



WILDLIFE CONSERVANCIES

For the Greater Mara

Strategic Plan

2021 - 2025

Overcoming crisis and optimising opportunities for a prosperous future.





Letter from CEO

Dear Members, Friends, Partners,

I am pleased to present the second Strategic Plan for the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) since our formation in 2013. The Plan provides a roadmap of how we will execute our mandate, sets out our strategic vision, and outlines our priorities for the next five years from 2021 to 2025.

This Plan succeeds the inaugural Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2020, that provided the foundation for significant milestones. We set up a good foundation and robustly executed our mandate during the period, as evident by; the growth of membership and area under conservation, enhanced capacity of conservancies, and inclusion of women and youth in conservancy management. Additionally, we successfully built our brand, forging a diverse array of partnerships and fundraising opportunities. Under our new Strategic Plan, we will seek to build on these successes to achieve our mission of growing and strengthening Mara Conservancies for wildlife and livelihood improvement.

Our new Strategic Plan responds to emerging issues in the last seven years since MMWCA's establishment. I note that the development and operationalisation of this Plan has come at a time when the world is battling the COVID-19 pandemic that has had far-reaching ramifications, especially on the tourism industry. This Plan has also benefited from lessons gleaned from the experience of the pandemic.

The 2021 – 2023 Strategic Plan provides a coherent, systematic and sustainable roadmap that anchors our operations. It spells out goals and objectives we seek to achieve during the implementation period. Overall, we envisage that the implementation of the Plan will lead to a vibrant and unified Mara ecosystem where the community and wildlife coexist sustainably for the prosperity of all.

As the umbrella body for the Mara Conservancies, we endeavour to continue representing and advocating for our members and fostering unity among them for the benefit of wildlife and the community. Whereas we are conscious of the challenges ahead occasioned by the pandemic and other challenges facing conservation, we assure you of our determination and commitment to supporting the conservancies to thrive. In this regard, I invite you to journey with us in this new phase.

Daniel Sopia, Chief Executive Officer

Executive Summary

MMWCA has positioned itself as a partner, leader, and important player in the Mara landscape and is critical for the success of the Mara conservancies. Most recently, MMWCA has helped conservancies navigate many challenges, not least of all the unprecedented challenges of the ongoing global pandemic, ensuring there is an intact Mara Ecosystem for the future. While MMWCA has had many achievements that have led to increased opportunities, these have also led to increase in internal and external challenges and pressures.

Community conservancies across the Mara have been formed for wildlife conservation, tourism, and wider natural resource management. These conservancies provide a financial incentive for Maasai landowners through lease payments. Wildlife conservation across the Mara ecosystem will not work in the long term unless the Maasai people experience the continued benefit from it.

The foundation of a strong conservancy is strong governance structures, ensuring fair benefit sharing and cohesive decision making for collective action. Thus, a major focus of MMWCA's work going forward will be to support and improve conservancy governance to ensure they are well managed, protect wildlife, and more importantly, deliver benefits to the Mara communities.

MMWCA envisions a greater Mara ecosystem where various land uses are zoned and planned to serve the growing needs of the community and the conservation of wildlife, thereby minimising conflict while optimising conservation and ecosystem integrity.

MMWCA's 2021 - 2025 strategy will be guided by the following goals:

- Improve Conservancy Governance.
- Support new conservancies and wildlife corridors to be established.
- Regional and National frameworks incentivise and support the growth of Mara Conservancies.
- Enhance communication and coordination across the landscape.
- Support conservancies to have resilient and diversified revenue models.
- MMWCA is a well-functioning organisation capable of delivering its mission.



This map tells the story of the threats and opportunities that face the Greater Mara Ecosystem as the umbrella organisation for the Mara conservancies these are some of the external contexts in which MMWCA works:

Opportunities:

ROAD IMPROVEMENTS made to the Narok - Sekenani highway, creating better access to areas that were once remote.

OPENING OF NEW WILDLIFE CORRIDORS through the removal of fences, restoring connectivity and free movement of wildlife.

FREE MOVEMENT OF CATTLE, is a product of good governance in conservancies, which supports the livelihoods of Mara communities.

SIGNING OF LONG TERM LEASES, shows that conservation is a sustainable land use option for the Mara communities and encourages other landowners to do the same.

