



WILDLIFE CONSERVANCIES

For The Greater Mara

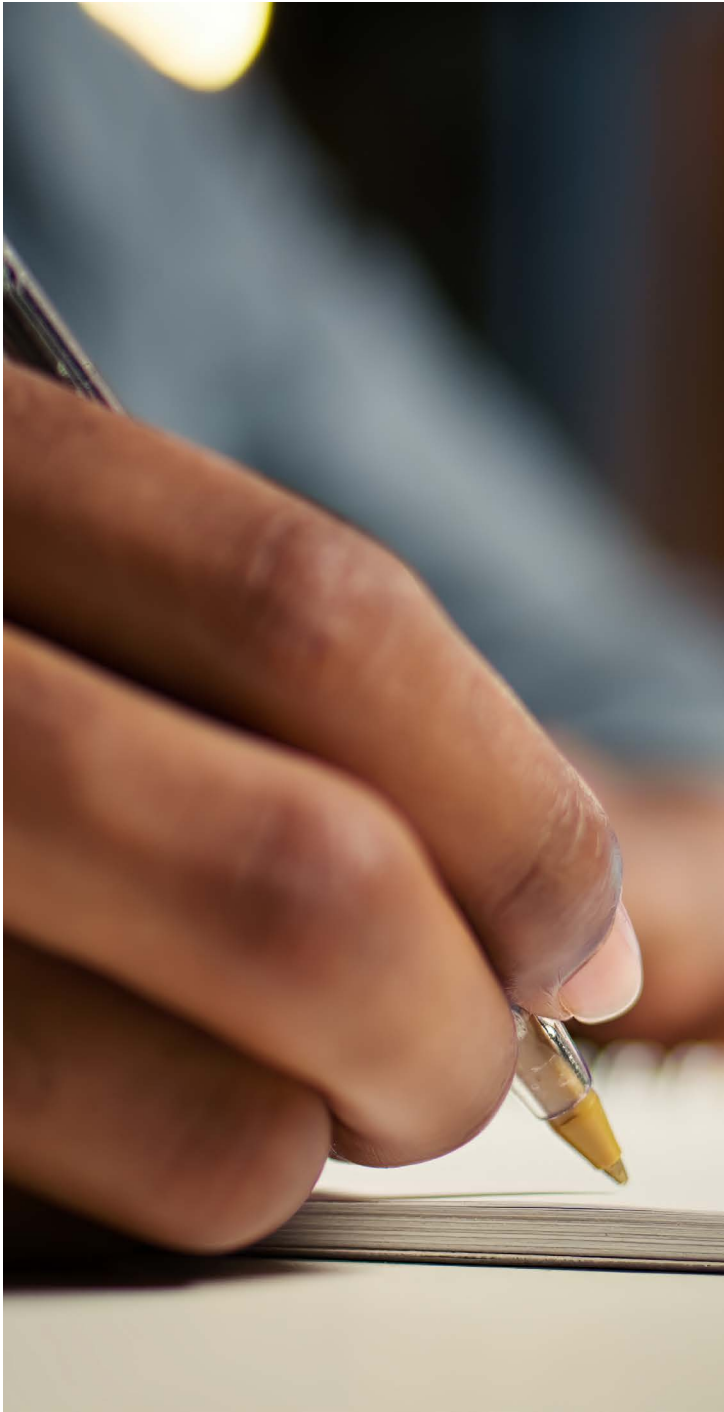


QUARTERLY

newsletter - 2026



OPENING NOTE



2026 for us reflects a strong start, marked by renewed momentum under our ten-year strategy. The year also began with active engagement on national platforms such as the Business of Conservation Conference (BCC 2026), alongside continued innovation through EarthRanger. With promising progress on the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Bill (2026) and key milestones in the Carbon Project, the year ahead holds even greater opportunity. Enjoy the read.

**William M. Peshut- Strategic
Communications Consultant, MMWCA.**



1. A New Chapter as we launch our new strategy, 2026-2036

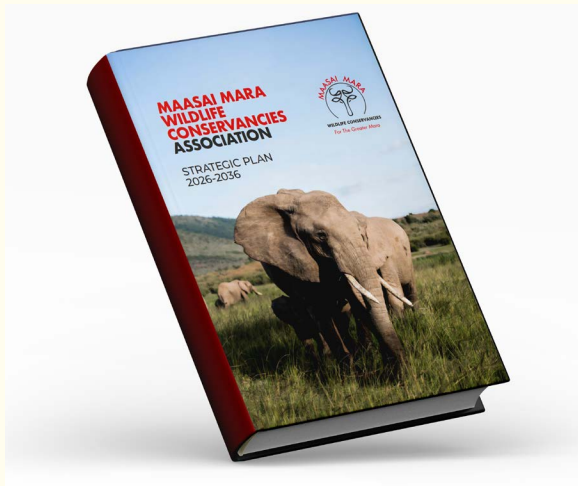
2026 marks a new chapter for us as we start implementing the new strategy. The ten-year framework provides an exciting turning point that will see us grow into new heights. As we roll out the implementation of the strategy, we are taking a step forward, building on our commitment to protecting the Mara landscape while improving the lives of the community and wildlife.

