development, place increasing pressure on communities to turn to alternative, less sustainable land uses. At the landscape level, inconsistent policy implementation, limited resources, and climate change further intensify threats to ecosystems and livelihoods. Without coordinated investment, policy implementation, and stronger institutional support, the Mara risks losing critical habitats, connectivity, and community trust.

MMWCA's strategy is rooted in lessons learned and in its mandate to champion locally led conservation. It focuses on building resilience, deepening impact, and safeguarding the Mara's ecosystems by advancing community-driven models that align conservation with sustainable development. At the heart of this strategy is a commitment to inclusive governance, data-driven decision-making, and strategic partnerships that maximize collective impact.

This 10-year strategy sets our goals:

- 1. Governance and resilience of conservancies strengthened** - MMWCA will support conservancies to become legally compliant, inclusive, and transparent institutions. Through capacity building, leadership training, and conflict resolution frameworks, MMWCA will empower conservancies to manage resources sustainably and equitably.
- 2. Land for conservation expanded and secured** - MMWCA will facilitate the creation of new conservancies and ecological corridors by mapping critical habitats, negotiating land leases, and formalizing conservation agreements. This will ensure long-term protection of wildlife and connectivity across the Mara landscape.
- 3. Community livelihoods enhanced with partnerships and targeted support** - MMWCA will act as a convenor, connecting conservancies with partners to deliver essential services (e.g., health, education, water) and create employment opportunities for women and youth. By facilitating vocational training and enterprise development, MMWCA ensures conservation delivers tangible benefits to communities and ensures conservation directly improves local well-being.
- 4. Conservancy revenue increased** - To reduce dependency on tourism and donor funding, MMWCA will promote alternative conservation-friendly enterprises such as carbon finance, livestock integration, and sustainable tourism. It will also strengthen financial systems and link conservancies with investors and partners.
- 5. Policy and recognition of conservancies strengthened** - MMWCA will lead advocacy efforts to strengthen legal recognition and policy alignment for conservancies. By coordinating multi-stakeholder platforms and engaging government agencies, MMWCA will ensure conservancies are formally recognized, supported, and integrated into national and county planning frameworks.

By implementing this strategy, MMWCA will help secure a resilient Mara where biodiversity thrives alongside empowered communities. Conservancies will develop stronger governance, greater financial sustainability, as well as gain recognition as a cornerstone of Kenya's conservation and development agenda. In doing so, MMWCA will ensure that for generations to come the Mara remains a global symbol of ecological integrity, cultural heritage, and shared prosperity. This strategy is not just a roadmap—it is a collective promise to protect the Mara, uplift its people, and inspire future generations.

Our History

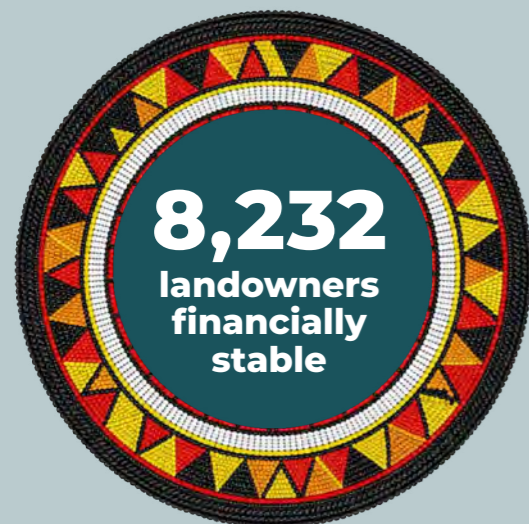
2013	MMWCA is formally established as a membership organization to support the development of, and spearhead coordination among the conservancies and wide range of key stakeholders in the Mara.
2014	With seed funding from the Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT), the first Annual General Meeting of MMWCA is held, with Daniel Sopia elected as Conservancies Chair and Lars Lindkvist as Board Chair.
2014	MMWCA management team is established after receiving grants from Asilia Giving and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).
2015	USAID funds TNC and MMWCA to deliver a three-year Mara Conservancies development program. The annual budget increases from USD 150,000 to 1.5 million, and staff numbers increase from three to 10 within one year.
2015	Stakeholders, including county government, local non-governmental organizations, KWS, community members and academics, come together to create the Cultural and Natural Resource Conservation Action Plan of the greater Mara Ecosystem. The Plan responds to the need to undertake integrated planning across the different conservancies and conservation areas neighboring the Maasai Mara National Reserve.
2017	Launch of MMWCA first strategic plan, 2017- 2020.
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MMWCA Headquarters is established in Aitong town, Maasai Mara. • Mapping of the Greater Mara undertaken and critical wildlife habitat identified for establishment of additional conservation areas, buffers, and corridors. • The Pardamat Conservation Area (PCA) is set up to counter rising threats, including unplanned development and settlements, as well as fencing, which threatens to undermine the stability of the ecosystem.
2018	MMWCA diversifies its funding base to 16 donors, increasing its operating fund to USD 3.8 million.

2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservancies mobilize to renew lease agreements for 25 years, a significant achievement as landowners commit to conservation • The first “State of the Mara Conservancies” report, a biennial publication aimed at highlighting the work of MMWCA, is produced.
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A COVID-19 mitigation strategy is developed, and conservancies are supported to implement governance improvement plans to enhance conservancy oversight during their COVID response. • MMWCA is a key player in forming the One Mara Research Hub – a collaboration of key conservation research stakeholders in the Greater Mara Ecosystem coordinating research for conservation interventions.
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of MMWCA's second Strategic Plan - Overcoming crisis and optimizing opportunities for a prosperous future. • The Narok County Government and MMWCA signs a two-year agreement that accelerates conservation efforts.
2022	Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem Management plan is launched - The GMMEMP provides a framework that guides activities within the ecosystem by outlining a zoning scheme and management actions to address threats.
2023	Celebrating 10 years of MMWCA.
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with Narok County Government, KTB exhibited One Mara Brand at the Magical Kenya Tourism Expo in New York • Participated in the UN Commission on status of women in New York showcasing MMWCA's work. • MMWCA legal status changed to Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) - this enhances MMWCA's legal protection, access to funding, governance, and long-term continuity.
2025	One Mara Carbon Project established.

12 years of Achievements

CONSERVATION

- Expanded area conservation from eight conservancies in 2015 (90,000 ha) to 25 in 2025, securing over 180,000+ hectares for wildlife and livestock.
- Strengthened governance and legal compliance by registering 13 new conservancies as legal entities and implementing gazetted management plans to support accountable, sustainable biodiversity management.
- Achieved stable keystone species populations, e.g. lions (18 per 100kms) and the re-emergence of rare and endangered species such as black rhinos and African wild dogs.



LIVELIHOODS

- 8,232 landowners have secured financial stability through land leases, including the ability to access formal loans using leases agreements as collateral.
- MMWCA mobilized USD 1.4 million to support conservancy operations, secured a 50% lease payment relief, and facilitated USD 850,000 in low-interest loans to sustain tourism partners during COVID 19 pandemic.
- Established six enterprises, such as bee keeping and beadwork for women and youth to boost economic resilience and inclusive growth.
- Launched the One Mara Carbon Project to generate sustainable income across 25 conservancies, expected to benefit approximately 17,000 households upon onboarding all conservancies.
- 3,710 people employed in conservancies and camps, supporting local livelihoods.

WOMEN AND YOUTH

- 70 (14%) female rangers recruited to advance gender inclusivity and create meaningful employment opportunities.
- 75+ youth trained through the Wildlife Tourism College (WTC), creating opportunities for sustainable income and building careers in conservation.
- 2,257 individuals reached through vocational training, unlocking employment pathways and empowering local communities.
- Created a Landscape Child Protection Policy to uphold rights and protect vulnerable groups in conservation zones.



