



BIG LIFE
FOUNDATION

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2030

**CONTINUITY AND EVOLUTION:
BUILDING ON THREE DECADES OF
CONSERVATION SUCCESS**



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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AEMP	Amboseli Ecosystem Management Plan
AET	Amboseli Ecosystem Trust
ALOCA	Amboseli Land Owners Conservancies Association
BLF or BIG LIFE	Big Life Foundation
EWMA	Enduimet Wildlife Management Area
GAE	Greater Amboseli Ecosystem
HWC	Human-Wildlife Conflict
KWS	Kenya Wildlife Service
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPT	Maasailand Preservation Trust
NBE	Nature-Based Enterprise
NEMA	National Environment Management Authority
PCF	Predator Compensation Fund
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health



LETTER FROM THE CO- FOUNDER

More than 30 years ago, when we sat with community leaders to conceive the first actions that would later morph into Big Life's programs, there was no plan. All we had was a gut feeling of what needed to be done, and we got to work.

This landscape, our home – the Greater Amboseli ecosystem of East Africa – has been through extraordinary changes since. But the same principle that drove every decision then is just as fundamental now: conservation has to work for the people and communities that are most affected by its outcomes.

This tenet has underpinned our longevity, and the many extraordinary achievements that our team should be extremely proud of. Working at the coalface, we have continued to adapt, addressing new and shifting threats.

Through our phenomenal growth we have maintained the human relationships that are so important to us, both with our partner communities and with our supporters.

It is these supporters who have powered our work for more than three decades. To them we say thank you, although there are no words to express my personal gratitude. Without the contributions made by so many, we wouldn't be here, and Amboseli would be a different place.

While we have never been ignorant of the future, we have always been very focused on the task at hand, whether stopping poachers or raising the funds to get us to the next year. But we can no longer plan on the back of a napkin. With momentous changes in land tenure across the Amboseli ecosystem, we are once again adapting our approach, and must look further ahead than we ever have before.

One result is this document, Big Life's first formal 5-year strategy.

It's a plan that lays out exciting opportunities, daunting challenges, and ambitious goals. But importantly for me, it also represents another step forward in the evolution of our organization. Faced with the overwhelming loss of natural habitat and biodiversity across Kenya and Africa, we have an opportunity to lead with effective, community-led solutions. This is our strategy for doing so.



Richard Bonham

Co-Founder and Executive Chairman, Big Life Foundation Kenya

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Greater Amboseli Ecosystem (GAE) spans approximately two million acres at the center of one of the most important regions for large mammal biodiversity globally.

Much of the ecosystem's biodiversity is found outside the relatively small government-protected areas, and wildlife in national parks frequently undertake seasonal migrations far beyond their borders. Freedom of movement and access to large-scale intact natural habitats is equally important for the ecosystem's human inhabitants, the majority of whom are heavily reliant on free-range livestock production.

Despite the value of its abundant natural resources, the GAE is undergoing unprecedented change. Land subdivision and unplanned development, unsustainable agricultural expansion, governance gaps, rising human-wildlife conflict (HWC), and climate change are fragmenting habitat and challenging traditional pastoralist systems that historically maintained ecological integrity. Only about 5% of the ecosystem is protected by national parks, and the future of wildlife and community livelihoods depends on how the wider landscape is managed.

The increasing pressure on natural habitat in the GAE is compounding existing conservation threats such as poaching and human-wildlife conflict, requiring an integrated response to all. This same range of threats impacts biodiversity across Africa, and the solutions and models developed in the GAE will have broad relevance.



Big Life Foundation has a 30+ year legacy of partnership with communities, government, and conservation stakeholders, working to secure the future of the GAE. Big Life’s pragmatic, community-led approach has a strong track record of delivering results, thereby building trust and credibility. Employing nearly 600 staff—primarily from within the ecosystem—Big Life delivers one of Africa’s most comprehensive community-led conservation models, integrating wildlife protection, habitat preservation and human development.

These diverse programs, operating at scale across the GAE, have achieved success in controlling poaching, managing human-wildlife conflict, securing vital wildlife habitat, and improving human well-being. Building on these successes, and Big Life’s extensive experience and operational strengths, this 5-year strategic plan sets out a bold but necessary response to accelerating pressures on the GAE. The plan integrates feedback from a robust stakeholder consultation process, with input from leadership and program management teams in Kenya and the United States.

