



Maliasili  
Conservation  
Fund

# 2025 Impact Report

Investing in Africa's community conservation leaders  
- for **people**, **climate** & **nature**



Maliasili  
Conservation  
Fund

## Key Highlights

- 28 partner organizations | 3 key geographies
- \$14.5 million raised
- 59 million hectares of conservation reach
- 8+ million people reached
- 94% of organizations reported a deepening of their impact

## Organizational Strength

- \$88,000 – average annual grant size per organization
- \$350,000 – average total expenditure growth per organization
- Leverage: For every \$1 from MCF, partners unlocked about \$3 in additional funding
- 28% growth in team size

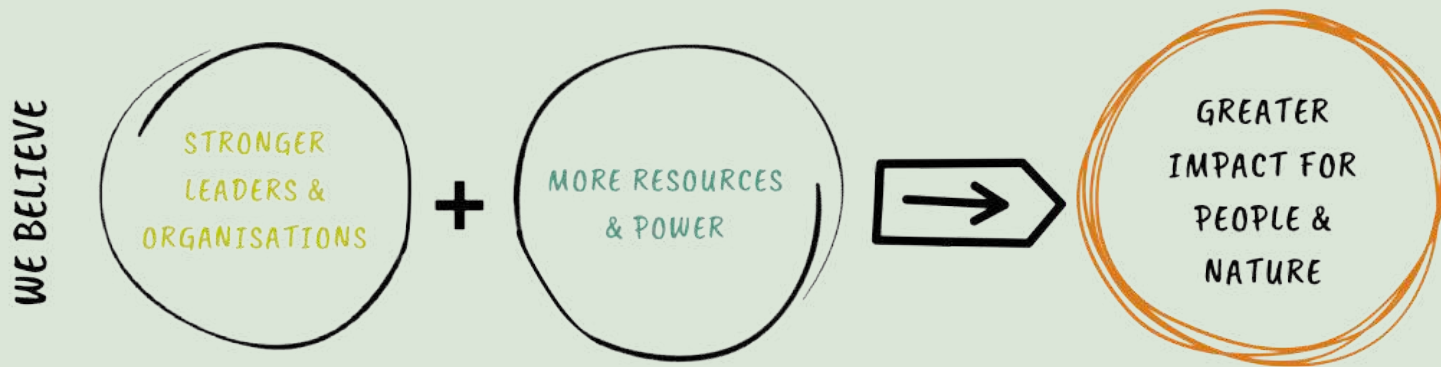


# Introduction

## About Maliasili & the Maliasili Conservation Fund

**Maliasili's mission is to accelerate community-led conservation through local organizations.** We work with a carefully selected portfolio of leading local African organizations that are working directly with communities to manage, benefit from, and steward their lands and natural resources.

Our role is to strengthen local organizations, enhance leadership capacity, and fundraise so that more money gets to the right people.



**In 2023, we launched the Maliasili Conservation Fund (MCF) as a mechanism to get more funding into the hands of outstanding local community conservation organizations.**

The Maliasili Conservation Fund (MCF) is a pooled fund providing multi-year, unrestricted support to a portfolio of the best and brightest organizations working in three key geographics in Africa. MCF invests in community-led organization as they address climate, wildlife conservation, local resource rights, and livelihoods, helping to spread innovative and high-impact models, with local roots and leadership at the helm of the African conservation narrative.

## **Responding to a Systemic Challenge**

Despite the talent, commitment, and impact of local organizations, the global funding architecture has made it exceedingly difficult for local organizations to increase their impact, and set the agenda for the African conservation space. Globally, Indigenous Peoples and local community organizations receive less than 1% of all climate funding. African organizations receive only around 10% of all private philanthropic funding invested across the continent. We asked some of Africa's leading community conservation organizations what could help them increase their impact and do their work even better. The overwhelming majority said: longer-term, flexible, core/unrestricted funding.



## Maliasili Conservation Fund Funders

The MCF was conceptualised as a collaboration between the grantees, funders and Maliasili, each group playing distinct roles in pursuit of conservation impact. The following represent a dedicated group of funders who pooled money together to make the Maliasili Conservation Fund possible. It also includes \$4M allocated by Maliasili from a 2022 one-time gift from MacKenzie Scott.



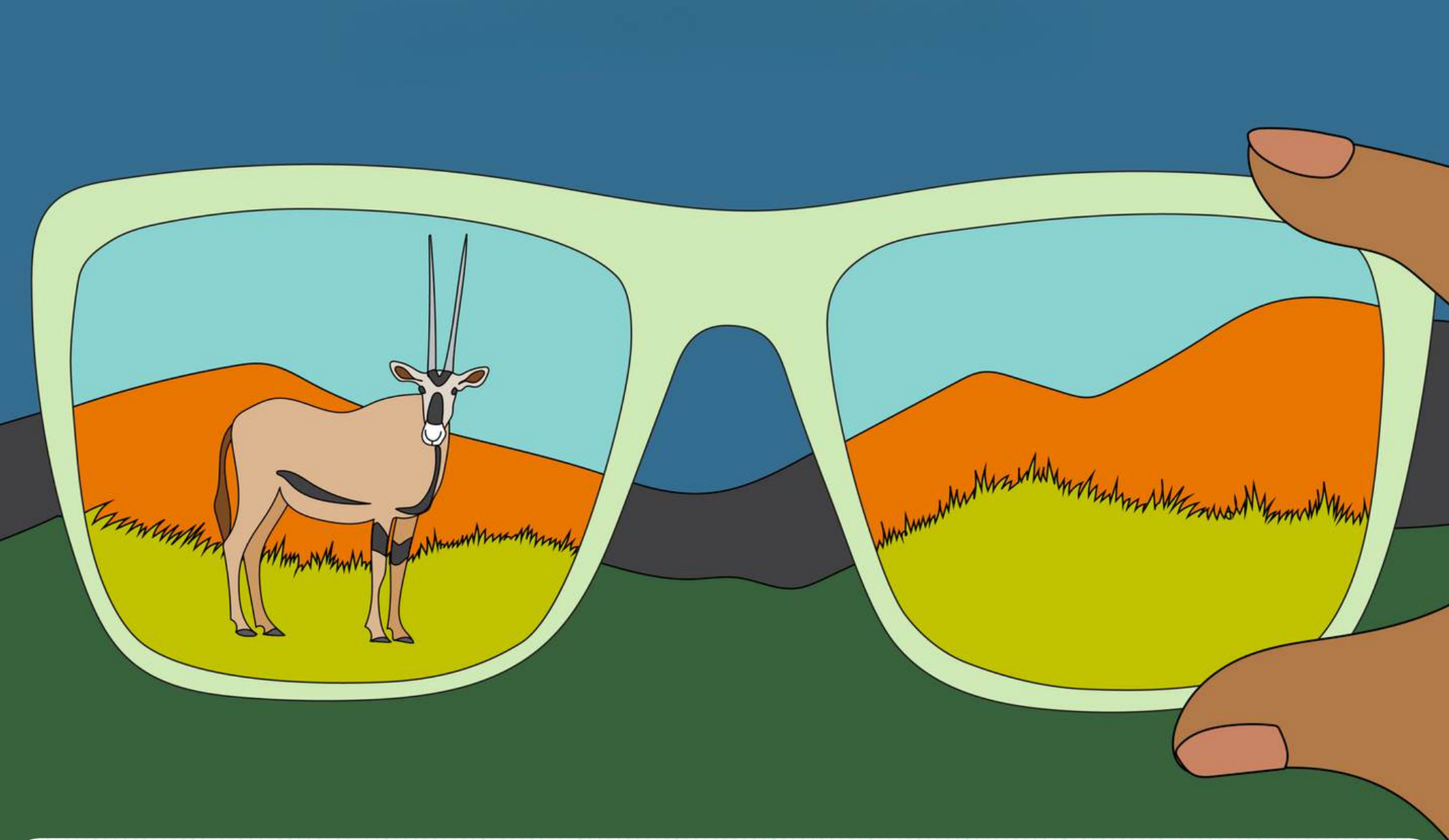
## About this report

We developed MCF as more than a funding platform. We also designed it as a way to test and learn from a new funding model, so that our experience can help the conservation sector invest in impact more efficiently and effectively.

Each year we collect impact and organizational data from our MCF partners. We also collect feedback from them. Our goal is to learn from them about how they are using their funding, what is helpful (and what isn't), and what enables them to achieve greater conservation impact.

This report shares what we're learning. It includes data and stories of conservation impact made possible through unrestricted funding, data on organizational development, and analysis of how flexible support helps partners strengthen their strategies, systems, and results.