Threats:

FENCES, block connectivity and affect the stability of the ecosystem.

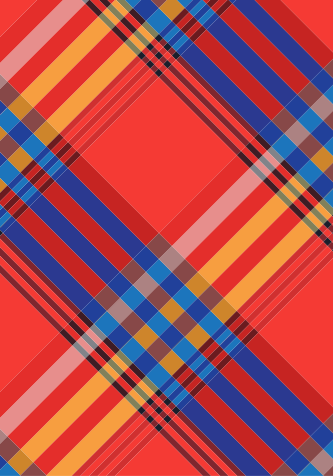
GROWTH OF NEW SETTLEMENTS, as families and communities grow, there is an increased demand for conservancies to support more people, many settlements are unplanned and can encroach areas designated for wildlife.

Leads to **HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT** as settlements move into wildlife corridors.

AGRICULTURE, as landowners are incentivized to find ways to get higher returns from their land through small-scale farming, or selling their land to large-scale farmers.

DEFORESTATION, as land is sold to make space for agriculture, or charcoal production causes ecological damage to the ecosystem.





What guides us

Vision

A vibrant and unified Mara ecosystem where the community and wildlife coexist sustainably for the prosperity of all.

Mission

Grow and strengthen Mara Conservancies for wildlife and livelihood improvement.

Values:

CULTURE: Our Maasai culture is central to who we are. All of our work in the Mara starts from the foundation of honouring the Maasai people for which the region is named. Respecting and promoting culture, which has created an ecosystem that is compatible with wildlife conservation and tourism, is the foundation of our work.

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 as a team we can achieve more.

ACCOUNTABILITY: We hold ourselves to high standards, continuously striving for improvement in the way we work and by promoting accountability; to ourselves, our organisation, and the conservancies we serve.

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 establishing partnerships through open communication and transparency.

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.



Value Proposition

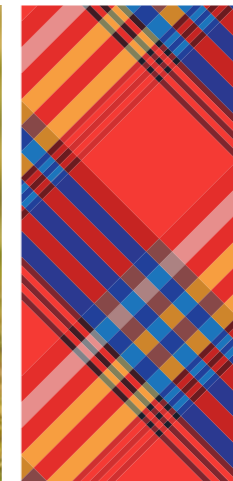
MMWCA is the umbrella body for conservancies in the Mara. It is the only organisation mandated to represent the Mara conservancies, advocate for them, foster unity, and strengthen cohesion between conservancies.

MMWCA is a trusted partner of donors and stakeholders. It is uniquely positioned to create external linkages to donors for fundraising opportunities and building partnerships that secure the prosperity of the Greater Mara ecosystem.

MMWCA is strategically positioned to influence and promote the value of Maasai culture as a key solution to ensuring a thriving ecosystem.

MMWCA in fulfilling its mission will ensure that conservation is a viable land-use. Ensuring that local communities derive substantial long-term benefits from conservation-related revenue, which can be used to service their local development needs. At the same time safeguarding the long-term sustainability of conservation in Kenya.

Mara conservancies are an interdependent model between people, land, livestock, and tourism. The following diagram illustrates the interconnected nature of all conservancy stakeholders.