Over the next five years, Big Life will pursue goals comprising four mutually reinforcing pillars, as follows:

1.	SECURE AND RESTORE PRIORITY HABITATS Directly establish or strengthen community conservancies protecting 400,000 acres; restore degraded rangelands; promote sustainable livestock systems; and ensure long-term ecosystem connectivity.
2.	PROTECT WILDLIFE AND PROMOTE COEXISTENCE Maintain zero trophy poaching in core areas; reduce bushmeat poaching and other environmental crimes by 20%; reduce all forms of HWC by 50%; expand ranger capacity and enabling technologies; and scale coexistence tools across the landscape.
3.	DELIVER LASTING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VALUE Position partner conservancies to attract sustainable investment through eco-tourism, carbon value chains, livestock, and other nature-based enterprises; ensure equitable benefit-sharing; expand access to education and healthcare; and increase direct conservation-compatible income for landowners.
4.	STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE AND LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT Support transparent and accountable conservancy governance systems; formalize land management partnerships; and ensure effective implementation of land-use plans and national legal frameworks.

In order to achieve these goals investments will be made in; strengthening our team and improving succession planning at all levels; diversifying revenue streams and growing non-philanthropic income to improve financial sustainability; collaborating more intentionally with partners to co-create concrete long-term programs of work; and broadening external communication strategies to capture the breadth of Big Life’s work and better engage partner communities and decision-makers.

Implementation of this strategy will require a significant increase in annual revenue, with Big Life’s East African operational budget projected to increase from \$10.3m in 2026 to \$15.9m in 2030. A supplemental fundraising strategy indicates that the required growth in both philanthropic and non-philanthropic income is possible, with the largest growth rate expected in the latter ‘sustainable’ category.

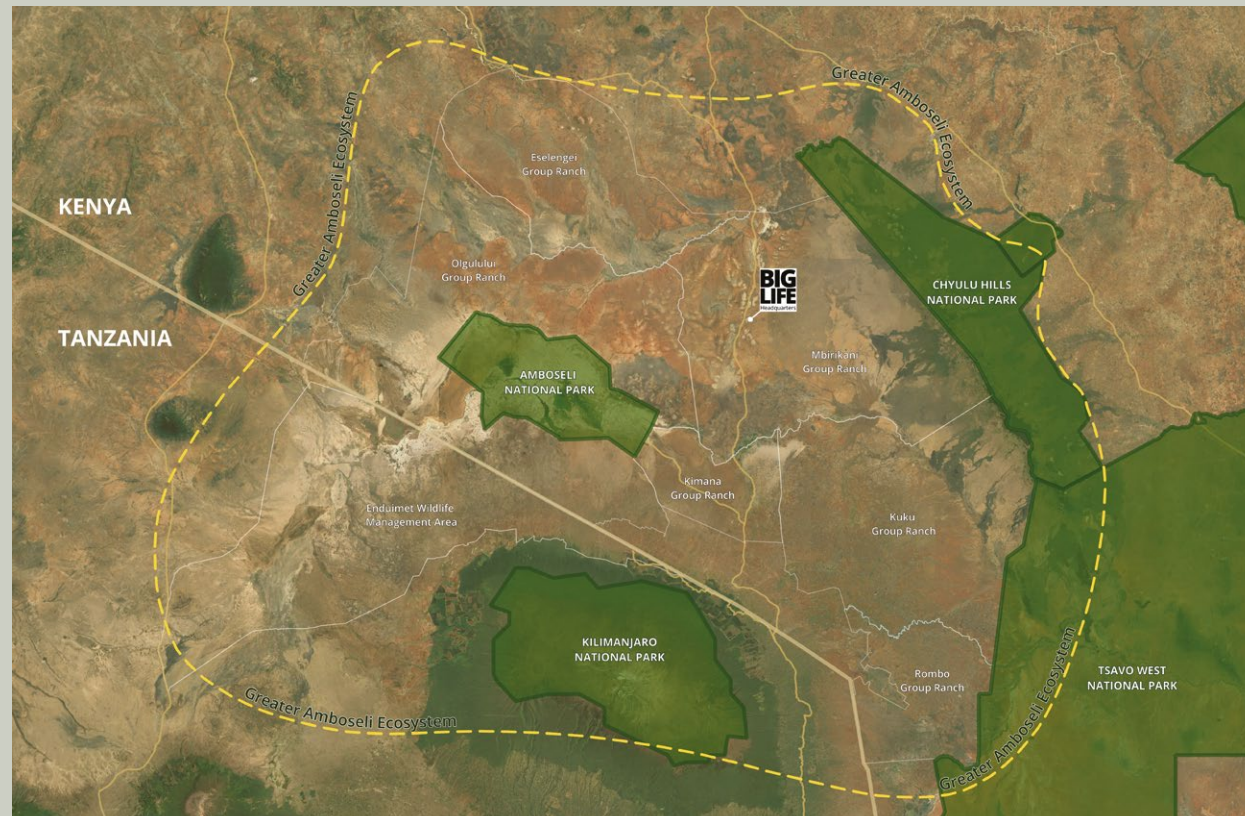
Decisions made in the coming decade will determine whether this globally significant ecosystem remains open and productive or becomes fragmented and degraded. With its scale, credibility, operational capacity, and deeply rooted community partnerships, Big Life is uniquely positioned to help secure a future where nature thrives and communities prosper, together.