## At a Glance

# Meet the MCF partner organisations:



## East Africa



## Southern Africa

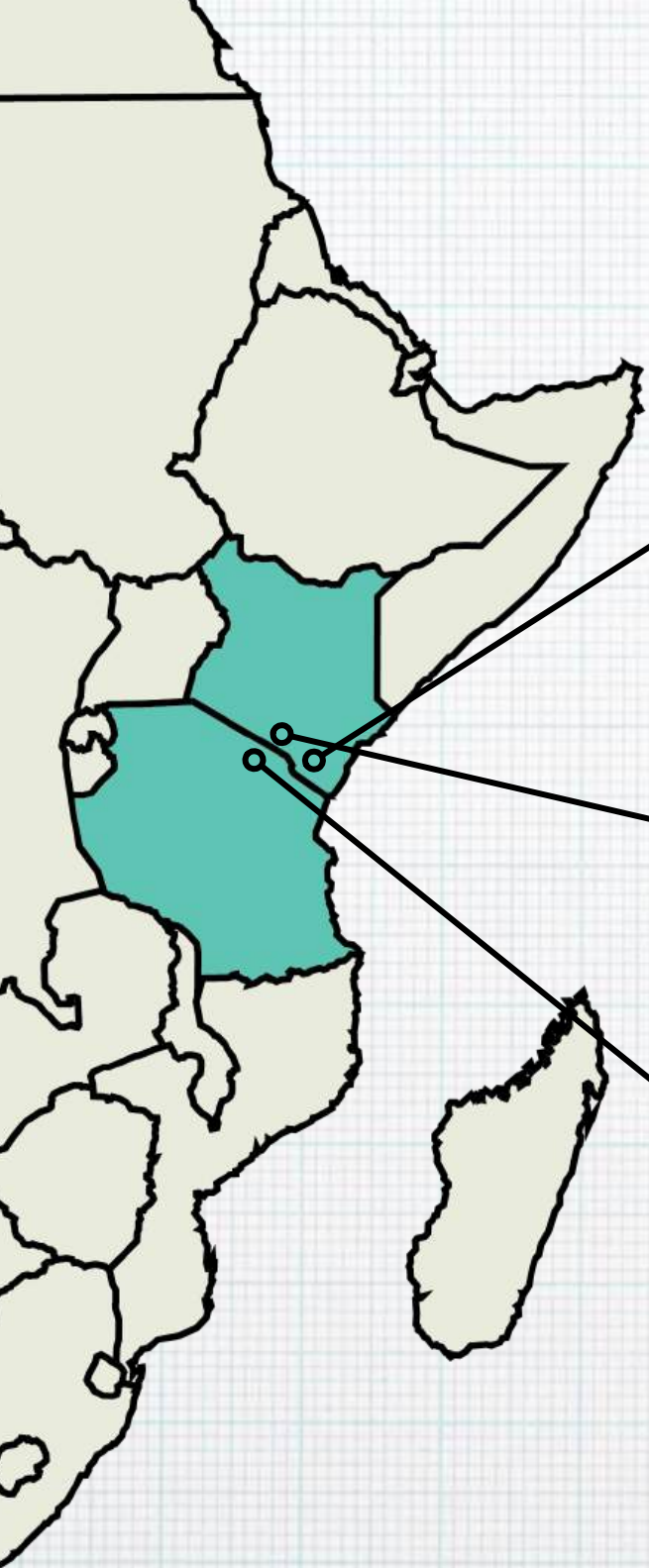


## Madagascar



# Impact Snapshots

## Geography: South Kenya, Northern Tanzania



**Tsavo Trust:** Tsavo Trust works across the important Tsavo Ecosystem, spanning 4 million hectares that is home to 16,000 elephants, 450 lions and a plethora of other wildlife. In 2024 alone, the Black rhino population increased by 5.6% while bushmeat poaching reduced by 74%. In Kamungi conservancy, they saw an 80% reduction in human-elephant conflict while also seeing a tripling in elephant and zebra numbers.



**SORALO:** SORALO is safeguarding the South Rift's wildlife and rangelands by strengthening community-led conservation. In 2024, 360,702 hectares were managed under communal conservancies, which is a doubling of the land area from 2022. SORALO supports 10,340 hectares as restoration area, and has supported communities to register 111,000 hectares of land under Kenya's Community Land Act.



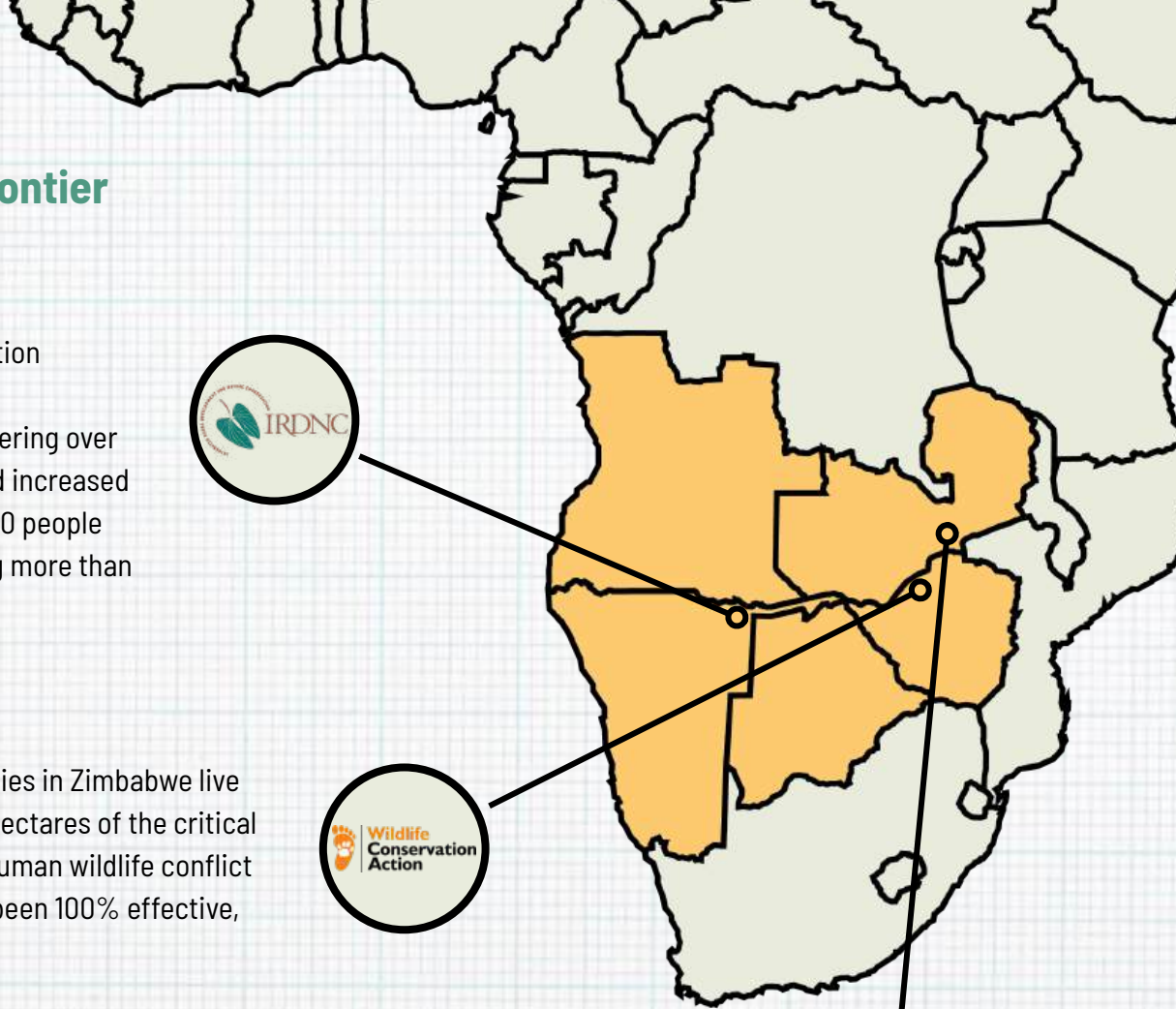
**Kope Lion:** Kope Lion is turning human-wildlife conflict into coexistence in Tanzania's Ngorongoro landscape. In the past two years, not a single lion was killed for traditional purposes in their core area—thanks to 30+ Ilchokuti (lion guardians), most of whom are reformed lion hunters. With two "corridors of tolerance" now linking key lion habitats, Kope Lions has recorded a 28% growth in the lion population in Ngorongoro Conservation area in the past three years.