Among the new highlights of the new strategy is a powerful vision: **a united Mara ecosystem where communities**

and wildlife live in harmony, sustaining nature, culture, and shared prosperity for generations to come, which guides us into attaining coexistence.

Our mission remains clear, **to grow and strengthen Mara conservancies so that both wildlife and livelihoods can thrive,**

And now we have an impact statement, which is: **To advance community-led conservation that secures biodiversity and strengthens sustainable livelihoods in the Mara.**



What the new strategy means in Practice

This strategy is not just a plan on paper. It is about real change on the ground by achieving these five goals;

Our goal number one focuses on strengthening conservancies' governance so that they are more resilient and sustainable. To achieve this, we will support the continuous improvement of the conservancy's governance and institutional capacity to ensure that each member conservancy is well-managed, equitable, promotes inclusivity, and is adaptive to changing social, political, and climatic conditions. Our long-term goal is to ensure that conservancies evolve from direct receivers of MMWCA's support to become self-sufficient institutions. Additionally, we shall continuously work with conservancies to formalize their legal status, facilitate them to update their constitutions, and align governance structures with the national and county regulations. We shall also provide targeted capacity-building workshops for the conservancy boards and the management to equip them with skills to implement standardized management protocols covering operations, financial, and sustainability, and natural resource stewardship. To ensure a seamless resolution of conflicts, we shall implement the conflict resolution protocol for disputes over land, resources, and benefits, and ensure grievance-receiving mechanisms are established.

In our second goal, we are focused on expanding and securing more land for conservation. Through this goal, we are not just ensuring that the Mara's rich biodiversity is protected for the long term, but we are also contributing towards achieving the UN member states Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call for halting biodiversity loss and protecting endangered species, to protect 30% of land by 2030. We shall achieve this by working with communities to identify and establish new conservancies in the Greater Mara ecosystem, 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. Additionally, we 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. MMWCA shall also identify priority habitats and wildlife corridors, develop clear management plans, and mobilize resources from the County Government-supported Conservancies Fund to finance their establishment.

Thirdly, we are also placing strong emphasis on increasing conservancy revenue by diversifying income streams and growing sustainable tourism. This is aimed at making conservation work for communities. To move this forward, we shall 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. To actualize this, earlier this year, and in partnership with the One Mara Carbon Project (OMCP), Conservation International (CI), and Ahueni, we facilitated special general meetings (SGMs) in several conservancies, where landowners and conservancy leaders were taken through the carbon project as a viable revenue stream for the conservancies. They were given the space to ask questions, raise concerns, and fully understand the opportunities and responsibilities involved. Additionally, MMWCA will guide conservancies on revenue streams diversification and implement budgeting, reporting, and auditing practices.

Equally important to us in **our goal four** is improving Community livelihoods through strategic partnerships. Through stronger and more intentional partnerships, we are creating opportunities that directly benefit communities across the Mara. 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, earlier this year, in partnership with Human Practice Foundation (HPF), we officially opened and handed over to the community, Olkimitare Comprehensive School, which is among 14 schools—out of 160 across the region—supported through a partnership with HPF, and the County Government of Narok. We are also partnering with other partners such as Community Health Partners (CHP) on maternal health and family planning. To further improve the community livelihoods, we shall continue to identify critical livelihood opportunity areas, mobilize resources, and facilitate training and income-generating opportunities for women and youth. Potential partners include Wildlife Training College and Karen Blixen Hospitality College, which can train youth on various hospitality courses. Additional potential partners include the Government of Kenya through affirmative action funds such as the National Government Affirmative Action (NGAAF) and Women's Enterprise Fund, which can support the financing of women and youth projects.

And to support all this, **our goal five** focuses on advocating for policies that protect and strengthen conservancies, creating an enabling environment for long-term success. To achieve this, we shall work with government agencies and key actors to secure and sustain formal recognition for conservancies. We shall also guide conservancies through registration and regulatory compliance, and support spatial planning to protect conservancy land, enabling conservancies to operate effectively and access government support.

How We Will Get There?