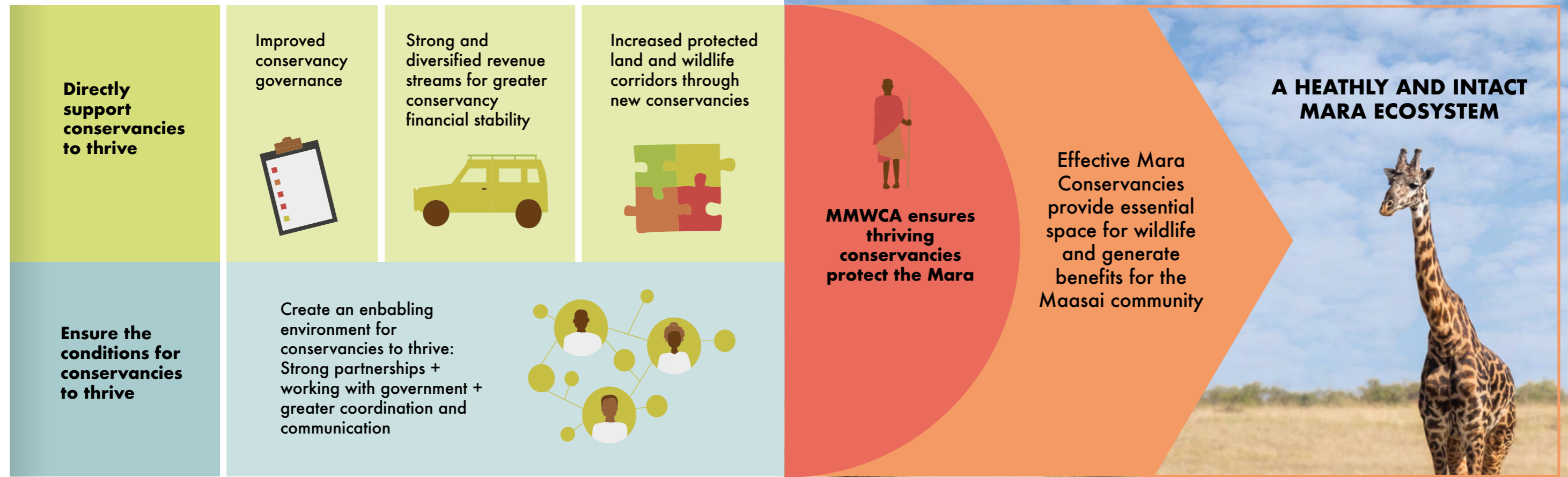


Theory of Change

The following diagram describes MMWCA's theory of change: how MMWCA believes the work it chooses to carry out will bring about the changes it desires in the Mara ecosystem.

MMWCA's theory of change is driven by the following core beliefs:

- 1. The foundations of political good will,** aligned partnerships, and strong communication and coordination structures are necessary for conservancies to operate.
- 2. If the basic needs of the community are provided for,** they are in a better place to make decisions that support the long-term objectives of conservation. Therefore, it is essential that the conservancies have sufficient and robust revenue models to support their landowners and operations.
- 3. Stronger conservancy governance** ensures conservancies make better decisions for delivering benefits to people and wildlife. Governance is the key that holds management accountable.
- 4. Increasing land under conservancy operations** will improve outcomes for wildlife, reduce human-wildlife conflict through enhanced security, and ensure a greater number of community members receive direct benefits from conservation. This will collectively increase the health and prosperity of the Mara ecosystem.



Strategic Implementation

As the representative body for conservancies in the Maasai Mara region of Kenya, MMWCA has many roles and responsibilities. The following goals and objectives present clear strategic choices MMWCA has made to spend its limited time and resources to best achieve its mission. As MMWCA has matured as an organisation and as lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic have emerged, there has been an increased refinement of MMWCA's mandate, giving this strategy a much narrower focus.

This strategic plan focuses on the direct work MMWCA will do to deliver on its core mandate of ensuring thriving conservancies in the Maasai Mara. Complementary to this refinement is the decision to focus on partnership to deliver essential outcomes for the Maasai Mara Ecosystem tangential to MMWCA's core mandate. This strategic plan deliberately uses the word support to highlight areas where MMWCA may not be the lead implementer but will work closely with landscape partners to complete this work successfully.

Goals and Objectives

MMWCA has identified six goals in service of its mission. Each of the six goals has subsequent shorter-term objectives, which detail the actions MMWCA will take to achieve each goal.



GOAL ONE

Improved Conservancy Governance

Success: Well-functioning conservancies led by effective boards providing transparency, accountability, and constitutional adherence required to have the trust of all stakeholders.

Why the goal is important: Strong conservancy governance leads to inclusive and effective decision-making for a conservancy to deliver on the protection of wildlife and livelihood benefits to communities.

COVID-19 Recovery Objectives:

1. Through the COVID-19 emergency operations fund, provide training and support to conservancy management to enhance their financial budgeting and accounting practices, as well as improve management documentation and reporting.
2. Support conservancies to transition from receiving 50% lease payments to 100% lease payments by July 2021.
3. Utilising emergency COVID19 funding, support Lemek and Olchorro conservancies to sign long-term lease agreements to secure the conservancy during a time of tourism collapse. Capitalise on short-term donor funding to establish lease structures which can attract, and secure longer-term tourism partners committed to guaranteed leases.