## Geography: Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA)

**IRDNC:** Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation pioneered a new model of conservation in Namibia that put communities at the center. Now, with 46 conservancies covering over 4.3 million hectares, they've helped grow wildlife tenfold and increased elephant populations eightfold since 1980. More than 100,000 people benefit directly from conservation where they work, earning more than \$3 million in revenue from natural resource management.

**WCA:** Wildlife Conservation Action is helping communities in Zimbabwe live alongside wildlife sustainably. In fact, across 2 million hectares of the critical wildlife areas where they work, they've helped reduce human wildlife conflict by 60% while their efforts to safeguard livestock have been 100% effective, helping save a total of \$2.3 million worth of livestock.

**ZCP:** The Zambian Carnivore Programme is conserving Zambia's lions, leopards, cheetahs, hyenas, and wild dogs while strengthening ecosystems and community wellbeing. In 2024, ZCP monitored over 1,200 carnivores, and specifically 455 wild dogs in 39 packs and 483 lions in 73 prides. They desnares 16 animals and vaccinated nearly 3,000 domestic dogs. By combining science, action, and leadership, ZCP is protecting nearly 4 million hectares of habitat and ensuring that people and wildlife can thrive together.

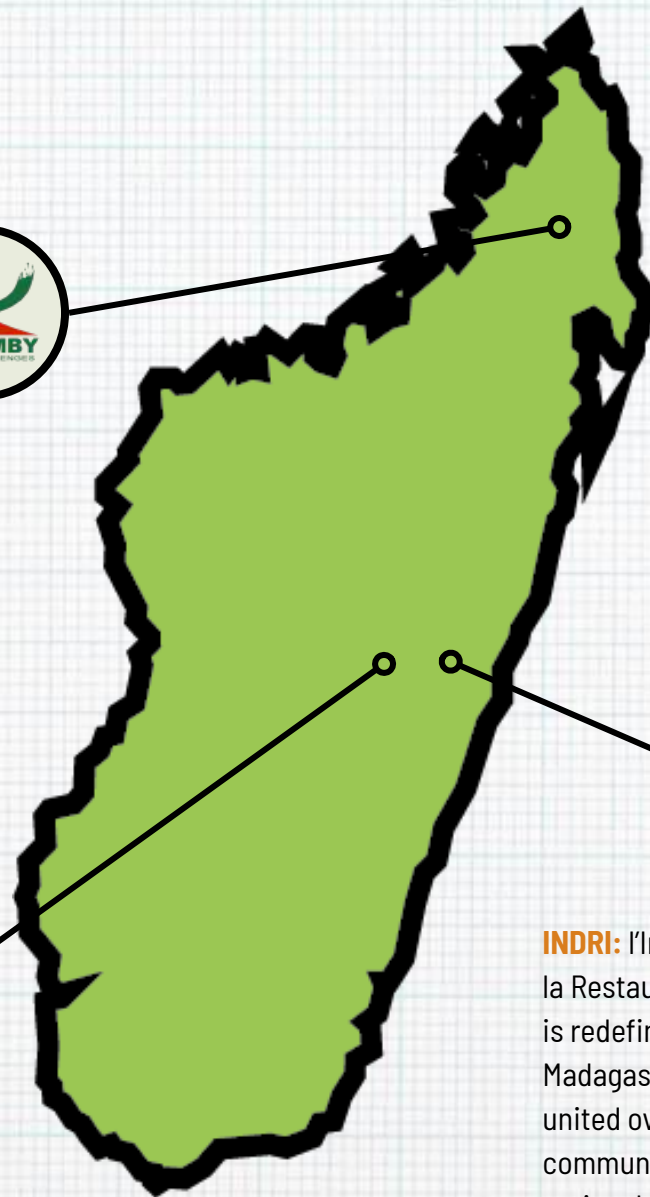


## Geography Madagascar

**Fanamby:** Fanamby is one of Madagascar's leading homegrown conservation organizations, working with communities to sustain over 500,000 hectares of forest across six protected areas spread around the country. Across these landscapes, full of endemic species, key achievements include reducing forest loss by 50%; reforesting 383 hectares; supporting 12 Village Savings and Loan Associations to increase the value of their loans to community members by 55%; and helping generate more than \$500,000 from vanilla production to local farmers.

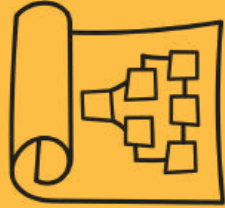


**MV:** Madagasikara Voakajy (MV) has advanced conservation across 117,120 hectares of land in Madagascar through applied research, helping downlist the golden mantella frog from "Critically Endangered" to "Endangered." They also played a key role in establishing Protected Areas, securing habitats for species like Grandidier's baobab and Tarzan's chameleon.



**INDRI:** l'Initiative pour le Développement, la Restauration écologique et l'Innovation is redefining environmental leadership in Madagascar. In just four years, it has united over 300 organizations and local communities to turn bold ideas into national action—shaping the country's first strategy to fight forest fires and pausing highway developments that threaten critical rainforest and rural livelihoods. From village workshops to high-level policy, INDRi transforms collective intelligence into lasting impact.

## Where we're at...2023 - 2025



**3 out of 4 years of support  
(2023, 2024, 2025)**



**Secured \$14.4 million  
total fund**



**Disbursed \$7.3 million to  
local organizations so far**



**\$1,472,400 invested on  
organizational development  
and \$981,600 on fund  
management**



**Supporting 28 local organizations,  
across 3 key conservation  
geographies (East African  
rangelands, KAZA, Madagascar)**

## What partners say

92%



found the funding approach to be exemplary and unique among other funding they receive

96%



used the funds toward core operational costs that are hard to cover under traditional programmatic or activity-focused funding

85%



used the funds to hire new staff or increase salaries, strengthening a key foundation for organizational success and impact

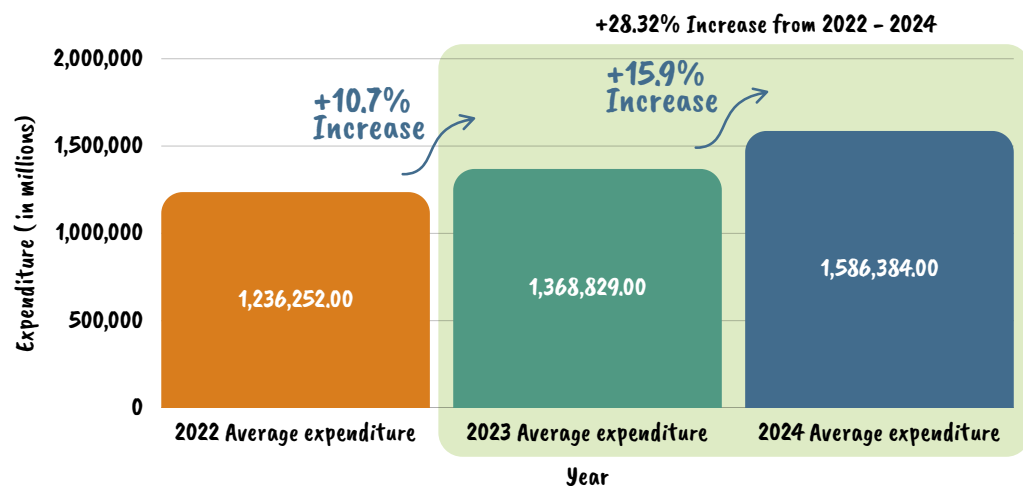
65%



found that this approach simplified administration and reporting, reducing the time and energy spent on bureaucracy