To bring this strategy to life, we are focusing on six key areas:

a) Diversifying and growing our funding base

This strategy requires immense resources to implement. For instance, on our goal number one that focuses on strengthening conservancies, we continually need resources to provide targeted capacity-building workshops for the conservancy boards and the management to equip them with skills to implement standardized management protocols covering operations, financial, and sustainability, and natural resource stewardship. Additionally, we need the resources to resolve conflicts through established conflict resolution protocols. Further, to facilitate the establishment of new conservancies, mapping critical areas for conservation and conducting community sensitization & awareness on the benefits of conservancies require immense resources. We therefore plan to develop and implement a 10-year fundraising strategy as well as strengthen carbon financing, conservation bonds, and impact investment. Additionally, we target to 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. In conclusion, we are set to build fundraising capacity through a dedicated partnerships and development team.

b) Strengthening strategic partnerships

MMWCA will engage in strategic partnership with both the National and County Government either directly or through their agencies, and with other partners such as the civil society and the private to leverage each actor's strengths and 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.



c) Enhancing how we communicate and tell the Mara story

Communications will be a key enabler of this 10-year strategy. Making the Mara conservancies visible to audiences locally, nationally, and globally is key in publicising the significance of the landscape while showcasing conservancy and community successes, and mobilizing resources and partnerships. To actualise this, we have already hosted a team of journalists from Nation Media Group, where the Mara conservancies were featured on NTV's *Twende* show that aired on Sunday, April 8th and 19th. In addition, we are already working on publishing our book, *Guardians of the Mara*, set to be launched later this year. The book tells our decade long story. We have also partnered with Airkenya, where our story was published in their quarterly publication Ndege News (March Edition). See the link for the article, https://issuu.com/airkenya/docs/ndege_news_-_march_2026_online_version. Through this strategic partnership, we have strategically displayed our publications in all Airkenya's aircraft, giving us an unparalleled access to new audiences.

d) Improving our Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning to guide decisions

We began establishing and operationalizing a robust, network-wide Monitoring and Evaluation framework that aligns with its strategic objectives and enables collective measurement of impact across conservancies (see related story)

e) Putting in place mitigation strategies to respond to emerging challenges

We 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

f) Building a more mature, agile, and responsive 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.

At its core, this strategy is about people and nature working together. It is about securing biodiversity while strengthening sustainable livelihoods. As we move forward, we are grateful for the continued support of our members, partners, and donors.

A copy of the strategy is available here: https://maraconservancies.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/MMWCA-Strategic-Plan-Summary_FINAL_WEB.pdf.





2. Business of Conservation conference (BCC) 2026 highlights

A powerful and timely conversation took place at the Business of Conservation Conference (BCC) 2026, bringing together leaders and practitioners to explore practical conservation solutions that benefit both nature and communities. Among the keynote speakers was our Chief Executive Officer, Daniel Sopia, who joined a panel of distinguished speakers to address a critical question of how community-led institutions can build resilient, investable business models that sustain natural resources while delivering real economic value, even with modest budgets.

Rethinking Conservation

Across Africa, communities are increasingly proving that conservation and economic empowerment are not mutually exclusive. From nature-based enterprises to locally driven conservation models, there is growing evidence that conservation can work for both people and wildlife. These sessions drew on real-world experiences from practitioners who have built and strengthened community conservation enterprises in dynamic and often challenging environments. Their insights offered practical lessons on how to develop institutions that are financially viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable.

Drivers Success

The discussion highlighted what truly drives success in community-led conservation. While there are many inspiring achievements, there are also real challenges that community institutions continue to face.

One key takeaway was the importance of approaches that are tailored to local realities. Strong leadership and inclusive governance structures are equally critical in building resilient and effective conservation models. When communities are equipped with the right structures, skills, and opportunities, conservation becomes more than protecting nature—it becomes a pathway to resilience, ownership, and sustainable economic growth.

Conservation That Works for Communities

A powerful message from our CEO, Daniel Sopia, captured the essence of this conversation:

“For community conservation to succeed, it must pay. It must put food on the table.”

This statement reflects a fundamental truth—conservation must deliver tangible benefits to communities. When it does, it creates lasting value for both people and the environment.

Going forward

The Business of Conservation Conference 2026 was more than just a discussion—it helped to shape a new way of thinking. One where communities are not seen as recipients of aid, but as credible and investable partners in conservation. As the conversation continues, it is clear that the future of conservation lies in models that are practical, inclusive, and economically sustainable—and communities are at the heart of that future.