This strategic plan represents both continuity and evolution: building on three decades of proven success while adapting to new realities.

The stakes are high - but so is the opportunity to shape one of Africa’s most important landscapes for generations to come.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GREATER AMBOSELI ECOSYSTEM

The Greater Amboseli Ecosystem (GAE) covers ~2 million acres in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. The ecosystem is open on multiple sides and the outer bound is roughly delineated by the seasonal migratory needs of resident wildlife populations, incorporating a matrix of communal land, privately-owned land, and national parks.



The GAE is as biodiverse as it is spectacular; volcanic activity has created steep altitudinal and rainfall gradients, resulting in ecological zones that range from semi-arid savannas to towering montane cloud forests. Despite representing only 1% of Kenya's landmass, the ecosystem is home to more than 50% of Kenya's bird and mammal species (excluding bats and rodents), as well as the world's best-known elephant population. The GAE is a pivotal geographic link for wildlife populations that are connected across the larger Kenya-Tanzania borderlands landscape, which is one of the most important regions for large mammal biodiversity globally.

Much of the GAE is classified as semi-arid and natural resources are subject to high seasonal and geographic variation. However, only about 5% of the land area is protected by government-designated reserves and significant wildlife populations reside outside these areas. Further, Amboseli National Park (NP) (~100,000 acres) supports an abundance of life

but is too small to permanently sustain these wildlife populations; each year an estimated 80% of animals undertake local migrations between Amboseli NP and dispersal areas on neighboring community-owned lands. Freedom of movement is critical and most animals will die if unable to migrate.

Outside of national parks, the majority of the GAE was historically communally-owned by Maasai communities in both Kenya and Tanzania, and semi-nomadic pastoralism was the primary livelihood strategy and source of income. People have long been an integral part of the ecology of the landscape, and the human population also depends on a healthy and open natural ecosystem.

Pastoralism, combined with communal land management and collective decision-making, has kept most of the GAE open and protected from the land-use changes and ecological degradation that have characterized neighboring areas. However, the ecosystem is shifting away from this model and undergoing significant changes, driven by internal and external factors, that will have profound implications for both wildlife conservation and human development.



WHO WE ARE

Big Life's roots in the GAE go back more than 30 years, beginning with the establishment of the Maasailand Preservation Trust (MPT) in 1992.

What started with four community rangers and a small education program has grown into one of Africa's most comprehensive community-based conservation models. Big Life Foundation was created in 2010 in response to a surge in elephant poaching across Africa and within the GAE, and merged with MPT soon after to integrate decades of experience into a unified approach.

Today, Big Life builds on this 30+ year legacy as a trusted and long-standing partner to communities and governments. Our mandate is anchored in deep relationships, consistent delivery, and a profound understanding of the GAE's ecological and social systems.

At the end of 2025, Big Life supported 590 staff across Kenya (569) and Tanzania (21), the vast majority of whom are from the ecosystem. With our headquarters in the GAE and a very high proportion of local staff we maintain close situational awareness and can rapidly adapt programs to dynamic conditions. Our ability to respond quickly and effectively is reinforced by relatively low institutional bureaucracy.

Big Life's work is advanced through a sister organization in the United States that serves as a key partner to operations in Kenya, providing fundraising, partnerships, and strategic support. This is complemented by affiliated entities in Canada and the United Kingdom that further expand Big Life's global fundraising reach.



WHAT WE DO

Big Life has a holistic, landscape-scale vision for nature conservation, that integrates human development as a core element of success.

Our approach has been developed through close consultation with our partner communities and is informed by a deep understanding of the root causes of conservation challenges. Over the last three decades we have successfully tackled evolving conservation challenges of increasing complexity, from poaching and illegal wildlife trade, to human-wildlife conflict (HWC), and most recently threats to key habitats.

Big Life's integrated model is organized into three thematic areas:

1

'Wildlife' programs that address direct threats including poaching, illegal wildlife trade, and human-wildlife conflict. Interventions range from traditional anti-poaching and law enforcement, to innovative approaches to enhancing human-wildlife co-existence.