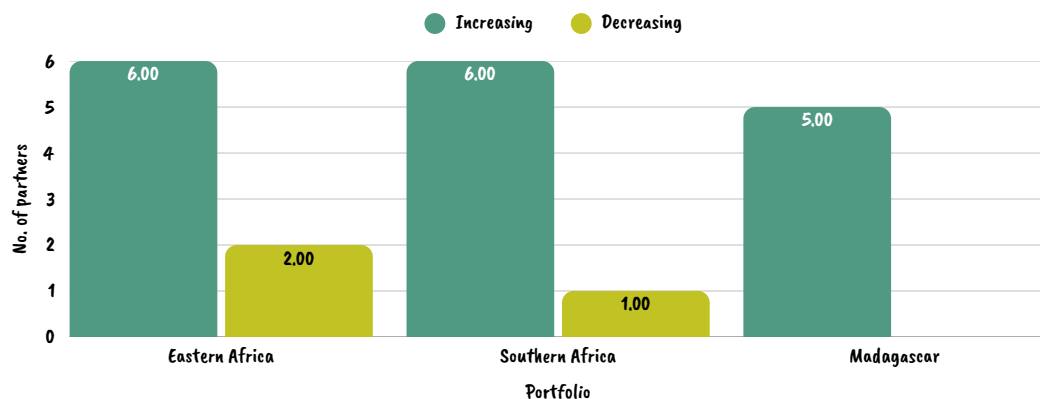
## Organizational Growth

### Average Expenditure 2022-2024



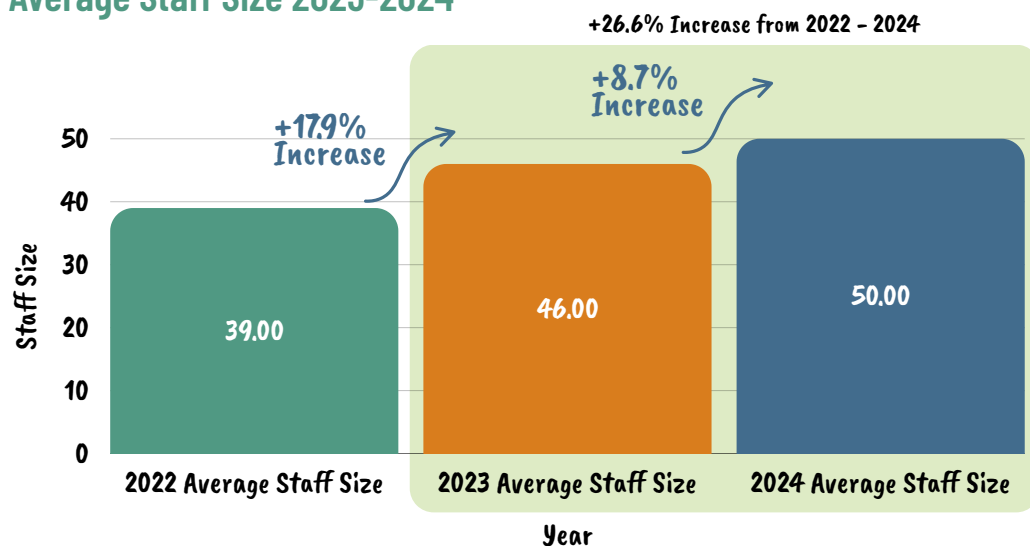
We use expenditure as our greatest proxy for the amount of “effort” our partners are able to put into their work in a given year. The amount of money an organisation spends in a year directly translates into the team and projects they are able to invest in. Therefore, this indicator, and the change over time of this indicator, is the best proxy we have for our partner’s impact potential.

### Partner Expenditure Trends 2023-2024



## Organizational Growth

### Average Staff Size 2023-2024



Staff size is the indicator we use to best describe the growth, or change, of an organization. The team size is a good proxy for the overall capacity the organization has to do their work.

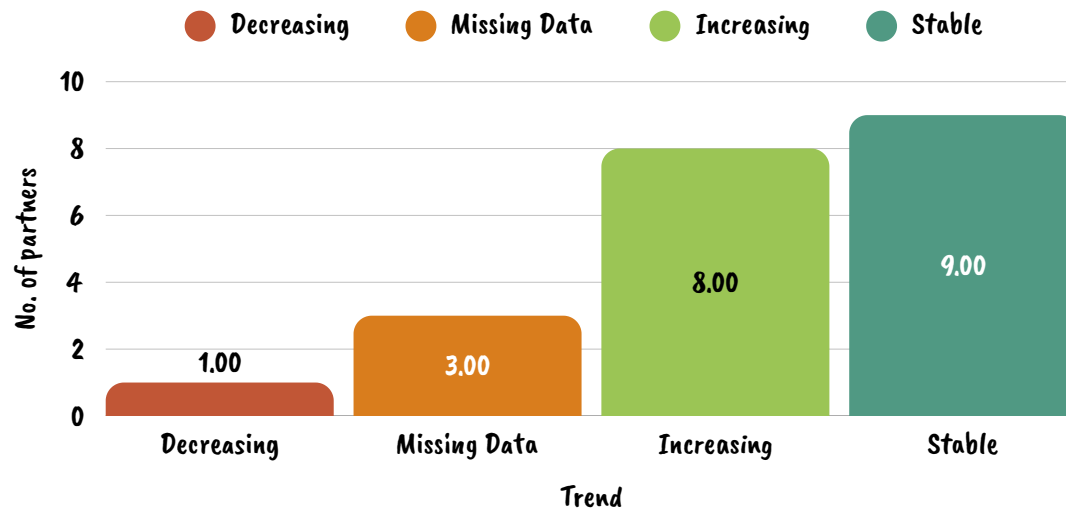
### Average No. of Donors over \$5000



Number of donors, percent from largest donor, and percent of unrestricted budget all help us see if an organization is increasingly financially stable with less reliance on a single donor. It can show growing resilience and growing organizational strength.

## Organizational Impact

### Impact Trend 2023-2024



94%

of Maliasili's MCF partners reported data showing either increasing or sustaining impact between 2023 and 2024.





**An Evolving Concept:  
Learning, refining, achieving**

## MCF: Informed by experience

Over many years of partnering with and funding local organizations, Maliasili has gained deep insights into what works. We've learned which types of funding - and which grantmaking structures and systems - are most effective and impactful. Our open conversations with our partners help to shift power and agency to the point of impact, allowing conservation leaders to guide us to the type of funding that is truly fit for purpose.



### 2012 - 2020

From our founding, Maliasili has always looked for ways to get flexible, core funding to our partners. Whether from direct grants or by connecting funders to our partners, this has been a key part of our support.



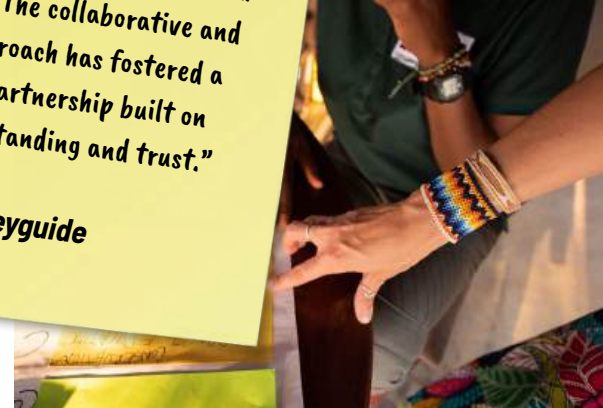
### 2020-2022 - The Maasai Landscape Conservation Fund

A formalized pooled funding mechanism to support local organizations at the forefront of community-led conservation efforts in East Africa



### 2023-2026 - The Maliasili Conservation Fund

Established in 2023, the MCF was designed as a four-year fund, intended to support and scale locally-led conservation efforts. The MCF built upon what was learned from the MLCF and is a scaled up version of that original funding model.



*"The success of our Yaeda program, our work with the Hadzabe, has a lot to do with the support of Maliasili. They helped us secure core funds, which was critical in supporting this work on the ground."  
(2016)*

**Dismas Partalaya, UCRT Founding Member and Yaeda and Lake Eyasi Program Coordinator**

*"MCF funding aligns seamlessly with our strategic objectives, particularly in governance and community-based conservation. The collaborative and adaptive approach has fostered a productive partnership built on mutual understanding and trust."*

**Honeyguide**

## Greening the Grassroots: Gaining Insights through Research

In addition to testing out grant making practices, we also asked questions about funding challenges and opportunities to funders and African civil society organizations directly. In 2022, we published the Report [Greening the Grassroots](#), which through interviews, surveys, and desktop research identified key barriers to funding faced by African CSOs as well as recommendations for breaking those barriers down. The development of MCF was very much informed by the findings from the report.



# Greening the grassroots

Rethinking African Conservation Funding

July 2022

African CSOs perspectives



Improve Funding Policies & Practices

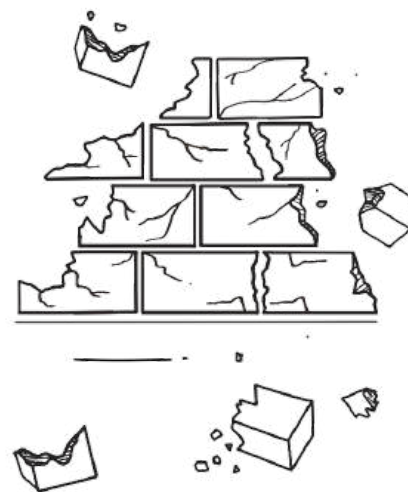
Make Funding Processes Easier and More Accessible

Increase Direct Funding of African CSOs

Improving funder-CSO relationships- building trust and sharing risk

Strengthen CSOs' fundraising capacity and networks

Breaking down barriers



Funders perspectives



Invest in more re-granters, pooled funds, and funder collectives, ideally locally-based ones

Take on greater transaction (and other) costs

Include those with local experience in decision-making

Fund organizational development and capacity

Utilize available mechanisms to address legal barriers

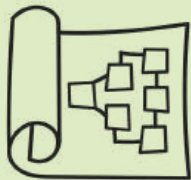
Adopt user-friendly processes

Treat CSOs and larger organizations equitably

# The Maliasili Conservation Fund

## 2023-2026

Established in 2023, the MCF was designed as a four-year fund, intended to support and scale locally-led conservation efforts. The MCF built upon what was learned from the MLCF and is a scaled up version of that original funding model.