“Communities are not just benefit recipients; they are equal partners in the game,” Daniel Sopia, CEO, MMWCA

#BCC2026



Daniel Sopia (second from right) - CEO MMWCA with other panellists at the BCC conference 2026

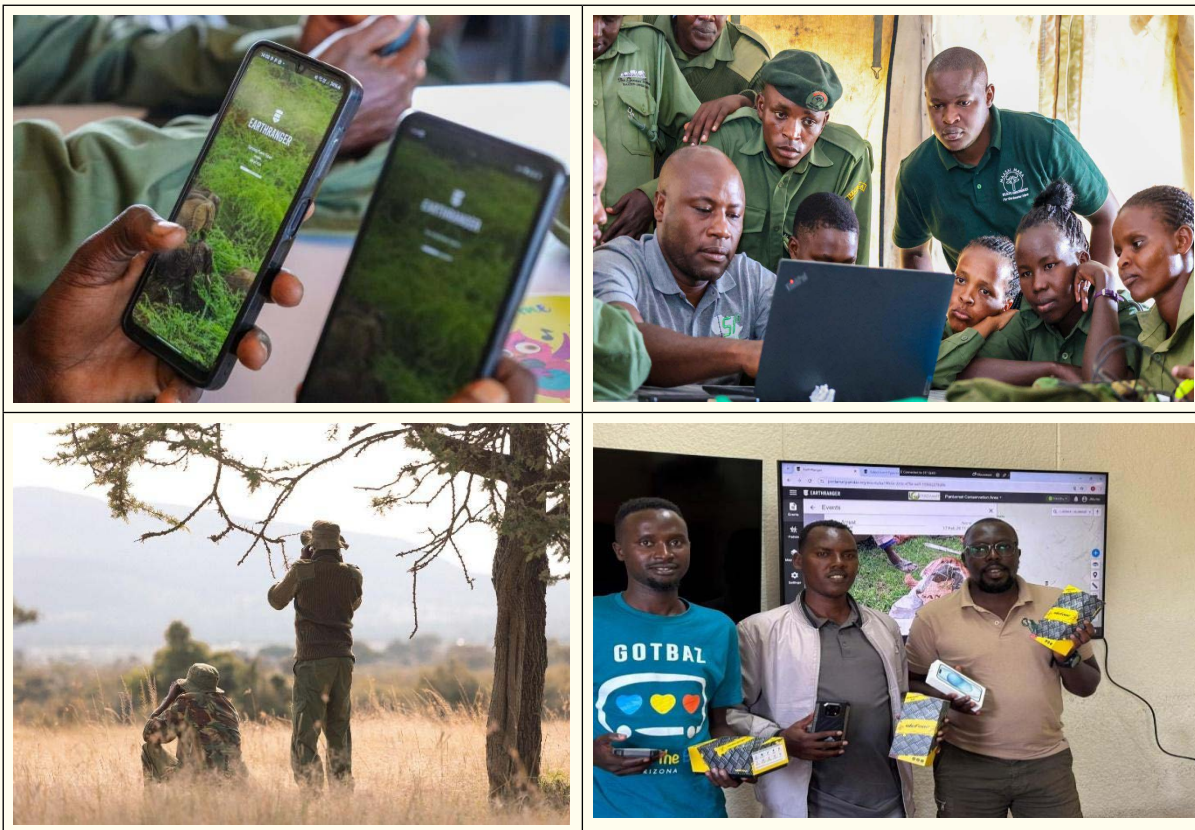
3. One Technology. One Ecosystem. A Whole New Way of Making Decisions in the Mara.

By: Charles Amenya-M&E

There is a place on this earth where the sky never feels big enough. The Greater Maasai Mara. Two million hooves. Lions that have stared down droughts. Maasai herders walking the plains with cattle and memory.

But the Mara had a silent wound: its data lived in silos. One conservancy kept patrol logs on paper. Another used a dusty spreadsheet. KWS had incident reports. WRTI had aerial numbers. Narok County had permits. MMWCA had 25 member conservancies, each speaking its own dialect. When a ranger spotted a snare near Olderkesi, it took three phone calls and two days to act. When a lion killed livestock, the conflict was recorded three different ways or not at all. Tourists sometimes drove for hours without seeing a leopard, because no one had a live map.