GOVERNANCE

- Registered 13 conservancies as legal entities, ensuring their legal compliance.
- 90% gender compliance achieved in conservancy governance, meeting the two-thirds gender rule across the landscape.
- Transparency in board transitions has improved with six conservancies having had successful transitions, leading to better functioning boards.
- Managed and helped resolve conflict in four conservancies, promoting successful governance.
- Honored lease payments with agreed increments annually, increased length of leases from short term five years to long term - 25 years.
- Management plans in place in all developed conservancies, guiding their running and effectiveness.



Understanding our Context

The Mara region is shaped by a complex interplay of political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal forces. Key threats such as habitat fragmentation, climate shocks, declining wildlife populations, and weak governance undermine ecological and social resilience. However, emerging opportunities in climate finance, technological innovation, and policy reform present new pathways for progress. MMWCA is strategically positioned to leverage these opportunities and mitigate risks by championing community-led conservation and strengthening conservancies as locally rooted models for sustainable development.

External Context

Political

Conservancies occupy 1,404 sq km of land in Narok County and are shaped by shifting political transitions. Electoral cycles often disrupt governance, but recent political goodwill has fostered an enabling environment for conservation. The proposed Conservancies Bill's success depends on sustained support from the local and national Government. Global political shifts, such as changes in international aid policies, or climate commitments, affect how resources are mobilized and which conservation priorities receive attention and funding in the Mara. MMWCA will continue engaging in policy dialogue, advocating for inclusive governance, and supporting legislation that strengthens conservancies as community-led development models.

Environmental

The Mara is globally significant for its biodiversity and the Great Migration, but faces severe pressures from land use change, livestock overgrazing, climate variability, erosion, poor waste management, and habitat fragmentation. High livestock densities strain ecosystems, while fencing and settlement disrupt wildlife corridors, intensifying conflict. MMWCA aims to secure and expand land under conservation management, restore degraded habitats, protect corridors, and

balance livelihoods with ecological integrity for long-term sustainability.

Social

The Maasai community anchors the Mara's cultural and social fabric, with pastoralism being central to identity, but under strain from land fragmentation, climate pressures, and economic shifts. Human-wildlife conflict, rising population, and youth unemployment deepen vulnerabilities. Women and youth remain underrepresented in leadership despite their crucial role in sustainability. Land ownership patterns shape access and participation. MMWCA will promote inclusive, culturally grounded strategies that empower women and youth while strengthening community resilience.

Technological

Technology supports conservation through tools such as EarthRanger, GPS tracking, camera traps, and mobile monitoring. These improve data collection and decision-making but face barriers of cost, uneven uptake, and limited technical capacity. Building local skills and trust in data use is essential. MMWCA will strengthen community access to conservation technologies and ensure data-driven approaches reflect local priorities.



Economic

Tourism and livestock remain the backbone of the Mara economy, yet benefits are unevenly distributed, and livestock is increasingly vulnerable to droughts. In response, communities are diversifying into climate-resilient livelihoods, such as exploring climate finance opportunities. Despite this progress, revenue diversification, market access, and ecosystem service monetization are still limited. At the same time, the global funding landscape is shifting, traditional donor support is declining while climate finance, private sector investment, and blended finance mechanisms are gaining traction. Strengthening local resilience will therefore require inclusive benefit-sharing, innovative financing models, and targeted investment. MMWCA will build strategic partnerships that connect conservation to sustainable, community-driven economic opportunities and leverage emerging funding streams to support long-term impact.

Legal

Conservation in the Mara has evolved through reforms, notably the 2013 Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, which recognized conservancies. Narok's spatial plan provides a legal basis for zonation, but enforcement is weak. Benefit-sharing and governance frameworks exist but are inconsistently applied. New climate legislation introduces stricter requirements for carbon projects. MMWCA, alongside KWCA, will advocate for enabling county and national legal frameworks that strengthen conservancy growth, governance, and access to funding.

Organizational Strengths

Strong leadership and a resilient team: Over the past decade, MMWCA has been guided by the steady hand of visionary leadership and the dedication of a committed team. Through major disruptions including the COVID-19 pandemic and shifts in funding sources, the organization demonstrated adaptability, creativity, and an unwavering focus on its mission. This legacy of resilience and impact positions MMWCA to confidently manage future challenges and seize emerging opportunities.

Locally rooted and community-driven: MMWCA is locally rooted and deeply representative of the communities it serves. Its collective vision, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the Mara communities have enabled the organization to navigate both triumphs and challenges, earning trust and legitimacy across the landscape.

Convening power and strong coordination in the landscape: Amidst a complex ecosystem of diverse actors and interests,

MMWCA has distinguished itself as the trusted organization for collaboration. It effectively aligns conservation and development efforts, while stewarding strong, strategic relationships with partners, stakeholders, and both County and National Government — reinforcing its leadership role across the Mara.

Trusted leadership in the conservation landscape: MMWCA has built a respected reputation as a leading community conservancy association, widely recognized for its inclusive governance, community empowerment, and landscape-level collaboration. Its model has inspired other associations across Kenya and beyond, serving as a source of learning and practical guidance. This recognition reflects not only the impact of its conservation efforts, but also the deep trust it has cultivated with communities, partners, and peers. MMWCA's credibility is a strategic asset that strengthens its convening power, influence, and ability to scale solutions across the region.



Organizational Challenges

Capacity challenges: MMWCA is at a pivotal moment of growth, expanding into new geographic areas and managing a broader, more complex portfolio of conservancies at various stages of development. However, its current operational capacity is not yet fully aligned with this scope or scale. The team is overstretched, and critical functions such as grant development, policy formulation, conflict resolution, and donor compliance are progressing more slowly. Other challenges include staff turnover rates and ability to offer competitive salary and work life balance to retain talent. These gaps have led to delays in implementation and procurement, affecting the momentum of high-impact programs. Moreover, internal processes shaped by donor protocols, while required, can inadvertently create bottlenecks. Addressing these capacity constraints through targeted support will unlock greater efficiency, accelerate delivery, and strengthen MMWCA's ability to meet its ambitious mandate.

Telling the MMWCA success story: One of MMWCA's most under-used assets is its powerful story of growth, resilience, and impact. From humble beginnings to becoming one of the most respected community conservancy associations in the region, MMWCA and the Mara conservancies embody what is possible when local leadership, community-driven conservation, and strategic partnerships come together. This journey is not just inspiring, it is a compelling case study for what works in landscape-level, community-led conservation.

Misaligned interests and expectations among stakeholders: As MMWCA grows in influence and success, it faces increasing pressure to balance the diverse and often conflicting interests of its stakeholders. Tourism operators, local communities, government agencies, and conservation partners each bring their own priorities, visions, and expectations to the table. These differing priorities create friction, particularly between tourism players focused on profit and communities seeking tangible benefits and greater inclusion. Meanwhile, MMWCA's rising profile has led to heightened expectations from the community, who now

look to the organization not just for conservation leadership, but also for broader socio-economic support. Navigating these tensions while staying true to its mission requires strategic clarity, inclusive dialogue, and a shared vision that unites all actors.

Rigid conservancy model limits expansion into diverse conservation areas: MMWCA's current conservancy model is anchored in community-private partnerships and has delivered tangible results over the years. However, its replication in new regions is constrained by a lack of flexibility. The model does not sufficiently account for differences in land size, fragmentation, and competing land use patterns. As expansion moves further from core tourism zones, the attractiveness to tourism investors declines, while alternative land uses such as agriculture and settlement become more appealing. Applying the same approach across vastly different landscapes risks undermining the viability of new conservancies and slowing the momentum of conservation efforts. A shift in thinking is needed to develop adaptable models that reflect local realities and unlock broader participation.