3 out of 4 years of support (2023, 2024, 2025)



Secured \$14.4 million total fund



Supporting 28 local organizations, across 3 key conservation geographies:

- East African rangelands, 12 organizations, \$4.5m
- KAZA - 10 organizations, \$1.7m
- Madagascar - 6 organizations, \$1.1m



Disbursed \$7.3 million to local organizations so far



\$1,472,400 invested on organizational development and \$981,600 on fund management

## What partners say about MCF

2023-2026

### Investing in organizations, not just projects or deliverables, matters for long-term impact.

A unique feature of MCF is its investment in organizational development support to its grantees. Maliasili works together with MCF partners to develop an annual “Organizational Strengthening Plan” to map out areas to work on together. Beyond that specific work, Maliasili also provides leadership development opportunities and support to its MCF partners as well as fundraising connections and support.

**The organizational development contributions of the MCF across the three years (2023-2025) included:**



#### Strategic plans

17 organisations strengthened through strategic planning process



#### Communications and fundraising

22 organizations supported with training, strategies, websites and fundraising documents



#### Monitoring, evaluation and learning

10 organizations supported with MEL training and plans

*“The development of organizational capacity is a foundational element for achieving high-impact results. When an organization’s internal systems, staff skills, and strategic focus are strengthened, it becomes more agile and efficient in delivering its mission.”*

**Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association**

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt with a white and gold patterned design, is standing in a workshop. She is looking down at a whiteboard on an easel, which is covered with yellow and pink sticky notes. The room has wooden walls and large windows in the background. To the right, another whiteboard is visible, also covered with sticky notes and diagrams. The overall atmosphere is one of active collaboration and strategic planning.

**"The MCF funds enabled us to carry out critical meetings, workshops, and retreats to evaluate and restructure MV to align more effectively with our mission. This process of reflection and planning allowed us to create a structure that will better support our strategic goals."**

**Madagasikara Voakajy**



## Core and unrestricted funds are critical

There are two main areas where partners used MCF funds, which is aligned to where other unrestricted funding mechanisms have seen investments made, specifically on adding new staff or being able to maintain certain posts.

### Staff support and team capacity

**Salaries:** 61% used funds to cover or support salaries, including raising salaries to support better staff retention.

**New staff:** 71% used funds to hire new staff

**Training and capacity building:** 57% used funds to strengthen their team

### Operations


**Equipment and infrastructure:** 61% used funds to procure field equipment or build infrastructure

**Field operations expenses:** 61% used funds to support field operations



*"The funds have enabled the recruitment of two full-time staff members (a communication officer and, an operation officer) and three interns, upscaling the organization's capacity to deliver the intended mission."*

**Community Wildlife Management Areas Consortium**



*"[We] plugged many funding gaps that are critical for running the organization. These included vehicle expenses, fuel, uniform, rations for staff, maintenance costs, end of year accounting costs, travel costs, etc...Having the unrestricted funding meant that we did not have to slow down."*


**CLAWS**





## Unrestricted funding supports innovation and scaling

Unlike conventional funding approaches that often emphasize programmatic activities and project outputs in order to clearly link funding to outcomes, the MCF emphasizes a whole organizational approach framed around core and unrestricted support. Under this model, it is difficult to make direct connections between investment and impact. Yet, the organizations involved in the MCF believe there are linkages between funding and impact. Because they have proven impact models, flexible and unrestricted investments in their capacity and operations are simultaneously direct investments in their strategies and therefore impacts.



*"[We could] allocate funds in areas with no or limited funds and mostly provide an opportunity for creativity and innovation in implementing new activities that contribute to our goals."*

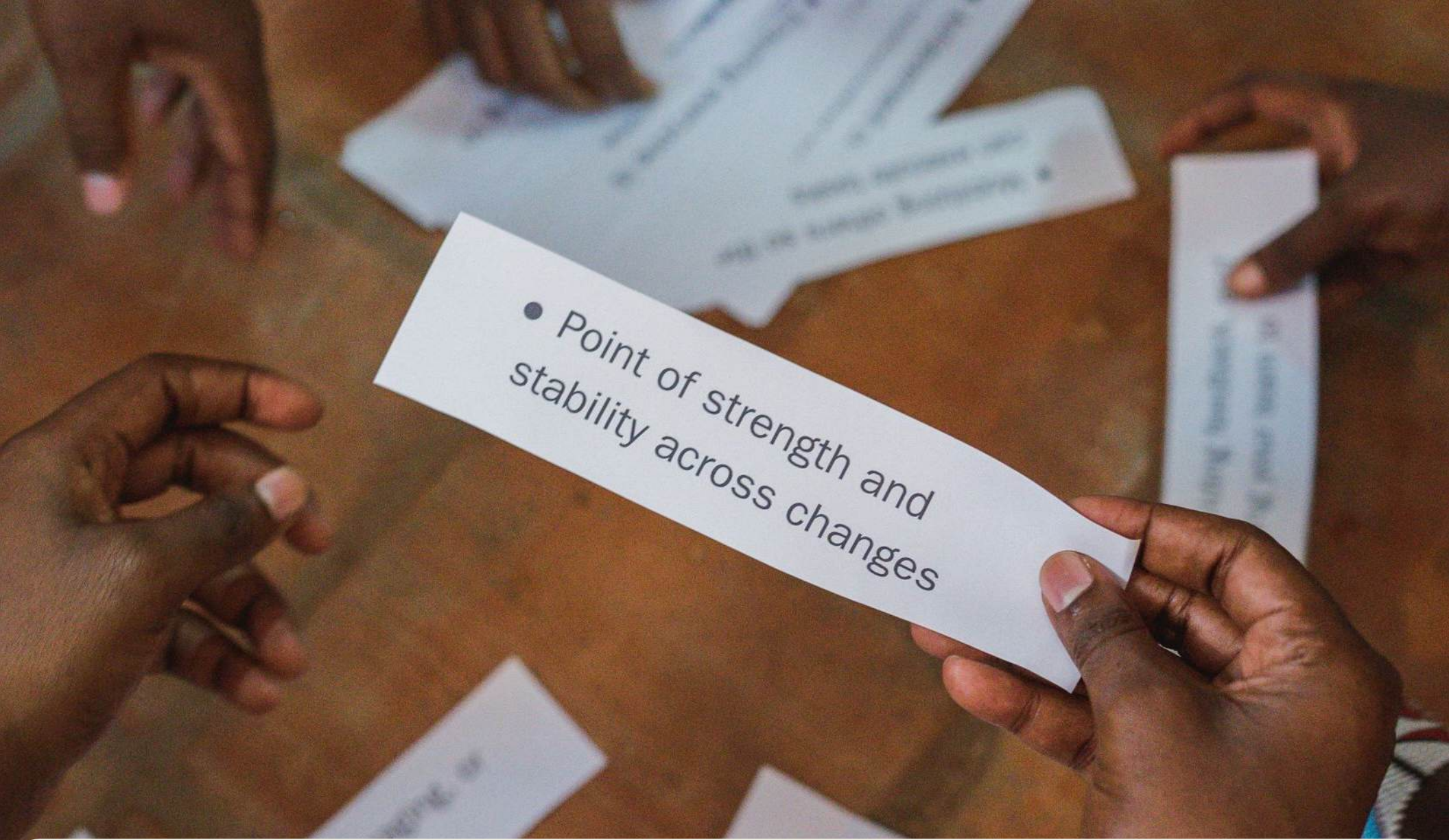
**Kope Lion**



*"...MCF gave us the confidence to test new ideas, learn from what did not work, and build on what did. That freedom to experiment has been central to the growth of our impact in Tanzania"*

**Honeyguide**



- 
- A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a white rectangular card. The card features a single bullet point. The background shows a wooden table with several other similar white cards scattered around, some of which are partially visible and contain faint text. The lighting is warm, and the focus is sharp on the card being held.
- Point of strength and stability across changes