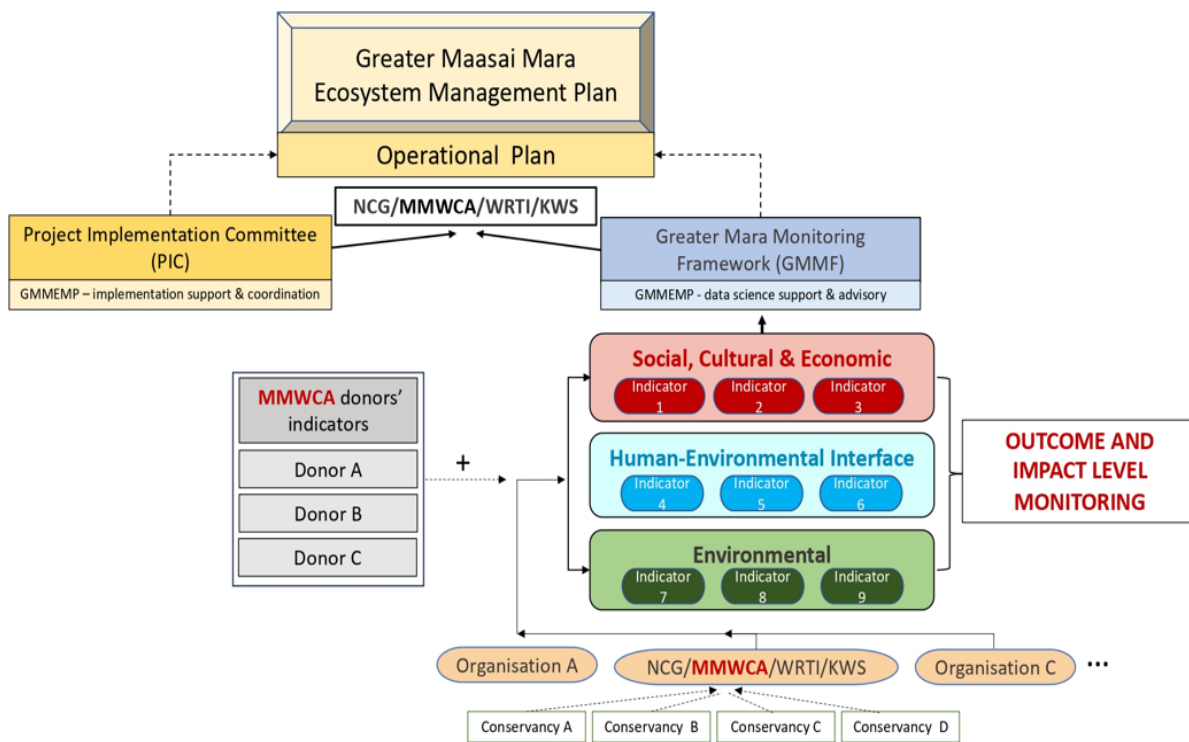
Earthranger Adoption



The training and handover of Earthranger equipment by MMWCA officers

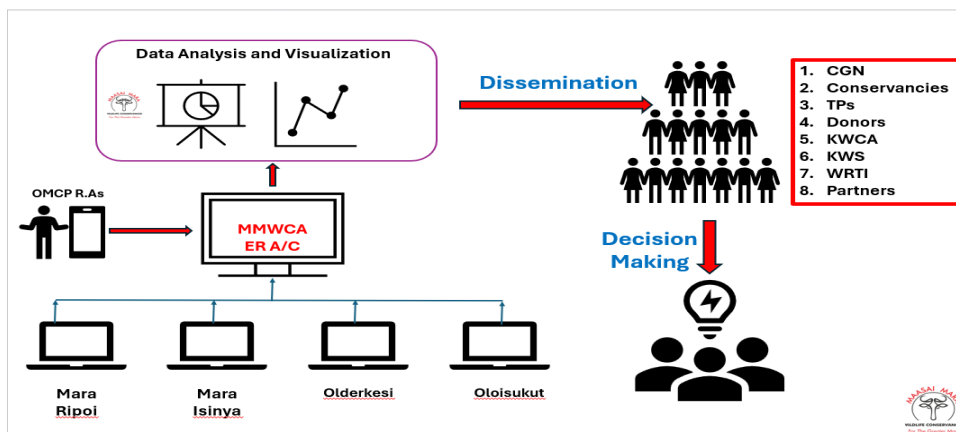
A digital war room on the savanna. One screen where every patrol, sighting, and cut fence post appears in real time. Narok County Government set up its station at Keekorok. MMWCA set up theirs at Aitong. LoRaWAN gateways, long-range radio towers whisper across the grassland. No 5G needed. Just elevation and patience. For the first time, a ranger in Oloisukut could report a snare, and Keekorok would see it within minutes. A patrol team in Mara Isinya could spot an injured zebra, and KWS could dispatch a vet before the hyenas arrived. The 2021 and 2025 aerial census surveys dropped a shock: over 85% of the Mara's wildlife is now in conservancies - lands where communities chose wild-life over fences. Earthranger logged the shadows too: fragmenting corridors, charcoal burning, illegal grazing, among other illegal activities.