Objectives:

- 1. High-capacity conservancy leadership** and governance, ensuring effective participation, decision-making, transparency, and oversight accountability for strong conservancy operations.

By 2022: 8 conservancies trained in governance, leadership, and communication.

By 2024: 80% of all MMWCA member conservancies trained.

- 2. Support established conservancies** to develop and implement management plans.

By 2022: At least 5 conservancy management plans gazetted - Olderkesi, Siana, Oloisukut, Lemek, and Naboisho.

By 2024: 85% of Mara conservancies have management plans that are in active implementation.

- 3. Support established conservancies** to increase land leases from 15 years to 25 years.

By 2022: 80% of Lemek and Olchorro landowners will have signed 25-year lease agreements.

By 2024: Olderkesi, Isaaten, and Olerai conservancies have signed long term leases.

- 4. Pardamat Conservation Area (PCA)** is fully transitioned to an independent conservancy.

By 2022: PCA has developed key institutional policies and structures.

By 2024: PCA has developed adequate independent revenue sources to sustain leases.

- 5. Support conservancies to develop** and implement legal structures and policies to ensure transparency and accountability.

By 2022: 6 conservancy landowner's legal entities registered, and governance policies developed.

By 2024: 80% of conservancies have institutional policies and structures in place and at least 2 conservancies hold elections.

- 6. Develop a conflict resolution mechanism.**

By 2022: MMWCA has implemented a formal process for conservancies requesting support from MMWCA to mediate conflict in the conservancies.

By 2024: The conflict resolution mechanism is actively being utilised, resulting in targeted and strategic deployment of MMWCA resources towards creating a cohesive conservancy environment.

- 7. Through gender empowerment and training,** women and youth take active roles in conservancy governance and management.

By 2022: 70 women forum members trained

By 2024: Women forum members are utilising their knowledge of conservancy structures and policies to participate in governance discussions and practices.



GOAL TWO

Support new conservancies and wildlife corridors to be established

Success: Minimum of 3 new conservancies are formed, resulting in more land secured for conservation, an increase in wildlife numbers, and more community members benefiting from conservation.

Why the goal is important: Conservancy and corridor expansion brings together more of the community to benefit from conservation, ultimately expanding land under generating benefits for people and wildlife.

Objectives:

- 1. Open critical wildlife corridors** essential for the movement of wildlife through the ecosystem.
 - Work with regional partners to monitor, map, and identify priority areas for opening a wildlife corridor.
 - Lead the process of landowner engagement and consent.
 - Support the design of financing models, governance of the corridor, and signing of leases.
 - Partner with local wildlife organisations to monitor the effect of new corridors on wildlife populations.

By 2022: Open 3 wildlife corridors in the Eastern Mara.

By 2024: 6 wildlife corridors are open and functioning well.

- 2. Support the creation of new conservancies.**

- Lead the process of landowner engagement and development of lease agreements.
- Support the registration of appropriate governance entities.
- Support the implementation of the legal body to sign and register leases.
- Ensure the development of a functioning revenue model tailored to the available revenue sources of the conservancy.
- Partner with local wildlife organisations to monitor the effect of new conservancies on wildlife populations.

By 2022: Nyekweri, Oloirien, and Mara Isinya conservancies are established.

By 2024: Additional conservancies begin the process based on real time evaluation of need and suitability.



GOAL THREE

Regional and National frameworks incentivise and support the growth of Mara Conservancies

Success: Conservancies are operating within clear, legal frameworks where the government provides policy and financial incentives.

Why the goal is important: Conservancies require an enabling environment where the legal incentives for operating support the conservancies to thrive.

COVID-19 Recovery Objective:

Work with Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association and Kenya Wildlife Services to ensure the government stimulus support for ranger salaries payments are well coordinated to support the Mara conservancies.

Objectives:

1. **Formalise and strengthen** MMWCA's partnership with NCG.

By 2021: MOU between MMWCA and Narok County Government is signed

By 2024: NCG is providing financial support to conservancies

2. **Advocate for development** of policies by NCG to support conservancies.

By 2021: Ecosystem management plan is endorsed by NCG and is aligned with the county spatial plan.

By 2024: County spatial plan and the ecosystem management plan are both implemented accordingly.