Funding and fundraising: A core challenge facing MMWCA is its heavy reliance on donor funding to sustain operations, implement programs, and support member conservancies. While donor support has been instrumental in enabling MMWCA's growth and impact to date, this dependency presents long-term risks to the organization's stability and strategic autonomy. The fundraising environment has also become increasingly competitive, with shifts in donor priorities, economic pressures, and a growing number of conservation initiatives seeking support. This has made it more difficult to secure predictable, long-term funding that allows for flexible planning and sustained community engagement. Moreover, the organization's current fundraising capacity, both in terms of human resources and technical expertise, remains limited.

Building more sustainable and diversified funding streams will be critical, whether through private philanthropy, government engagement, conservation enterprises, or local co-investment.

Opportunities

Youth engagement: The future of the Mara's conservation lies with its youth. By actively involving young people in education, leadership, and livelihood opportunities, MMWCA can build a new generation of conservation champions and secure long-term stewardship of the landscape.

Alternative income and livelihood opportunities: For the conservancies in the Mara to be successful the lease payments should be just one of many benefits derived from conservation management. Other forms of income and access to services and better livelihoods complement the work of the conservancies.

Investing more in data, science, and research: MMWCA needs more research to inform ideas and support improvement in the management of conservancies. Research policy and priorities are required to better understand conservation's impact on the ground. Existing data and research needs to be documented clearly and shared widely. There is a Mara story about innovations and learnings to be told. There is an opportunity for MMWCA to take the lead in coordinating and implementing the One-Mara Research Hub.

Threats

Perceived political alignment: MMWCA's collaboration with government entities through support for the government of the day is essential for advancing policy reforms, securing public resources, and scaling conservation impact. However, in politically complex environments, such engagement may be misinterpreted as partisan alignment. This poses a reputational risk, potentially eroding stakeholder trust and compromising MMWCA's position as a neutral and member driven institution.

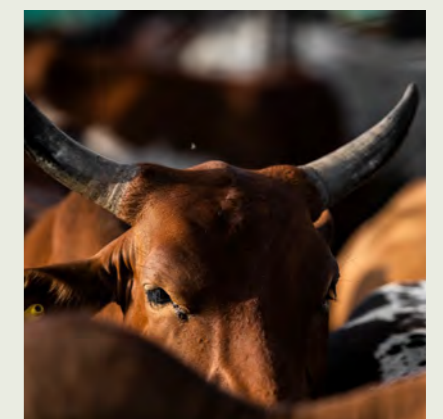
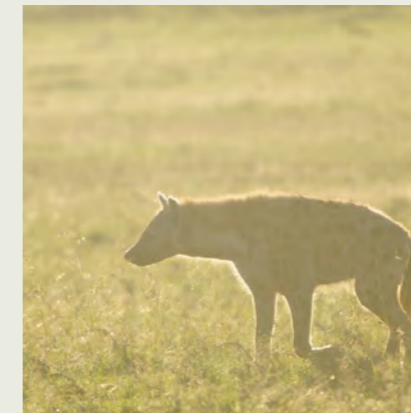
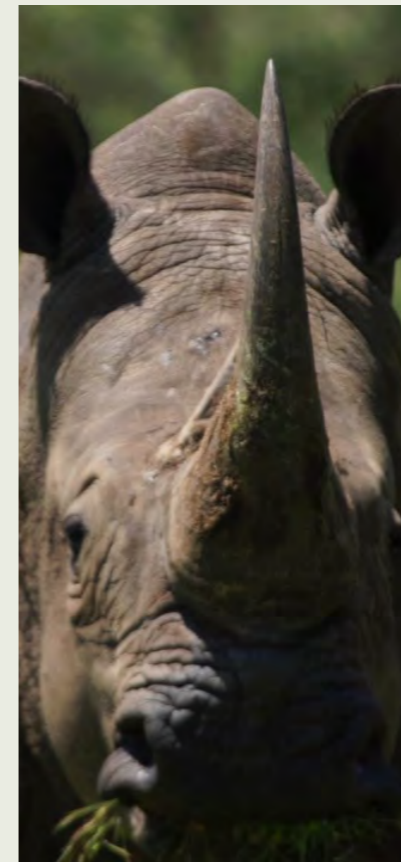
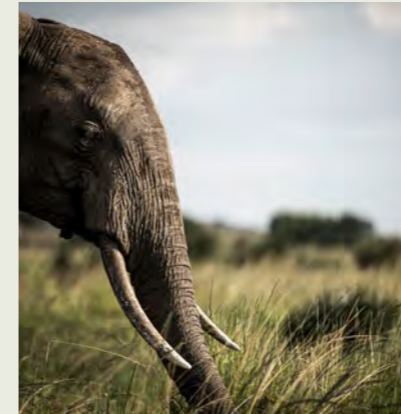
Land subdivision, fencing, and changing land use: Rapid land subdivision, fencing, and settlement expansion are fragmenting the Mara's once-continuous landscapes, disrupting wildlife corridors, grazing systems, and ecological balance. Driven by population growth and rising demand for private land use, these changes undermine

Enabling and aligned legal and policy environment: MMWCA's work will be more effective if key wildlife and conservancy policies in Kenya are strengthened and aligned. For example, the Kenya Land Spatial Plan, which guides land use and planning, needs stronger integration with conservation priorities. In addition, advocacy can play an important role in addressing the issue of fencing within conservancies, since laws governing this already exist but are not consistently applied.

Community ownership and telling their success story: While MMWCA has made significant strides in external visibility, opportunity remains to amplify the voices of landowners and community members themselves, and to ensure that they are at the heart of the conservation narrative. When they are able to share their experiences in their own words and languages it becomes far more powerful and relatable to other potential conservancy members, local stakeholders, and even funders.

traditional land systems and make it increasingly difficult to persuade landowners to keep land open for conservation. While conservancies offer long-term benefits, short-term pressures often push landowners toward immediate, individual gains — threatening the future of the Mara's interconnected ecosystem.

Climate change and weather variability: The Mara ecosystem is increasingly affected by unpredictable weather, including reduced rainfall, rising temperatures, and more frequent droughts. These climatic changes are altering natural cycles, drying up rivers and wetlands, and heightening competition for limited water and grazing resources between livestock and wildlife. This has led to decreased livestock productivity, more frequent disease outbreaks, and a rise in human-wildlife conflict. Wildlife is also under pressure, with changes in migration routes and shrinking habitats contributing to a decline in biodiversity. These environmental stresses threaten tourism, one of the region's primary economic sectors.



What Guides Us

Our Strategy

This strategy draws on over a decade of experience to strengthen and scale conservancies across the Mara. In the face of a shifting global landscape, it outlines the key actions MMWCA must lead to ensure resilience, deepen impact, and safeguard the Mara's ecosystems. At its core is a commitment to inclusive governance and strategic partnership for a thriving, sustainable conservancy model.

Problems to Address

Conservancy challenge

Conservancies have emerged as important platforms for habitat protection, climate resilience, and community benefit. However, their potential is constrained by limited capacity, insufficient funding, and lack of harmonized data and coordinated investment. Without strategic collaboration and targeted support, the Mara's ecological and socio-economic systems will continue to deteriorate. While significant progress has been made, some conservancies across the Mara landscape continue to face structural and operational challenges, such as strong governance and conflict resolution, that limit their full potential in safeguarding land, supporting livelihoods, and conserving wildlife.

Landscape level problems

The Mara landscape is under increasing pressure from land fragmentation as communal lands are subdivided and converted for agriculture, settlement, and speculative development. This trend is leading to the loss of critical wildlife habitats and migration corridors, contributing to a decline in wildlife populations and weakening the ecological integrity of the region. At the same time, local communities are grappling with limited income generating opportunities, insecure land tenure, and inadequate access to



Vision
A united Mara ecosystem where communities and wildlife live in harmony, sustaining nature, culture, and shared prosperity for generations to come.

Mission
Grow and strengthen Mara conservancies so that wildlife and livelihoods can thrive.

Impact statement
To advance community-led conservation that secures biodiversity and strengthens sustainable livelihoods in the Mara.

essential services such as education, health, and infrastructure. These socio-economic challenges are driving unsustainable land use practices that further degrade the environment and threaten long term community wellbeing.