Conservancies use Earthranger to map grazing blocks that support during dry-season refuges, wet-season rotation zones. A grassbank for when drought comes. And when predators kill livestock? The incident goes into Earthranger with details. Patterns emerge. Targeted interventions follow. No more blanket guesses. In 2023, three management plans said the same thing: the ecosystem must be managed as one. The Greater Mara Monitoring Framework (GMMF) committee was established to oversee monitoring the plans from shared indicators developed by the One Mara Research Hub.



Multi-sectoral coordination in implementing the frameworks

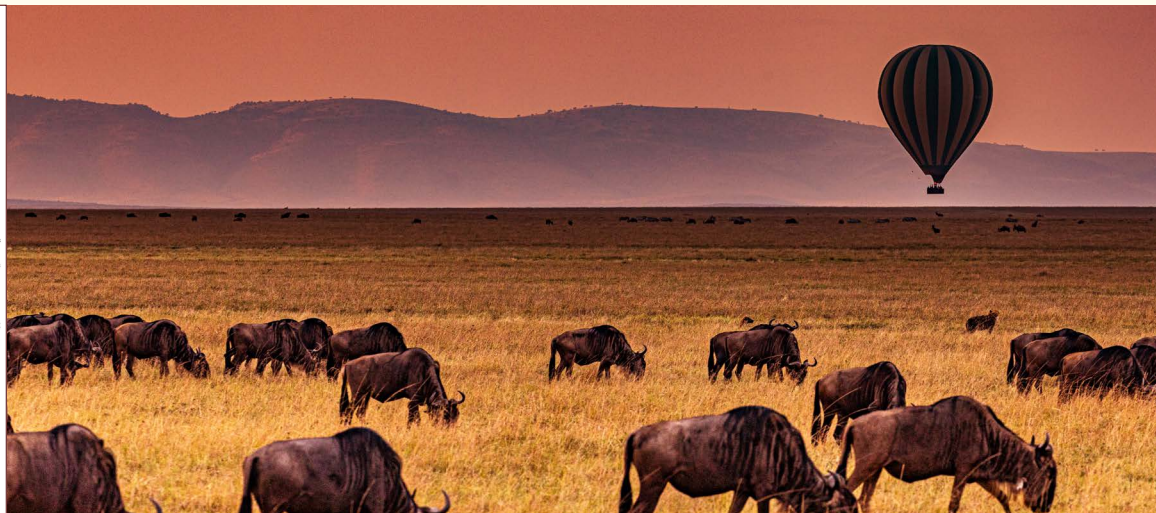
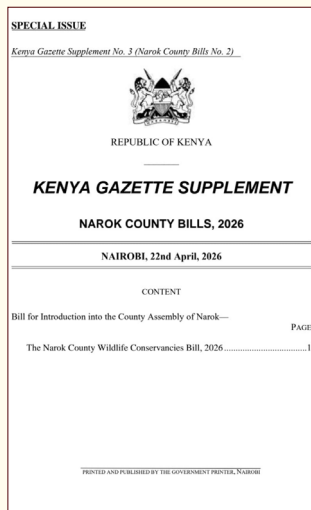
While recognising Earthranger as a powerful platform, now data flows from the field into analysis, visualisation, and dissemination to everyone who matters: CGN, conservancies, tourism partners, donors, KWCA, KWS, WRTI, and landscape partners. From there, **decision-making** is clear, fast, and evidence-based, serving the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem.



The flow of data on the EarthRanger App

4. Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Bill 2026

A new chapter for conservation is taking shape in the County of Narok with the legislative progress of the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Bill 2026. Together with the County Government of Narok and partners, including the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA), we have been supporting the development of the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Bill 2026, a transformative step towards strengthening conservation and community livelihoods in the County.



The Bill seeks to:

- Recognize, promote, support, and facilitate the establishment, sustainability, and development of conservancies in the County;
- Provide an opportunity for collaboration with other partners to provide technical support to conservancies;
- Support conservation education awareness and capacity building, and promote good governance and management of conservancies; and
- Provide mechanisms for intermediate financial support for families and victims of wildlife attacks and losses.

In addition, the Bill that will be known as the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Act, 2026, once it comes into force upon publication in the Kenya Gazette, also seeks to establish a fund to be known as the Wildlife Conservancies Fund, which shall be administered by a Board to be known as

the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Board. Among the responsibilities of the board is to oversee the administration and management of the Fund, approve annual plans, and supervise the performance of the Fund. The board shall be composed of a Chairperson appointed by the Governor, the Chief Officer for tourism and wildlife matters, the Chief Executive Officer who shall be the Secretary and ex – officio member, a representative of the Community wildlife Association in the county and four representatives of communities nominated from each of the four clusters namely; the Eastern cluster (Northern part of Siana ward, Naikarra, Loita and Maji Moto Narroosura wards), the Central cluster (Eastern part of Mara ward and southern part of Siana ward), the Western cluster (Western and northern part of Mara ward, Lolgorian and Kimintet wards) and the Suswa cluster that covers, Suswa, Mosiro and Ildamat wards.