**Partner Highlights: Organizational Growth,  
Community Conservation Impact**

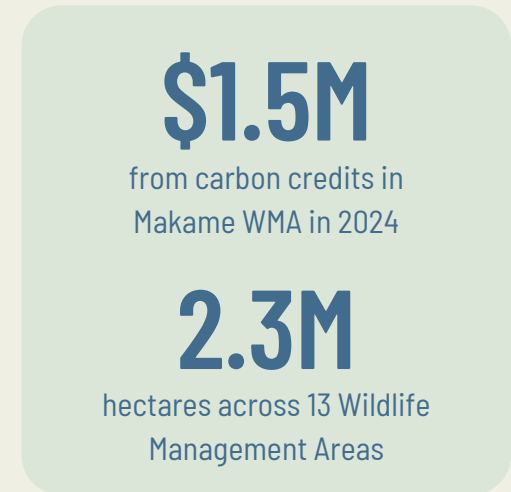


## Partner highlights: Honeyguide



### Organizational Impact

Honeyguide is empowering communities in Tanzania to lead conservation across 13 Wildlife Management Areas covering **2.3 million hectares**. In 2024, they trained 176 Wildlife Management Area leaders, supported 377 rangers, and equipped 450 farmers with conflict-mitigation tools, achieving up to 95% effectiveness in protecting crops from elephants. With WMAs like Makame WMA earning over **\$1.5 million from carbon credits** in 2024 and Makao WMA over **\$630,000** from tourism, Honeyguide is proving that conservation delivers when communities are in charge.



### Organizational Growth

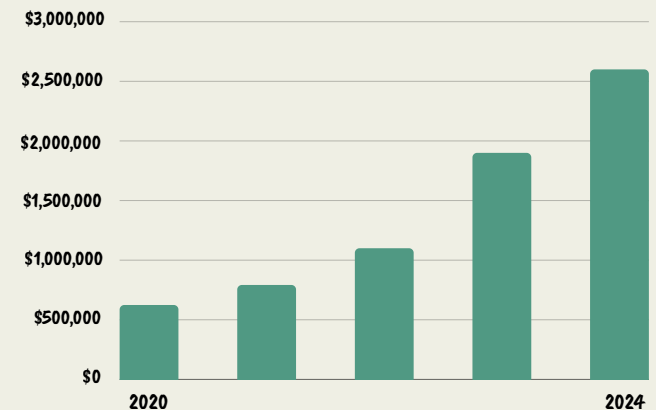



Over the last three years Honeyguide saw a doubling of their annual expenditure, spending \$2.6 million in 2024.



Honeyguide increased their donor base since 2022, adding five new donors who contribute more than \$5000 USD/year.

Expenditure





**“MCF funding.. has proven invaluable in addressing gaps left by restricted funds..This has been particularly evident in [one community conservation area], where MCF funds allowed critical activities to proceed, ensuring that the team remained creative and open-minded in delivering impactful solutions. This adaptability has helped achieve more with limited resources while focusing on long-term goals.**

**Honeyguide**

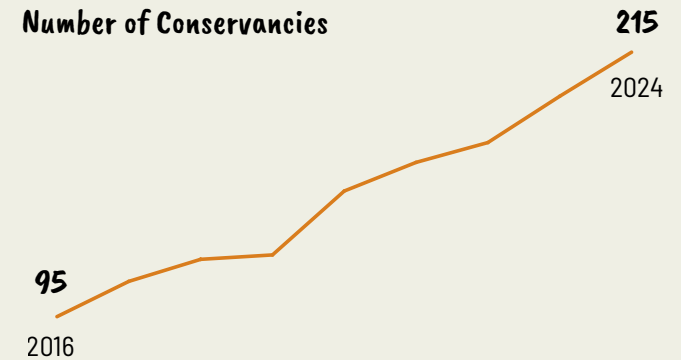


## Partner highlights: KWCA



### Organizational Impact

KWCA is reshaping conservation in Kenya by putting landowners and communities at the center. Today, **230 conservancies** protect **10.1 million hectares**—18% of the country’s land—while creating jobs, securing wildlife corridors, and driving local development. As the national association for conservancies, KWCA unites the community led network, turning grassroots conservation into a national force for change. In 2024, KWCA was appointed as a working group member to review the **Wildlife Act 2013**.



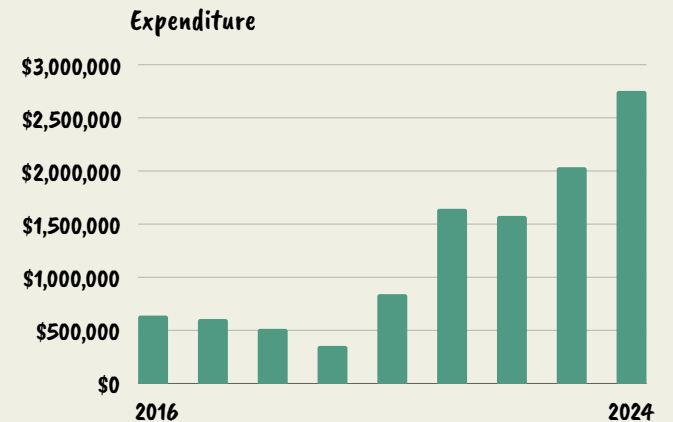
### Organizational Growth




Over the last 3 years KWCA increased its expenditure by over 40% - spending \$2.75m in 2024.



KWCA decreased its dependence on a single donor by diversifying their donor revenue. In 2022 their largest donor contributed 38% of their total revenue and in 2025 the largest donor contributed just 21%.



A woman with a green and black patterned headwrap and a white short-sleeved shirt is speaking into a microphone. She is surrounded by a diverse group of people, some wearing blue shirts with a logo. The background shows a natural, outdoor setting with trees and a clear sky.

*"The MCF Funding enables KWCA to deliver on its mandate and strategic plan, in a big way. ..*

*Flexibility enables KWCA to allocate funds where they are most needed, whether it's for improving infrastructure, building staff capacity, or ensuring operational sustainability, all of which are essential for long-term success."*

***Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association***



Zimbabwe

## Partner highlights: WCA

### Organizational Impact

Wildlife Conservation Action is helping communities in Zimbabwe live alongside wildlife sustainably. In fact, in critical wildlife areas where they work, they've helped **reduce human wildlife conflict by 60%** while their efforts to safeguard livestock have been 100% effective. WCA's Community Guardians cover more than **2 million hectares** of land, responding to human-wildlife conflict incidents, providing solutions, and enhancing community and livestock safety.

### Organizational Growth



Since 2022, WCA has increased its revenue four fold, with USD \$1.1 million revenue in 2024.



In the last 5 years, WCA has gone from 100% dependence on a single donor to now just 33% dependence on its largest donor.



Wildlife Conservation Action

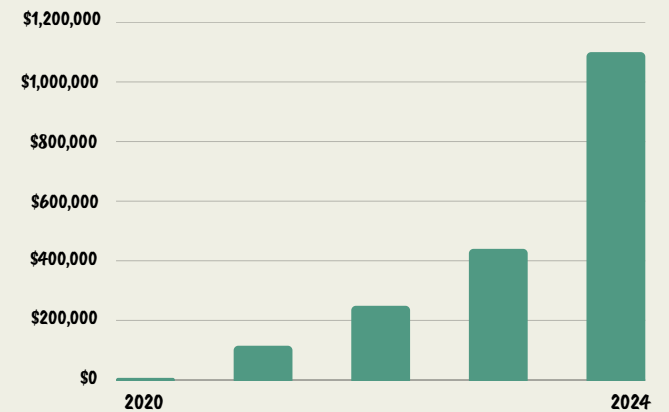
60%


reduction in Human Wildlife Conflict

\$2.3M

value of 16 140 livestock protected

Revenue



A photograph of two lions resting on a grassy bank next to a body of water. The lion on the left is lying down, while the one on the right is sitting up. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding landscape. The background features a savanna with tall grasses and scattered trees under a clear sky.