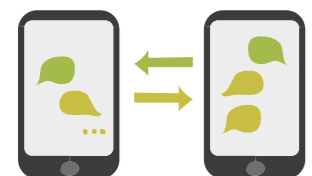
3. **Partner with NCG and the National Government** in undertaking key conservation related activities and events to promote conservancies and conservation at a regional level.

By 2022: MMWCA partners with NCG to celebrate county conservation related events such as Mara Day.

By 2024: MMWCA participates in national events such as World Wildlife Day, and the Devolution Conference. At a regional level MMWCA is included in county environmental committees.

4. **Work with the Kenyan Wildlife Conservancies Association** to push for strengthening and operationalisation of the Conservation Trust Fund.

By 2024: Conservation Trust Fund is operational



GOAL FOUR

Enhance communication and coordination across the landscape

Success: Harmony and collaboration among Mara stakeholders, leading towards more effective implementations of conservancy activities and regional programmes.

Why the goal is important: Uniting stakeholders and creating a shared voice and purpose underpins the success of all other goals.

COVID-19 Recovery Objective:

Develop and implement a communication framework that will enable local stakeholders and partners to be informed on the current situation of COVID-19 with a focus on its effect and what MMWCA is doing to support conservancy recovery. Conservancies have access to relevant and timely information on the recovery efforts.

Objectives:

1. **Facilitate regular engagement opportunities** with Conservancy Managers and Community Liaison Officers for learning and information sharing

By 2022: Monthly internal conservancy meetings and quarterly manager forums are active and functioning, providing regular opportunities for cross-conservancy learning and coordination.

By 2024: Enhanced partnerships and collaboration between conservancy management, leading to overall improved management of conservancies

2. **Strengthen engagement and communication** between MMWCA, Conservancy Boards and Landowners Committees

By 2022: Quarterly strategic information sharing to conservancy boards and landowners committees providing an overview of progress, opportunities, challenges, good practices and lessons learnt.

By 2022: Facilitate decision-making capabilities of conservancy Boards and Landowners to manage conservancies and improve strategy based on good knowledge and learning.

By 2024: Enhanced governance and collaboration between conservancies.

3. **Communities know about the benefits** of conservancies and the need to develop new conservancies

By 2022: Quarterly public forum meetings and media campaigns (radio, tv) are reaching key landowners.

By 2024: Community perceptions towards conservancies improve, supporting new conservancy and corridor development work under goal 2.

4. **Mara marketing strategy – One Mara Brand.**

By 2022: Establish the joint partnerships to develop the One Mara Brand Strategy and produce the first draft

By 2024: Active branding strategy implemented, generating national and international recognition that attracts tourists, quality investment, and advantageous partnerships

5. **Facilitate information sharing** between MMWCA and the Mara conservancies for mutual benefit and the enhancement of MMWCA's ability to amplify conservancy impact and brand visibility

By 2022: Annual State of the Mara publications produced

By 2024: Conservancy boards and management are well-informed of MMWCA work and activities on an ongoing basis.

6. **Increase youth engagement** and understanding of conservancy matters.

By 2022: Complete a youth strategy and action plan.

By 2024: Support 5 local youth groups to conduct local youth advocacy campaigns.



GOAL FIVE

Support conservancies to have resilient and diversified revenue models

Success: Conservancies have customised, diversified, and robust sources of income that can sustain their operating costs and lease payments.

Why the goal is important: Enhancing self-reliance within conservancies ensures the long-term security of land under conservation. Enhancing and diversifying the revenue models of conservancies increases benefits to land-owners over time while effectively managing risk against future disturbances.

COVID-19 Recovery Objective:

1. Fundraise for and operate an emergency operations fund to ensure conservancies remain operational until tourism rebounds from the impact of the pandemic.
2. Establish an emergency reserve fund for conservancies to buffer from future disturbances.

Objectives:

1. **Advocate for the formation** of a regional management company that will oversee management of revenue generation projects across multiple conservancies.

By 2022: MMWCA has supported the regional management company to become operational and focus on piloting carbon and livestock regional projects.

By 2024: MMWCA will participate in the governance of the regional management company. Advising on the delivery of exceptional management and project oversight to cross-conservancy revenue generating projects and providing financial support to conservancies.