The Fund will come as a reprieve to the community conservancies in the county, as it will add to the much-needed funds to run existing conservation programs as well as expand land under conservation in the county.

5. Conservancy Special General Meetings (SGM) meetings; progress on the One Mara Carbon Project

At the beginning of this year, we, in partnership with the One Mara Carbon Project (OMCP), Conservation International (CI), and Aheuni, engaged with landowners through a series of Special General Meetings (SGMs). So far, the meetings have been successfully held in 6 conservancies, including Enoonkishu, Naboisho, Mara Siana, Mara North, Lemek, and Olare Motorogi, with more scheduled to continue. These engagements are not just about introducing a project. They

are about ensuring that every landowner clearly understands what the One Mara Carbon Project means for them, their land, and their future. Through the SGMs, landowners and conservancy leaders were taken through the project in a transparent and accessible way. They were given the space to ask questions, raise concerns, and fully understand the opportunities and responsibilities involved.



Special general meetings (SGM) proceedings in conservancies.

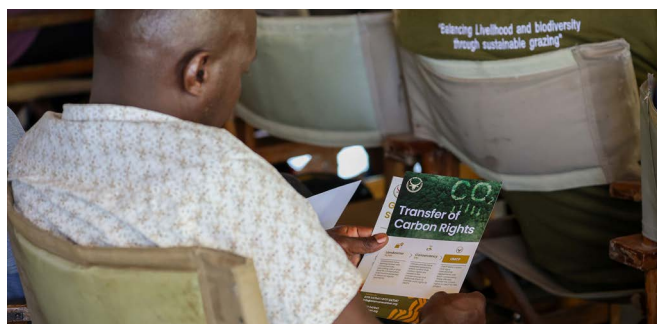


Photo credits: Ian Leshan

This process forms a key part of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), a globally recognised standard that ensures communities are not only consulted, but can make decisions freely. Following these discussions, conservancies were given time to reflect and make decisions on whether to participate in the project. These decisions are not taken lightly. They touched on important issues such as participation in the project, governance structures, the management of carbon rights, how benefits will be shared, and how information will be handled. The landowners drawn from the 6 conservancies unanimously voted to officially join the OMCP. Some of the conservancies such as Naboisho signed the membership agreement while the rest are yet to sign their membership agreements.

By walking through these elements together, the process ensures that communities are active partners of the community-led conservation. As the SGMs continue across the remaining conservancies, the focus remains to build understanding, strengthen trust, and ensure every decision is informed and collective. The journey of the One Mara Carbon Project is still unfolding, but one thing is clear—when the community is fully engaged and empowered, conservation becomes stronger, more sustainable, and more meaningful for everyone involved.

6. IN BRIEF HIGHLIGHTS

a) Staff changes

The following staff changes have taken place within our organisation in Q1 2026;



Eric Reson, who was our Chief of Programs officer, has transitioned to One Mara Carbon Project (OMCP) as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).



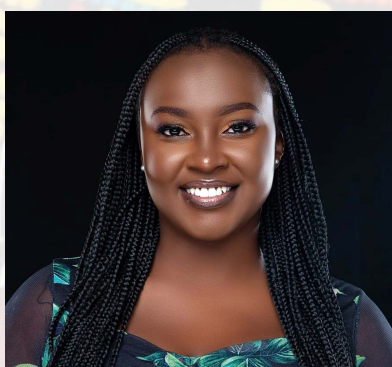
Daniel Muli who was the Senior Officer in charge of governance now takes over as the new Chief of Programmes officer and joins the senior management team.



Angela Sanau, who was the Senior Programmes Officer in charge of gender, now takes the role of Senior Officer supporting governance, partnerships, and youth, and sits on the Senior Management Team.



William Wamalwa, who was the Senior Finance Officer, is now the Finance Department Lead, playing the role of the Senior Finance and Grants Officer, and joins the senior management team.



Faith Nabiki, who was the Grants officer, has transitioned to OMCP as the Finance and Administration manager.



Gloria Kaelo (L) (Finance and Grants Assistant) and Saiton Nampaso (R) (Admin & Communications Assistant) have joined the team in their respective roles.



b) Celebrations of key international events- International Women's Day 2026

On the 7th March, we celebrated International Women's Day. The day provided us with a moment to celebrate a journey that tells the story of the women of the Mara rising from passive observers to front-line champions and equal partners in conservation. Through collective support and strong partnerships, women in the Mara have risen to become frontline champions of community-led conservation, including serving as female rangers across our member conservancies and as equal partners at decision-making tables, within conservancy leadership, the MMWCA Board, and as respected landowners. In the spirit of this year's theme "Give to Gain," we remain committed to giving by creating an equal playing field for all actors in the Mara. In doing so, we collectively gain through equity, fairness, and sustainable conservation for present and future generations.