Policy Problems

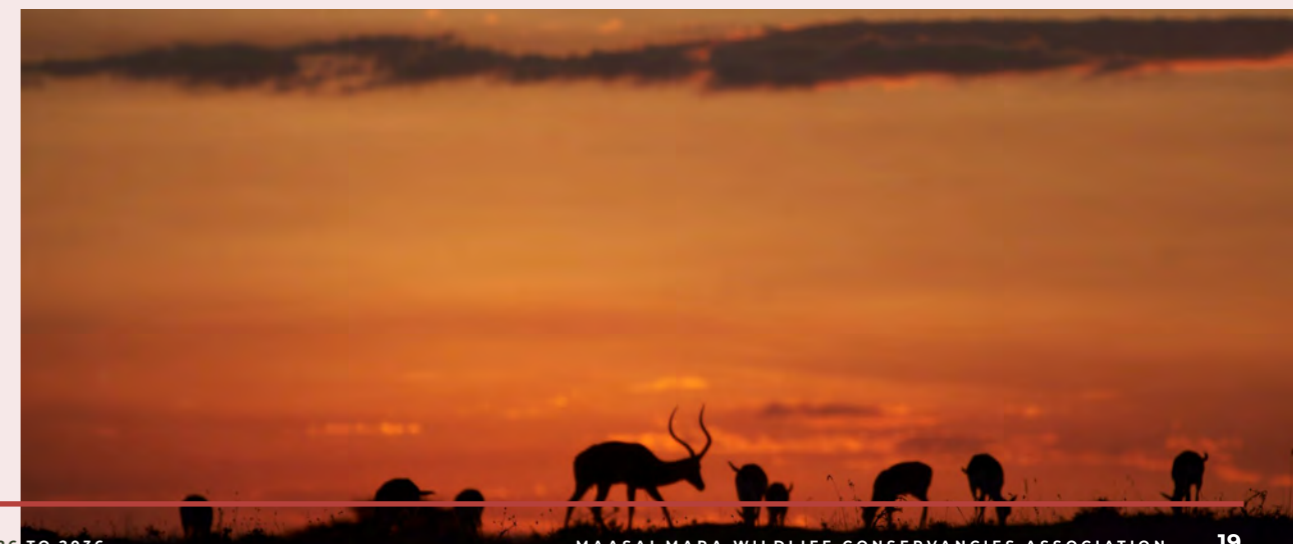
While the national and Narok County government have established strong policy frameworks including the Wildlife Act 2016, Greater Mara Management Ecosystem and Spatial Plans, implementation remains inconsistent due to limited resources, fragmented coordination, and operational constraints.

Value proposition

- **Unites and represents conservancies:** MMWCA represents 25+ member conservancies across the Greater Mara, amplifying their collective voice in policy, advocacy, and engagement with government, private sector, and donors.
- **Convenor of stakeholders and partners:** MMWCA brings together diverse actors to collaborate, align priorities, and strengthen collective action for the Mara.
- **Facilitator of partnerships:** MMWCA catalyzes strategic alliances that mobilize resources and expertise to deliver sustainable conservation and livelihood impact.
- **Innovator for thriving conservancies:** MMWCA drives innovation, capacity building, and resilience, enabling conservancies to grow as strong community-led development models

MMWCA Values

1. **Culture** - Our Maasai culture is central to who we are. All we do in the Mara starts from the foundation of honoring the Maasai people for whom the region is named. Respecting and promoting culture, which has created an ecosystem that is compatible with wildlife conservation and tourism, anchors our work.
2. **Teamwork** - Our team is our greatest asset. We are passionate about the Mara landscape and have diverse and complementary skill sets, which strengthen our operations. We believe that by working together we can achieve more.
3. **Trusted Partner** - Our work is based on meaningful and inclusive participation, and engagement with our partners and stakeholders in the ecosystem. We know that creating impact requires building trust and nurturing partnerships through open communication and transparency.
4. **Accountability** - We hold ourselves to high standards, continuously striving for improvement in the way we work and by promoting accountability; for ourselves, our organization, and the conservancies we serve.
5. **Making a Difference** - We believe in a bright future for the Mara ecosystem. At our core, we make every decision with the fervent commitment to deliver positive, sustainable results for the Maasai Mara conservancies.



Theory of change

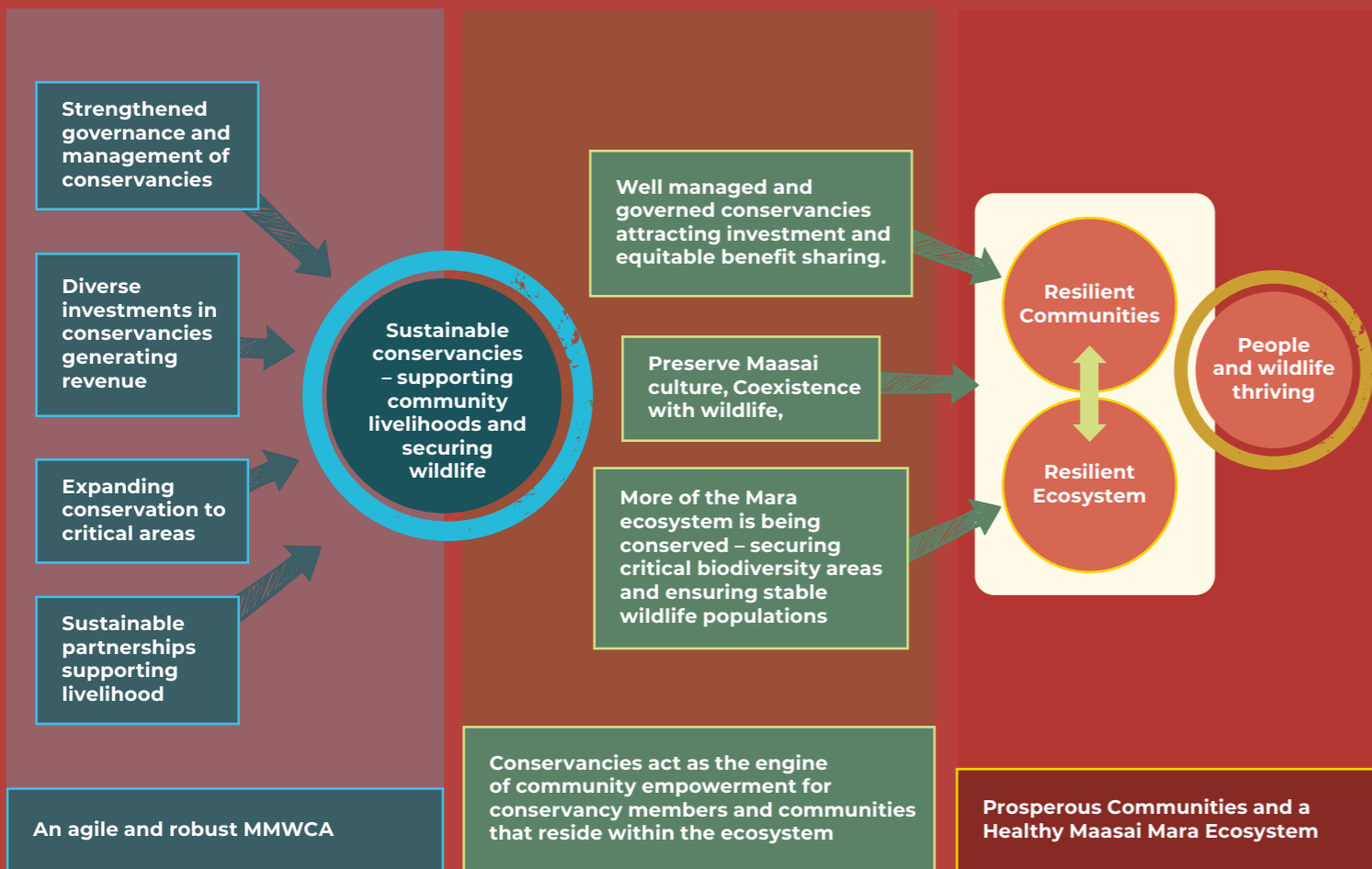
If the Mara conservancies are strengthened with effective governance and management, plus diversified revenue streams, if land for conservation is secured and community livelihoods are improved, and if supportive policies and coordinated partnerships are enhanced at the landscape level, then conservancies will become more resilient, attract sustainable investment, safeguard wildlife habitats and migration corridors, conserve biodiversity and

deliver tangible socio-economic benefits to local communities.