**“This type of funding has proven invaluable...it allows us to address unforeseen needs and expenses that we may not have budgeted for at the beginning of the year, enabling us to remain agile and responsive to changing circumstances while continuing to make progress toward our mission.”**

**Wildlife Conservation Action**



Botswana

## Partner highlights: CLAWS

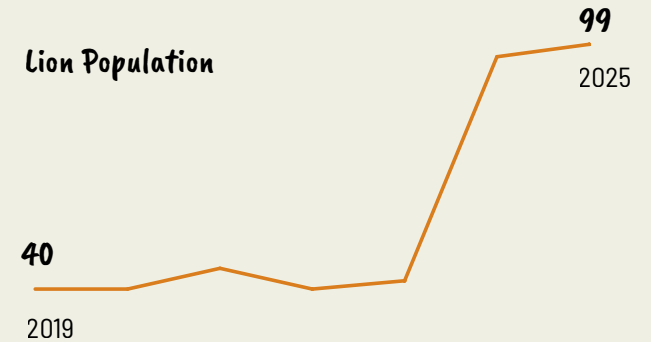


CLAWS CONSERVANCY

COMMUNITIES LIVING AMONG WILDLIFE SUSTAINABLY

### Organizational Impact

Through a new and sustainable livestock management technique CLAWS have helped facilitate the first sale of Certified Wildlife Friendly Beef in Africa providing a 10% premium to individual farmers. CLAWS has also helped see a **50% reduction in human-lion conflict** through a Lion Alert System, with **lion killings dropping from 25 in 2013 to zero recorded in 2024**. With the expansion of their team, they have identified **99 individual lions** in their study area which is more than double the number they knew in 2022 due to greater outreach and cub survivorship in more stable prides.



### Organizational Growth

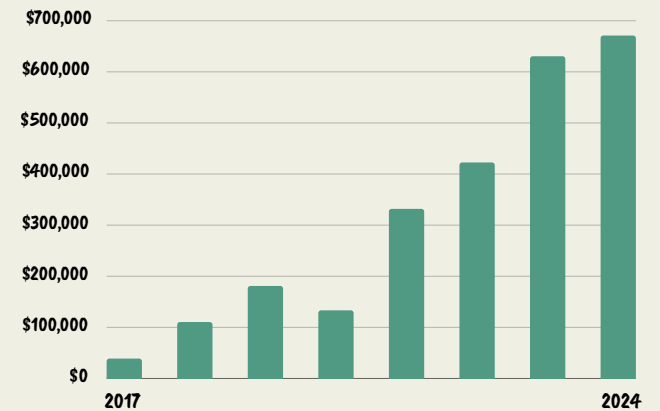


CLAWS has more than doubled its budget since 2022, with annual revenue of more than USD \$840,000 in 2024.



Over the past four years, CLAWS has grown its team from 21 to 41 employees.

### Expenditure





*"The MCF helped us achieve our Strategic Planning goals by providing competitive salaries for qualified staff that rebuilt our organization, established networks for deeper collaborations, and time to implement our plans.*

*Where other funding sources limited our growth with inflexible investment, the MCF has [helped] us and our partner communities to reach beyond our initial goals for greater impact."*

**CLAWS**

## 📍 Madagascar

### Partner highlights: GERP

#### Organizational Impact

GERP is protecting Madagascar's critically endangered lemurs by conserving over **30,000 hectares of forest**, supporting local communities, and advancing scientific research to safeguard some of the planet's most threatened primates. As the delegated manager of the Maromizaha Protected Area (PA), GERP has implemented conservation strategies that have led to **0 fires and 0 pressure** in that forest for 5 years running.

#### Organizational Growth



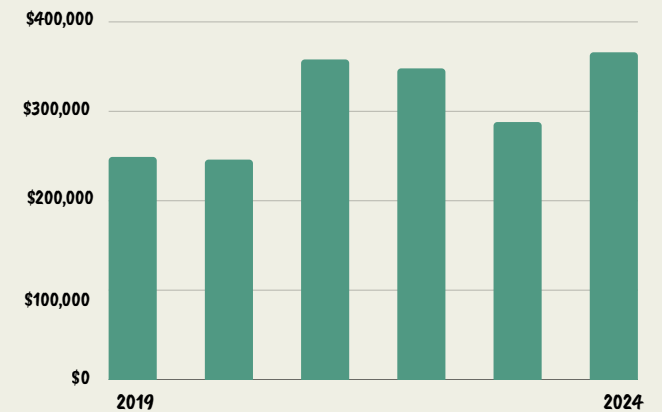
In 2024, 34% of GERP's funding was unrestricted, a massive increase from the less than 5% in 2022.



Over the same period of time, 2022 - 2024, GERP increased its revenue by approximately \$95,000.



#### Expenditure



A black and white lemur with striking yellow eyes is perched on a tree branch in a lush, green forest. The lemur is looking upwards and to the left. The background is filled with out-of-focus green leaves and branches, creating a natural, vibrant setting.

**“We...allocate a portion of the MCF funds towards upgrading our technological infrastructure and acquiring necessary equipment...These technological upgrades are crucial for improving efficiency, productivity, and communication within our organization, ultimately enhancing our ability to achieve our mission and goals.”**

**GERP**



## **Case Studies: Stories of Conservation Impact and Organizational Growth**

## Case study Tsimoka



Tsimoka has pioneered dry forest restoration and dynamic agroforestry techniques in Madagascar in order to improve ecosystem management, conserve biodiversity, and support local livelihoods.

Tsimoka was established in 2017 by a group of young conservationists eager to find conservation strategies that work. They began managing the Oronjia Protected Area in northern Madagascar, which is one of the last remnants of dry forest on the island. In Oronji they tested out their dynamic agroforestry technique, which helped to rehabilitate the ecosystem while also improving local livelihoods. Building on this model, Tsimoka developed a strategy to scale to other dry forest areas of Madagascar.

Over the next five years, Tsimoka plans to disseminate its techniques to ten partner organizations, promoting restoration and sustainable management across 500,000 hectares while impacting over 2000 households.

Results from Tsimoka's pioneering agroforestry efforts in Oronjia Protected Area:



**Forest loss and clearance has been reduced by 90%**



**Lemur population has grown by over 50%**



**Doubling of household income**

## How has the MCF catalyzed Tsimoka's work and impact?

MCF was the first time Tsimoka ever received unrestricted funding. They feel this type of funding has been instrumental in enabling them as a young and small organization to scale-up their efforts and expand their impact.

Between 2023-2025, Tsimoka received \$80,000 in funding. As a small organization, this has comprised about 25% of their budget.

MCF support has catalyzed Tsimoka's impacts in two foundational ways:

### **A broader, more ambitious strategy**

Small conservation organizations often face a dilemma when they want to expand their work and increase their impact: they struggle to attract donors and access the funding needed to fuel their ambitions. With support from the MCF, Tsimoka developed an ambitious new strategic plan to expand its restoration and agroforestry work to other dry forest regions and communities across Madagascar.

The combination of organizational development support and the stability of core, unrestricted funding enabled Tsimoka to think bigger and act on those ambitions, with the confidence that they have the resources to follow through. This kind of growth is difficult to achieve through more traditional, project-restricted funding models.

*"This was our first opportunity to access this kind of funding. It is very helpful for a young organization. Lots of donors don't yet have confidence in a small organization. The MCF funding helps us grow and expand our work, which can help attract other support."*

**Tsimoka**



## Establishing effective organizational functions are foundational to driving impact

The impacts Tsimoka is having on restoring dryland forest and strengthening livelihoods through dynamic agroforestry are directly linked to having an effective organization.

Recognizing these connections, Tsimoka is using support through the MCF to strengthen some core organizational functions including communications and monitoring and evaluation, that then will enable it to establish a stronger track record and grow additional support to implement its strategic goals.

*"The MCF funding was not used for one activity, but by addressing budget gaps within the organization it helps achieve our goals. All of our projects depend on the organization being effective."*

**Tsimoka**

*"In 2025, we want to focus on communications and MEL. We have a big gap in how we communicate our impact and results. But we know it is critical for the development of the organization, and if we can better share what we are doing, it will help to build confidence and trust among partners."*

**Tsimoka**



## Case study Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA)



The Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA) is a conservancy member organization that works to promote community-led conservation across the Tsavo ecosystem.

Established in 2013, TTWCA is a regional association within Kenya's broader conservancy movement, and works to strengthen and support its member conservancies and ranches. Its 35 members collectively manage and conserve over 3000 sq km of land, helping to sustain one of the most important conservation landscapes in Kenya for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

Over the last decade, TTWCA has supported its member conservancies and ranches to demonstrate significant conservation and social impacts.

Over the last decade, TTWCA has helped achieve the following impacts:



### 900% increase in conservancy land

Since 2017, land secured by conservancies grew from 31,000 Ha to 306,000 Ha in 2024.