2. **Oversee the initiation of projects** that help underrepresented stakeholders (women and youth) develop alternative sources of income tied to the benefits of conservation.

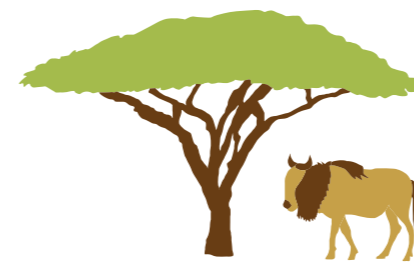
By 2022: Support the implementation of 6 small scale income generating pilot projects.

By 2024: At least 4 projects are successfully generating revenue and connected with conservancies.

3. **Develop a mechanism to support conservancies** in evaluating potential tourism partners in conservancies.

By 2022: Develop and launch a tourism evaluation tool.

By 2024: At least 6 new successful tourism partnerships have been established through use of the tool.



GOAL SIX

MMWCA is a well-functioning organisation capable of delivering its mission

Success: A well-functioning organisation delivering results to the Mara ecosystem.

Why the goal is important: An effective, high-capacity team is necessary for MMWCA to deliver on its mission and achieve their desired impact.

Objectives:

1. **Optimise MMWCA's M&E systems** by strengthening data collection, data quality, and build capacity staff.

By 2022: Establish a fully operational management information system aligned to MMWCA's strategic plan.

By 2024: Generate understanding of impact and best practices, using the knowledge to scale success and innovate for sustainable future programmes.

2. **Strengthen and retain** a high-performing, professional, high-capacity team.

By 2021: Increase focus on a culture of diversity and inclusion, working towards attaining a 2/3 gender principle in MMWCA's senior management team.

By 2022: Ensure MMWCA's senior management team and finance department are optimized to the growth of the organization, provided required financial and leadership oversight.

By 2023: Establish and operationalise a result-based performance management and reward system.

By 2024: Nurture organisational culture through continual investment in staff care and well-being programmes. Increase the representation of women in the Conservancies Council by 30%.

Design and implement an internal leadership framework (mentorship opportunities, leadership training, succession planning) to provide growth opportunities for women and youth in MMWCA.

3. **Establish a long-term resource mobilisation** framework to support MMWCA future growth and sustainability.

By 2022: Develop and implement a resource mobilisation strategy. Ensure staff and board are well equipped to be active and effective fundraisers.

By 2024: Develop and operationalize MMWCA's sustainability plan to ensure organisational continuity

4. **Execute exceptional communications**, improving MMWCA's reputation and organisational operations.

By 2022: Undertake sustained traditional and digital media presence and campaigns.

By 2024: Develop and implement a marketing and communication strategy. Successful investment in relationship building with key stakeholders and benefactors leading to new funding opportunities.

Resources and Partnerships

Local partners:

Local partners
Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association
Kenya Wildlife Service
Kenya Wildlife Trust
Mara Elephant Project
Narok County Government
Basecamp Explorer Foundation
Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT)
Mara Elephant Project
The MAA Trust
Maliasili
Koiyaki Guiding School
Karen Blixen Cooking School
Mara Discovery Centre
Maasai Mara University
Narok West Training College.

Donors:

Asilia Trust
Avaaz
Basecamp Explorer Foundation
Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF)
Dyreparken (Kristiansand Zoo and Amusement Park - Norway)
LGT Venture Philanthropy
Maliasili
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)
The Band Family Foundation
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Tusk Trust
USAid

Conservancy Operation (OPEX) Fund Donors:

Band Foundation
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
LGT Venture Philanthropy
Lion Recovery Fund
Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU)
Oak Foundation CJRF
USAID
Virgin Unite

Acknowledgement

The development of this Strategic Plan was made possible by the invaluable input and support of various individuals and organisations. Firstly, we recognise our stakeholders for valuable input on both past performance and plans for the future of MMWCA. Additionally, we acknowledge the invaluable contribution and guidance provided by the MMWCA Board.

The development of the Plan was also made possible by the contribution and meaningful participation of MMWCA Staff and the expert technical support of Maliasili, who guided the development process. Further, we remain indebted to LGT Venture Philanthropy and the Maasai Landscape Conservation Fund for their steadfast support and financial assistance that made the development of this Plan possible.

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