Thus, the Mara ecosystem will be conserved for future generations as a place where communities and wildlife thrive in harmony, sustaining nature, culture, with shared prosperity; a vibrant and unified Greater Mara that delivers lasting benefits for both people and wildlife.

The pursuit of this theory of change is based on the following key assumptions and acknowledgement of the following risks

An Enabling Environment For Conservancies



Key Assumptions	Risks	Mitigation Measures
Political stability and sustained commitment from county and national governments to conservation policies and enforcement.	Policy and governance shifts could weaken conservation if political priorities, leadership, or legislation change.	Strengthen advocacy and coordination with county and national governments through formal MOUs, joint policy forums, and active participation in policy review processes to safeguard conservancy interests.
Current conservancy land, wildlife habitats, and ecological corridors remain intact and resilient to climate change impacts.	Habitat loss and degradation may fragment key ecosystems and wildlife corridors due to land subdivision, overgrazing, or infrastructure development.	Support land-use planning agreements, promote conservation easements, and negotiate land leases with communities and government to secure corridors and regulate land conversion.
Stable and diversified revenue streams available, including tourism, partnerships, and other income sources, to support conservancy operations and provide incentives to landowners.	Financial volatility could threaten conservancies that rely heavily on tourism or single funding sources.	Diversify revenue streams through carbon finance, endowments, and sustainable enterprises; establish reserve funds and long-term financing agreements with partners.
Communities remain committed to conservation as a viable land use option when benefits are fair, reliable, and visible.	Community disengagement may reduce conservation outcomes if changing priorities or benefit-sharing arrangements weaken local support.	Maintain clear benefit-sharing frameworks and MOUs with landowners and community groups to define rights, responsibilities, and incentives; hold regular consultations to sustain trust and participation.
Continued community support and cultural values, such as keeping livestock and grazing, that align with conservation goals.	Weakening of community conservation values due to social change or competing land uses.	Strengthen community outreach, education, and awareness programs to reinforce conservation values and promote intergenerational stewardship.

Goals and Objectives

MMWCA's strategy is rooted in its mandate and lessons learned, with a commitment to locally led conservation, strong governance, and equitable partnerships. Guided by this, our goal is to advance community-led conservation that secures biodiversity and enhances sustainable livelihoods in the Mara.

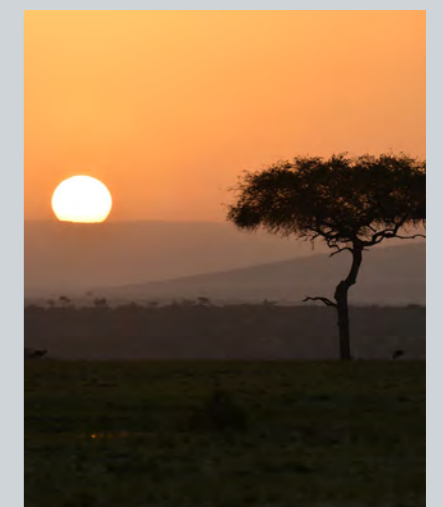
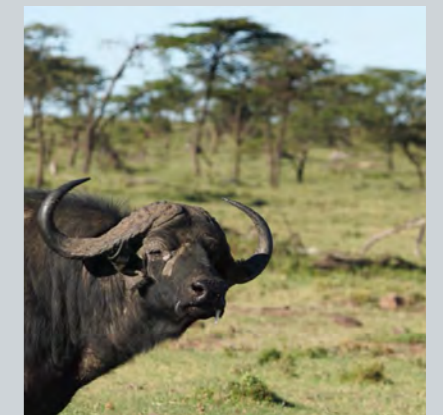
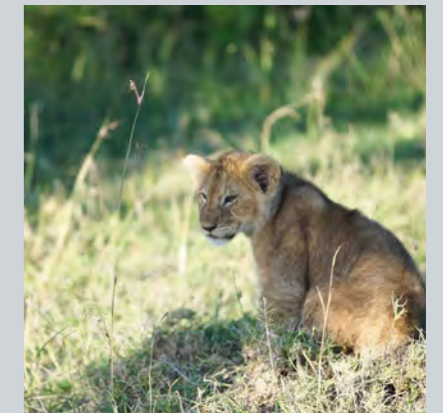
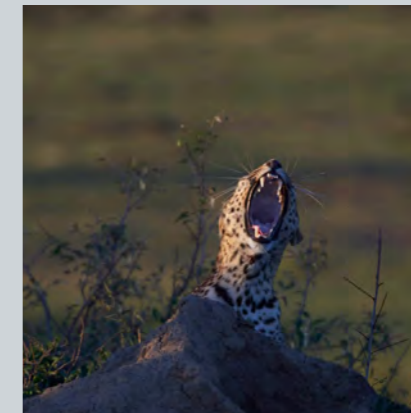
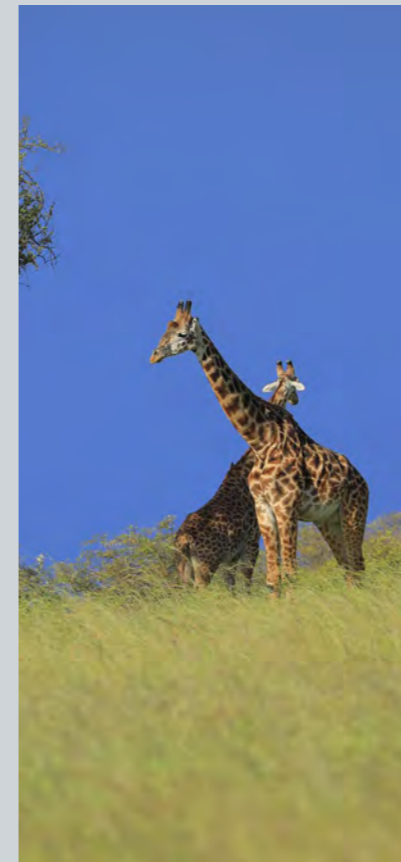
By putting communities at the center of conservation, MMWCA seeks to safeguard biodiversity while ensuring that local people derive tangible benefits from conservation efforts. Conservancies, as community-owned institutions, provide a platform where wildlife protection and sustainable development can reinforce one another. Each of the goals outlined below help us achieve this and reach our mission.

Success will be measured in three key ways:

- % of priority wildlife species e.g. Lions, with stable or increasing populations
- Total hectares of land under conservation across the Mara landscape
- % of households reporting improved livelihoods from conservation-linked activities

To drive this forward, MMWCA will focus on these five goals:

1. Strengthened governance and resilience of conservancies.
2. Expanded and secured land for conservation.
3. Conservancy revenue increased by diversifying income streams and growing sustainable tourism.
4. Community livelihoods improved through strategic partnerships.
5. Mara conservancies are secured and strengthened by enabling policies.





GOAL: Strengthened governance and resilience of Mara conservancies

Stronger conservancies are more sustainable and deliver greater environmental and community benefits. With robust governance systems, transparent leadership, and inclusive decision-making, conservancies will evolve into resilient institutions capable of driving both conservation and local development. This goal focuses on strengthening consistency, accountability, and long-term planning in management, empowering landowners, communities, and partners with the tools and confidence to steward natural resources sustainably.