Penina Taki- Chairperson- Women Forum

Photo credits: Ian Leshan

c) Imara close-out

A significant chapter in our conservation journey with one of our key partners in the landscape—the Integrated Management of Natural Resources for Resilience in Arid & Semi-Arid Lands (IMARA) program has come to an end. Supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), through World Vision Kenya, and in collaboration with the Government of Kenya and implementing partners, the IMARA program has concluded after seven impactful years of advancing community-led conservation across the Mara ecosystem. Designed as a resilience initiative, IMARA focused on strengthening household capacity to withstand climate shocks by promoting diversified livelihoods, sustainable natural resource management, and inclusive governance. The program was implemented across nine ASAL counties, Baringo, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Isiolo, Laikipia, Marsabit,

Narok, Samburu, Turkana, and West Pokot—through partnerships with Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA), Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), Saferworld, and the Stockholm Environment Institute. The program delivered impact across four key pillars:

- Securing livelihoods through diversified, market-oriented income systems
- Ecosystem restoration to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Strengthening governance and peace through conflict-sensitive approaches
- Promoting evidence-based learning through monitoring, evaluation, and research

In Narok County, where we served as the implementing partner, the impact has been both visible and transformative.



SIDA representative with World Vision Kenya officials at the close out of the IMARA grant.



IMARA supported the establishment of livestock management areas, helping communities to adopt more sustainable grazing practices. It also played a critical role in improving water access through the development and rehabilitation of water pans and the restoration of water springs. These interventions have been a lifeline, not only for local communities but also for wildlife across the Mara landscape. Beyond environmental and livelihood gains, the program made meaningful strides in advancing gender equity and inclusion. Through targeted workshops and support for women's forums, IMARA amplified women's voices in conservation. The establishment of housing facilities for female rangers has opened doors for more young women to join the conservation space, marking a powerful shift toward inclusivity. Youth empowerment was another cornerstone of the program, with hundreds of young people benefiting from internship opportunities in our office and in member conservancies, equipping them with skills and experience for the future. Importantly, IMARA strengthened governance within our member conservancies by promoting transformational leadership and supporting the development of management plans. This led to several key achievements, including:

- Establishment of new conservancies & registration of the conservancies as legal entities
- Implementation of conflict resolution protocols
- Support for conservancy Annual General Meetings
- Capacity building for conservancy management
- Facilitation of conservancy elections and revision of trust deeds

As the IMARA program comes to a close it has not only strengthened resilience among communities but has also laid a strong foundation for sustainable conservation, inclusive governance, and improved livelihoods.

We remain thankful to all partners and communities who made this journey possible.

d) Youth engagement forums

In partnership with the one Mara Carbon project (OMCP), we have had youth engagement sessions across the landscape to listen, share, and hold conversations about the carbon project and the youth engagement framework. These important conversations were being shaped with and by the youth. Through the sessions, young people from all our clusters in the mara shared their views, asking questions, and helping to define what their future in conservation and opportunity should look like. The sessions were crucial for us because we know one thing for sure—the future of the Mara will be shaped by the choices that the youth make today.



e) Mara Ripoi Elections

Mara Ripoi Conservation Trust entered a new chapter on 17th January following successful conservancy elections across all clusters, Nkineji, Losho, Empopongi, Kijirjir, Kishermoruak, and Ildungisho, ensuring inclusive participation. The elections reflected strong progress in equity and inclusion, with six women elected into leadership and Ben ole Silantoi (PLWD) representing Empopongi. A balanced leadership emerged, with eight new trustees and seven returning members. At the AGM on 7th February, the 15 trustees were officially inaugurated. The new office bearers are:

- Chairman: William Sanoe
- Vice Chair: Daniel Lepore
- Secretary: Veronica Senewa
- Treasurer: Ben Lakati Silantoi

Outgoing trustees, led by former Chairman David Ole Sururu, were recognized for their eight years of service and a smooth transition. These elections highlight growing inclusivity, fairness, and community-led conservation across the Mara. Focus now shifts to the upcoming elections in Mara Naboisho Conservancy.



Photo credits: Ian Leshan



P. O. Box 984, Narok 20500, Kenya

Telephone: +254 (0)715 047 047, (0)777 047 047

Email: contact@maraconservancies.org

Web: www.maraconservancies.org