### 1.6 million tons of greenhouse gases sequestered/yr



### \$800,000 for community projects 40,000 households

\$10.7 million to communities from carbon trading  
(since 2017 last seven years)

## How has the MCF catalyzed TTWCA's work and impact?

The MCF support to TTWCA has helped a well-established and mid-size local organization to make capacity investments that move it past a growth plateau into a next phase of strategic impact. Since 2017, the number of TTWCA staff has grown from 1 to 24, and though TTWCA continues to attract more funding and a greater diversity of donors, a key struggle is having the flexible resources to make strategic investments in its team.

Between 2023-2025, TTWCA received \$380,000 from MCF, and the organization has primarily used this to invest in its people. This included creating new positions, and growing skills and capacity. This experience highlights a critical concept that the MCF funding model provides to local organizations: that having the flexibility to invest in people is simultaneously an investment in strategic impact.

*"One of the biggest challenges you get as a local conservation organization is that funders continually point out your lack of capacity, but then you don't really receive funds that support you to build that capacity."*

**TTWCA**



## Key investments in strengthening their capacity

- ✓ **Growing financial management capacity:** with the support from MCF, TTWCA hired a financial officer which has improved the overall effectiveness of the organization.

*"We got a brilliant lawyer, and this has really helped. Once they came in they were able to support our member conservancies with negotiating better contracts and...renewing land leases for the conservancies."*

**TTWCA**

- ✓ **Increasing policy and governance engagement capacity:** TTWCA also used the funds to recruit a policy and advocacy officer, which has not only supported the member conservancies to become stronger but also positioned TTWCA more strategically with key partners like local government.

- ✓ **Retaining and nurturing talent:** for organizations to become more effective and grow their impacts, building capacity is only one step, and the next challenge is retaining and nurturing it over time.

*"One difficulty we had was that once you have a strong team and build their capacity, they become attractive to other organizations. The kind of salary we were paying was very little and that was a huge struggle. And so with the MCF we said let's ensure that we can at least increase salaries, showing our team that the organization has made an effort to listen to them."*

**TTWCA**



TTWCA believes its strategic impacts are clearly linked to its team and the investments it has made in its people.

*"If you look at it holistically in terms of the whole team and what we have been able to do and achieve, we see for example how we have been able to contribute to the development of land use plans, which ensures functional corridors for wildlife. This then increases biodiversity, which is also a reflection of good governance, because the boards are now more effective, and if a plan has been adopted at the board level it means that the whole community has owned that process. Because of the growth and solidness of our team we are actually progressing towards our main vision for the wider Tsavo ecosystem. We can attribute some of this to the MCF which has put the organization in a winning position."*

**TTWCA**



## Learning & recommendations

## Learnings & recommendations

### Key insights on the funding approach

The experience with the MCF and the local organizations involved in the fund highlight and reiterate some key insights regarding the funding approach. Interestingly, these insights also very much align with and corroborate other philanthropists' findings from similar type funding models.

#### ✓ **Secure, flexible and unrestricted funding is an investment in lasting impact.**

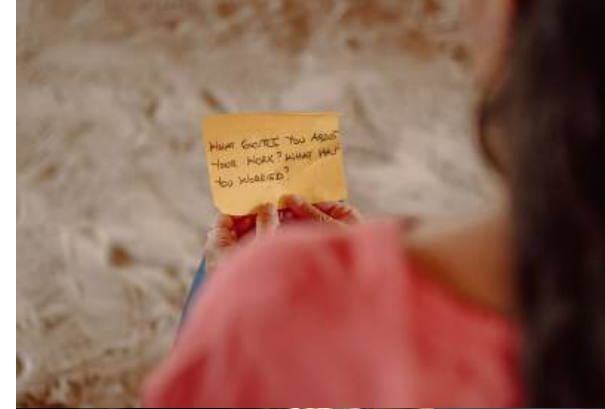
Despite funding, climate, geopolitical and other major shocks during this time, the vast majority of MCF partners have kept stable or grown their impact. This means restored forests and grasslands stay restored, secured livelihoods stay secured, and healthy wildlife populations stay healthy. Partners have said that funding security and flexibility allows them to respond to issues rapidly, to be innovative, and to get going in new places where they see great opportunity.

#### ✓ **A core, unrestricted approach can be transformative**

The MCF experience reiterates the experience in the broader philanthropy space, that conservation funding designed around a core and unrestricted approach is transformative for local organizations. This shifts funding from a transactional, hierarchical relationship to one that is enabling and aligned, promoting the principles of equity and self-determination that are at the heart of community conservation.

#### ✓ **Whole-organization investments are an investment in strategic impact**

Effective organizations are designed around their strategies, that are informed by their local contexts and priorities. Investments made into organizations are investments into their strategies, even when those investments are not directed to a specific project or activity.



*"The MCF funds... allow us to expand our reach, engage with more communities, and maximize the impact of our interventions."*

**Wildlife Conservation Action**



## Learnings & recommendations

### Key insights on the funding approach



#### **Linking organizational strengthening with funding**

Where a core, unrestricted funding approach is most transformative is where organizations are on a pathway to be effective and high-performing. Integrating organizational development alongside this funding approach ensures local organizations can maximize the funding toward delivering impact, and also builds confidence among funders to make further investments. Intermediary support organizations such as Maliasili can play a critical role.



#### **Trust-based relationships are key to equitable funding**

The success first experienced in the MLCF and then through the MCF is linked closely to the design of the funds, where local organizations and Maliasili are collaborating closely together to create a pathway of access for funders. Key to this is having deep relationships and sustained trust, and this in turn enables a funding approach that is more equitable and puts local organizations in the driving seat.



#### **Building an evidence base**

A barrier to a core and unrestricted funding approach is clarifying the linkages between investments and impact. To grow these kinds of funding approaches and bring on more funders, a clearer demonstration of the linkages between unrestricted investment and impact on the ground will build confidence and momentum.



## Learnings & recommendations

# Practical learnings for the design of pooled, unrestricted funding models to support more equitable conservation

To learn from the experience of the MCF to create and evolve similar and improved funding models, this reflection identifies some valuable recommendations:



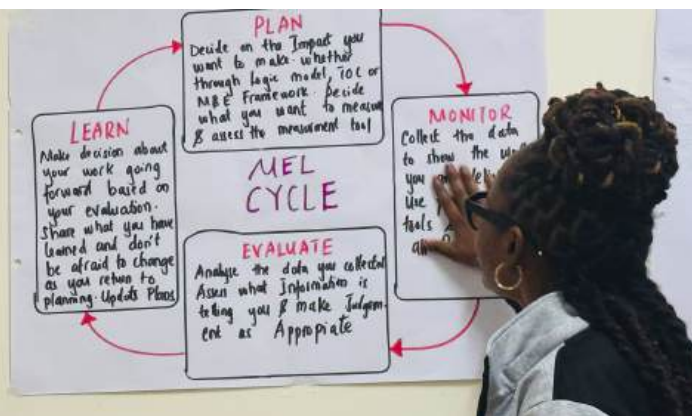
### Collaborate with and commit funders early

Many funders want to see clear linkages between their investment and impact, and this desire for accountability underlies more traditional transactional and project focused funding approaches. Involving funders early in the creation process of pooled funding models, including defining its goals and objectives and providing opportunity to input into its structure, creates a collaborative energy and shared sense of ownership. Early involvement can also build momentum around initial commitment of funds, recognizing initial injections are preferable to ongoing fundraising that is more challenging.



### A clear theory of change

For unrestricted, pooled funding models defining a clear pathway of investment-to-impact will help create alignment and established a shared vision of success. Recognizing that local organizations are experts in community conservation and their strategies are shaped by their contexts and needs, a shared understand of how unrestricted organizational investments achieve strategic impact is needed. This builds confidence in the funding approach and establishes more equitable relationships.



## Learnings & recommendations

### Practical learnings for the design of pooled, unrestricted funding models to support more equitable conservation



#### Longer-term

The MLCF was for 3 years, and the MCF built on this to be a 4-year fund. While these can be considered long-term compared to many traditional funding practices, these are short time frames within community conservation, where work is gradual, constantly changing, and long-term. Creating funding models that are self-sustained for the long-term is an area where more work is needed.



#### Governance matters

To explore and implement these learnings, including developing a collaborative design, securing commitments, clearly defining a theory of change that aligns with a whole-organization investment approach, and creating funding models that last long-term and provide sustained support to local conservation efforts, governance is the critical piece. Since community conservation is about locally-led leadership and decision-making, innovative funding designs need to reflect this spirit, and local organizations need to lead processes to define the goals of funding approaches, and how they will be structured and implemented. Creative fund governance models that put this into practice need to be explored.





Join other funders to bring about lasting impact for people and nature



[info@maliasili.org](mailto:info@maliasili.org)



[/maliasili](https://www.linkedin.com/company/maliasili)