As a catalyst for thriving conservancies, MMWCA will support the continuous improvement of governance and institutional capacity, ensuring that conservancies are well-managed, equitable, and adaptive to changing social, political, and climatic conditions. Over time, MMWCA's role will evolve from direct support to facilitation and mentorship as conservancies become more mature and self-sufficient. In order to keep MMWCA's resource needs at manageable levels, conservancies must assume more operational independence over time.

A well-governed conservancy

- An inclusive legal entity, representing women and youth
- Functional, accountable and effective board, meeting regularly to make strategic decisions
- Transparent, timely communication with members on conservancy matters
- Clear, transparent structures and mechanisms to address and mitigate conflicts
- Equity and equality in conservancy leadership, decision making and governance
- Conservancies comply to rules and regulations, e.g. management plans, by-laws

Objectives

Strengthen conservancy legal entities and promote compliance

MMWCA will work with conservancies to formalize legal status, update constitutions, and align governance structures with national and county regulations. MMWCA will also provide targeted capacity-building workshops for boards and management.

- **Indicator of success:** 100% of established conservancies legally registered & compliant by 2036

Strengthen the governance practices of conservancies

MMWCA will support conservancies to design governance structures that include women, youth, and marginalized groups. It will provide mentorship, leadership training, and governance toolkits to strengthen accountability and stakeholder participation.

- **Indicator of success:** 80% of established conservancies have inclusive leadership by 2036

Build effective management systems

MMWCA will assist conservancies to implement standardized management protocols covering operations, financial and sustainability, and natural resource stewardship. It will also establish conflict resolution frameworks and grievance mechanisms for disputes over land, resources, and benefits. As well as develop and enhance monitoring and evaluation for wildlife/biodiversity management.

- **Indicator of success 1:** 100% of reported disputes resolved through established conflict resolution mechanisms by 2036
- **Indicator of success 2:** 80% of conservancies with functional financial management systems by 2036



GOAL: Expanded and secured land for conservation

Rooted in Maasai culture and traditional stewardship of land and wildlife, the Mara conservancies play a vital role in protecting key habitats and maintaining ecological connectivity across the landscape. By securing and managing these areas, conservancies safeguard wildlife populations, sustain healthy ecosystems, and preserve the cultural heritage of grazing management, that has long valued coexistence between people, livestock, and wildlife.

MMWCA brings together communities, government, and conservation partners to align efforts that strengthen habitat protection, reduce human-wildlife conflict, and prevent biodiversity loss. Connectivity within and between conservancies is essential for wide-ranging species and ecosystem resilience. By linking conservancies through secured corridors and contiguous conservation areas, MMWCA in partnership with communities, helps restore ecological integrity, enable species movement, and enhances the landscape's capacity to adapt to climate variability and environmental pressures.

Conservancy or corridor?

A wildlife conservancy is a community-owned land area managed for conservation, while a wildlife corridor is a specific, narrow strip of habitat linking two larger protected areas to facilitate animal movement. Conservancies serve as habitats and breeding grounds, whereas corridors prevent habitat isolation and increase connectivity between conservancies.

Objectives

Increase number of conservancies

MMWCA will work with communities to identify and potentially establish new conservancies in the Greater Mara ecosystem, by mapping critical areas for conservation and conducting community sensitization and awareness on the benefits of conservancies. This will expand formal community-led conservation areas and strengthen local stewardship of wildlife and natural resources.

- **Indicator of success 1:** Number of conservancies increased from 25 to 35 by 2036
- **Indicator of success 2:** 100,000 hectares of new area brought under conservation by 2036

Secure land leases and conservation agreements for new conservation areas

MMWCA will facilitate the negotiation and formalization of land leases and conservation agreements with landowners and communities, ensuring secure, long-term commitments to conservation. These agreements will protect critical habitats, support wildlife movement, and provide communities with sustainable benefits from conservation.

- **Indicator of success 1:** 25 of the 35 conservancies with land leases or conservation agreements signed by 2036

Protect and manage critical wildlife corridors and dispersal areas

MMWCA will map and identify priority habitats and wildlife corridors, develop clear management plans, and mobilize resources from the County Government-supported Conservancies Fund to finance their establishment. Legal entities will be created to manage the corridors; long-term leases will be secured to ensure sustained protection and connectivity across the Mara landscape.

- **Indicator of success 1:** Establish 11 wildlife corridors by 2036



GOAL: Conservancy revenue increased by diversifying income streams and growing sustainable tourism

As a catalyst for thriving conservancies, MMWCA strengthens the financial sustainability of its member conservancies by supporting revenue generation, diversifying income streams, and expanding sustainable tourism. These efforts enhance the value of land under conservation and improve the overall effectiveness and resilience of conservancy management.

Increased revenue serves not only as an indicator of conservancy impact and resilience but also as a driver of long-term sustainability. Complementing this, MMWCA's management of the Carbon Fund and the new Conservancies Fund, developed in partnership with the Narok County Government, provides critical and equitable financial support to conservancies most in need, ensuring stability, inclusivity, and shared growth across the entire network.

Objectives

Increase tourism revenue

Tourism revenue is sustained and continues to grow across conservancies, strengthening their financial independence and resilience. In mature conservancies, revenues remain stable with improved transparency and accountability in the flow of tourism income. In emerging conservancies, diversified tourism products are developed, marketed, and made profitable. The "One Mara Brand" elevates the visibility of the Mara as a whole, increasing recognition and visitor demand. MMWCA's role will be to link potential investors with emerging and developing conservancies.

- **Indicator of success 1:** 10 conservancies with tourism packages developed and marketed by 2036
- **Indicator of success 2:** By 2036, increase tourism revenue in conservancies by 30%

Implement diversified conservation-friendly income streams

MMWCA will catalyse and identify partners to develop and support conservation-friendly initiatives (e.g. tourism, livestock, partnerships, carbon) and establish sustainable alternative income-generating activities, through seed funding and training. MMWCA will support piloting and scaling of new conservation friendly business enterprises and these new business models project materially significant revenues for conservancies through partnerships.

- **Indicator of Success 1:** 10 partnerships established and maintained for income-generating initiatives by 2036.
- **Indicator of Success 2:** 10 conservation-friendly projects operational within conservancies by 2036.

Establish financial systems and sustainability mechanisms

MMWCA will guide conservancies to diversify income streams and implement budgeting, reporting, and auditing practices. MMWCA will support the training in financial planning, increased transparency and investment for long-term sustainability.

- **Indicator of Success 1:** 25 of established conservancies with documented financial management systems by 2036.
- **Indicator of Success 2:** 25 of established conservancies with established sustainability mechanisms by 2036.



GOAL: Community livelihoods improved through strategic partnerships

Community wellbeing is closely tied to the stewardship of land, making it a critical factor in sustaining conservation efforts. For conservation to succeed, communities must see and experience tangible benefits that create clear incentives for coexistence with wildlife. Even modest gains can foster goodwill, strengthen stewardship, and build local support for conservation.

Recognizing this, MMWCA will act as a catalyst for partnerships and a convenor of stakeholders and partners committed to improving livelihoods and promoting coexistence within the Mara landscape. While MMWCA will not serve as the primary implementer of livelihood initiatives, it will play a central role in connecting conservancies with skilled and aligned partners, mobilizing resources, and fostering collaboration that amplifies community benefits and sustains thriving, wildlife-rich landscapes.

Objectives

Expanded access to essential services across Mara conservancies

MMWCA will strengthen partnerships, link strategic partners to projects within and outside conservancies, and develop sustainability plans to ensure the continuity of essential services, including water, education, health, and infrastructure. For example, partner with HPF on education programs, partner with CHP on maternal health and family planning.

- **Indicator of Success 1:** 10 strategic partnerships established to deliver essential services by 2036.
- **Indicator of Success 2:** 100% of households in conservancies reporting improved access to targeted essential services by 2036

Increased employability and income opportunities for women and youth

MMWCA will identify critical livelihood opportunity areas, mobilize resources, and facilitate training and income-generating opportunities for women and youth. For example, partner with Wildlife Training College and Karen Blixen Hospitality College to train youth on various hospitality courses and partner with GOK (WEF, NGAAF) to support and finance women and youth projects.

- **Indicator of success 1:** 3,000 additional people employed in conservancies and camps by 2036
- **Indicator of success 2:** 2000 youth and women completing training programs or livelihood initiatives.
- **Indicator of success 3:** 50% of trained youth and women who gain employment or start income-generating activities



GOAL: Mara conservancies are secured and strengthened by enabling policies

MMWCA will position the Mara Conservancies model as a leading example of community-owned and community-led conservation, recognized locally, nationally, and globally for its impact and innovation. As the unifying body representing Mara conservancies, MMWCA will strengthen their collective voice and ensure coordinated advocacy for supportive policy frameworks and data-driven decision-making. Strengthened legal and institutional support will secure conservancies' recognition as a formal land-use model, granting them clearer rights, stronger governance, and greater influence in decision-making.

This enabling environment will attract sustainable funding, enhance conflict resolution, and build technical capacity, ensuring that conservancies remain stable, resilient, and impactful. Without it, they risk fragmentation, marginalization, and underfunding. Anchored in stronger frameworks and united representation, the Mara conservancies will continue to safeguard biodiversity, enhance climate resilience, and deliver lasting community benefits — serving as a cornerstone of Kenya's conservation and development agenda. MMWCA's role will be to lead advocacy for the development and implementation of key conservation policies, legislation, and strategies that advance this vision.

Objectives

Strengthen an enabling policy environment for conservancies

MMWCA will work with government agencies and key actors to secure and sustain formal recognition for conservancies. It will establish MOUs, guide conservancies through registration and regulatory compliance, and support spatial planning to protect conservancy land, enabling conservancies to operate effectively and access government support.

- **Indicator of success 1:** 35 Conservancies formally registered or recognized under county or national frameworks per year.
- **Indicator of success 2:** 80% of established conservancies have access to least one government service or support
- **Indicator of success 3:** Develop 6 new/revise policies, regulations, or legal reforms to support conservancies

Strengthen coordination of actors to support conservancies

MMWCA will coordinate government agencies, NGOs, private sector actors, and conservancies to align policies and actions. This will lead to a stronger, more coordinated implementation of the Greater Maasai Monitoring Framework. It will hold multi-stakeholder forums, facilitate joint planning, track policy implementation, and strengthen conservancy representation to improve coordinated support and reduce duplication.

- **Indicator of success:** 4 policy recommendations or actions jointly implemented through partnerships



Delivering the Strategy

To implement the strategy MMWCA will focus on the following six pillars

- 1. Diversifying and growing funding**
- 2. Strategic partnerships**
- 3. Strategic communications**
- 4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning**
- 5. Mitigation strategy**
- 6. A mature and agile MMWCA**

1. Diversifying and Growing Funding

MMWCA will mobilize \$40 million over 10 years through a diversified, innovative, and sustainable fundraising approach to support the establishment of new conservancies, support our members, build partnerships and strengthen our team to better serve the conservancies.

Key Priorities:

- Develop and implement a 10-year fundraising strategy with clear annual targets.
- Strengthen carbon financing, conservation bonds, and impact investment.
- Expand partnerships with donors, private sector, and government for co-financing, technical support, or in-kind contributions towards conservation and community priorities in the Mara.
- Build fundraising capacity through a dedicated partnerships and development team.

2. Strategic Partnerships

MMWCA will focus on catalyzing and enabling transformational partnerships built on shared responsibility and mutual benefit for their membership. Grounded in locally owned and led approaches, partnerships will integrate conservation with inclusive socioeconomic growth and ecological resilience in the Mara. The strategy will engage three main tiers of partners:

- 1. Government:** national and county ministries, departments, and authorities.
- 2. Civil society:** non-state actors and organizations at all levels.

3. Private sector: alongside development partners, INGOs, regional institutions, and like-minded organizations.

Partnerships will leverage each actor's strengths to maximize collective impact, emphasizing co-creation, co-financing, and co-implementation while ensuring equity and clear roles. Through strengthened coordination, learning, and accountability, MMWCA will deliver tangible benefits for communities, wildlife, and ecosystems.

Key Priorities

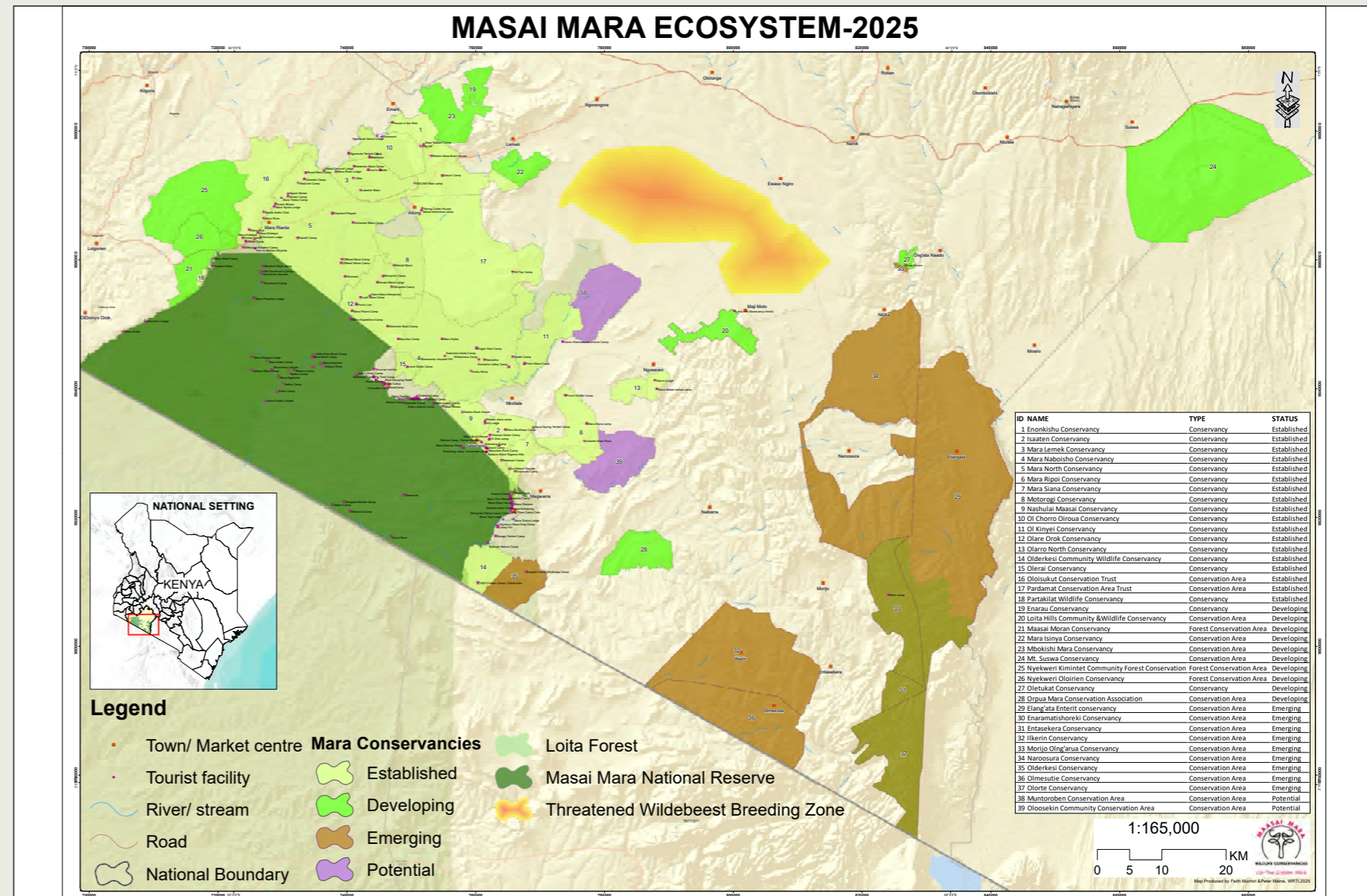
- Twenty of MMWCA's strategic partnerships are formalized through signed MOUs or joint initiatives, ensuring clear roles, accountability, and shared benefit.
- 80% of partnerships demonstrate measurable contributions to improved conservation and community outcomes (e.g. habitat secured, wildlife stabilized, livelihoods enhanced).

3. Strategic Communications

Communications will be a cross-cutting enabler of the 10-year strategy, building visibility for the Mara conservancies as a globally significant landscape, showcasing conservancy and community successes, and mobilizing resources and partnerships. MMWCA will invest in storytelling, knowledge sharing, and digital platforms to ensure conservation and development messages are inclusive, consistent, and impactful.

Key Priorities

- 1. Brand Strengthening & Visibility:** MMWCA will implement a refreshed communications and branding strategy that clearly positions its leadership and impact within the Mara ecosystem. Compelling



multimedia content including; videos, photo stories, and infographics, will elevate visibility and strengthen credibility with partners and supporters.

2. Community-Centered Communication: MMWCA will facilitate regular community dialogues and feedback forums, ensuring messages are accessible in Maa and Kiswahili and shared through radio, SMS, and social media. Conservancy staff and youth ambassadors will be trained in digital storytelling, and the annual Voice of the Mara report will capture progress, lessons, and community-driven conservation narratives

3. Expand MMWCA's Digital Footprint: MMWCA will strengthen its website, social media presence, and newsletters to enhance visibility and stakeholder engagement. Real-time data visualization tools will communicate ecosystem health and conservancy performance transparently and effectively.

4. Knowledge Management: MMWCA will establish a centralized knowledge hub and secure digital

repository to organize and share data, case studies, and institutional resources. This system will strengthen reporting efficiency, institutional memory, and stakeholder access to high-quality materials.

5. Stakeholder & Partner Engagement: MMWCA will deepen relationships with local, national, and global media to amplify conservation and livelihood narratives. It will co-create strategic communication campaigns with government, civil society, and private sector partners to broaden reach and collective impact..

4. Monitoring Evaluation and Learning

A strong Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system is central to MMWCA's continued role as a convener and driver of conservation and livelihood outcomes in the Mara. MEL will serve not only as a tool for accountability but also as a strategic engine for decision-making, influence, and growth.

MMWCA will establish and operationalize a robust, network-wide MEL framework that aligns with its strategic objectives and enables collective measurement of impact across conservancies. This framework will integrate biodiversity, livelihoods, governance, and financial sustainability indicators, ensuring that the value of conservancies is demonstrated at both community and landscape levels.

Key Priorities

- **Institutionalizing MEL at all levels:** Build the MEL capacity of member conservancies, ensuring reliable, comparable, and timely data collection that feeds into MMWCA's central system.
- **Participatory and inclusive approaches:** Engage communities, landowners, women, and youth as active contributors and users of evidence, strengthening ownership and trust in the data.
- **Learning and adaptation:** Establish structured learning processes, reflection forums, peer exchanges, and annual "State of the Mara Conservancies" learning products, to capture lessons and scale best practices.
- **By embedding MEL into the design and implementation of all programs,** MMWCA will foster a culture of continuous improvement and adaptive management. This evidence-driven approach will reinforce MMWCA's credibility, demonstrate the collective power of conservancies, and position the Mara as a global model of community-led conservation and sustainable development.

5. Mitigation Strategy

MMWCA recognizes that achieving this strategy depends on strong risk preparedness and clear response mechanisms. The Mitigation Strategy outlines concrete steps to identify, monitor, and respond to financial, operational, environmental, and political risks that could slow or disrupt progress. Risk management will be embedded into all planning and implementation processes to better ensure conservancies operate efficiently, funding remains stable, and partnerships continue to deliver tangible results.

MMWCA will apply evidence-based planning and continuous review to anticipate threats such as climate variability, land-use conflicts, or changes in policy and donor priorities. The organization will use data to guide timely decisions, ensuring that emerging risks are addressed early and do not compromise conservation outcomes or MMWCA's operations.

Key Priorities

- **Risk Identification and Monitoring:** Develop and maintain a live risk register that tracks financial, operational, and environmental threats. Conduct quarterly risk reviews with conservancies and partners to identify new and emerging risks early.
- **Financial and Resource Resilience:** Establish a reserve fund to manage cash flow disruptions and diversify income through carbon finance, endowment growth, tourism levies, and long-term donor agreements.
- **Adaptive and Scenario-Based Planning:** Integrate "what-if" scenario analyses into annual and project planning to guide resource allocation and decision-making during funding delays, droughts, or policy shifts.
- **Crisis Response and Business Continuity:** Create a crisis response plan that defines clear roles, communication protocols, and action triggers to ensure uninterrupted operations during emergencies such as droughts, conflicts, or security incidents.
- **Capacity Building for Risk Management** Train MMWCA staff and conservancy managers in financial oversight, environmental risk analysis, and contingency planning to ensure timely and informed decision-making at all levels.

6. A Mature and Agile MMWCA

Beyond fundraising, strategic partnerships, communications and MEL, to deliver this strategy, MMWCA will strengthen its internal capacity, systems, and sustainability. These institutional enablers have been identified as critical for building an agile, resilient, and impactful organization.

Strengthening the team

Build and sustain a dynamic, skilled, and values-driven team capable of delivering MMWCA's mission with flexibility, collaboration, and strategic focus.

Key Priorities

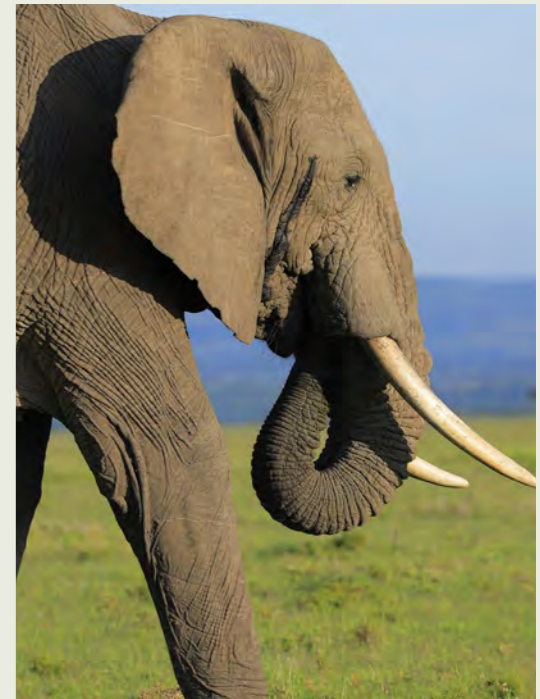
- Establish a cross-functional structure with expertise in governance, gender, carbon, and finance to support our work with conservancies.
- Create dedicated roles for fundraising, partnerships, MEL, and communications.
- Promote a culture of trust, accountability, innovation, and learning.
- Strengthen cohesion and collaboration across teams.

Strengthening Internal Systems

MMWCA will develop agile, integrated, and user-centered systems that empower the team to work efficiently, collaboratively, and sustainably.

Key Priorities

- Upgrade finance, HR, and procurement functions into an integrated ERP system.
- Strengthen ICT infrastructure, data security, and digital knowledge management.
- Institutionalize use of EarthRanger and centralized monitoring tools.
- Ensure periodic policy reviews and effective internal communications.



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WILDLIFE CONSERVANCIES

For The Greater Mara