2

'Habitat' programs are focused on securing and restoring priority natural habitats, and preventing conversion or fragmentation of these. A growing component of our work aims to promote sustainable human use of natural resources, so that productivity can be maintained and is resilient to future changes.

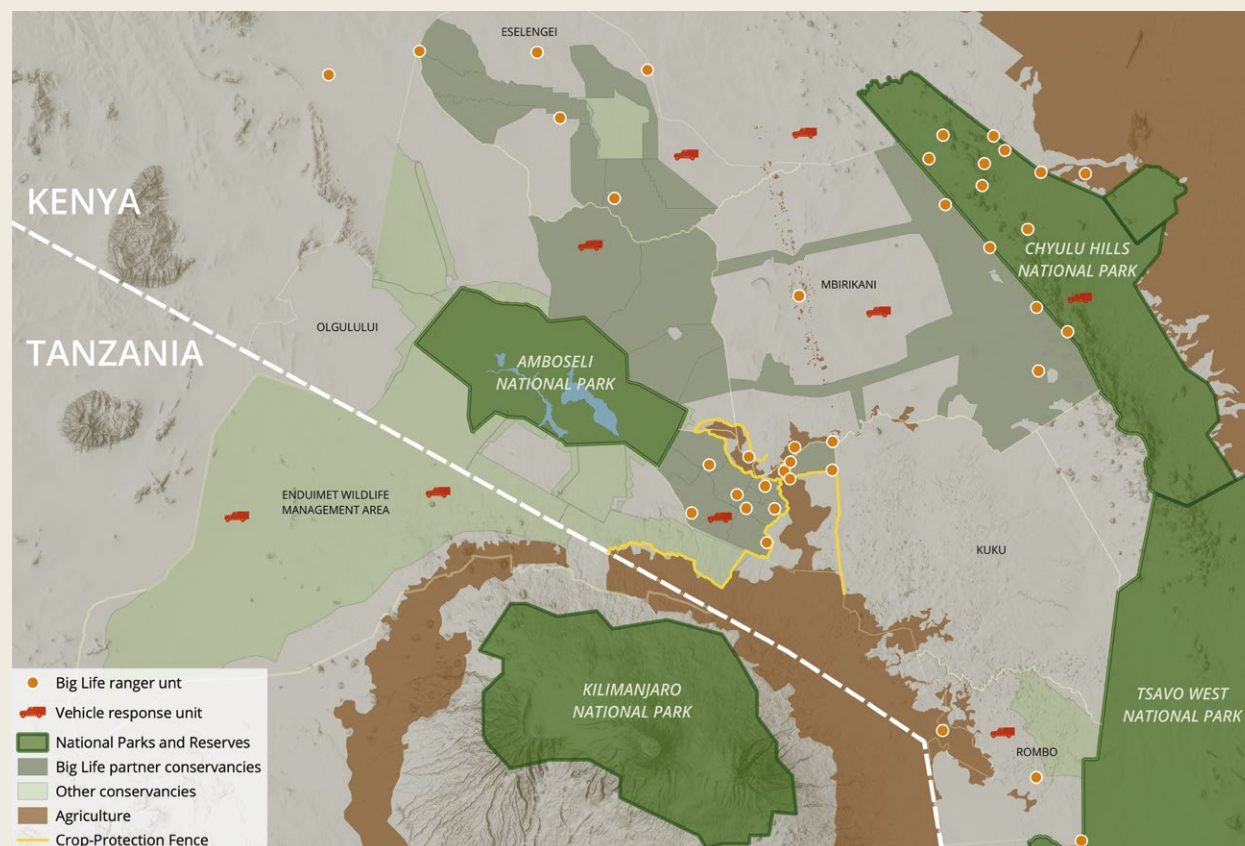
3

'Community' programs contribute to key human development needs, as identified by our partner communities. These include provision of education scholarships to disadvantaged and/or deserving children, support for healthcare, and in-school conservation education to address inadequate environmental literacy.

WHERE WE WORK



We work in the Greater Amboseli Ecosystem (GAE) of Kenya and Tanzania, predominantly outside of formal protected areas.



The majority of the GAE lies in Kenya, but the ~350,000 acre Enduimet Wildlife Management Area (EWMA) in Tanzania is a key part of the ecosystem and Big Life was the first organization in the region to establish collaborative community anti-poaching efforts between the two countries.

By 2025, our work extended across approximately two million acres including well-established coverage on five of the six largest historic Maasai communal ranches (Mbirikani, Kimana, Eselengei, Olgulului, and Rombo); sections of neighboring areas to the north and west (Mailua and Merrueshi); the central and northern sectors of Chyulu Hills National Park (in partnership with Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)); and the EWMA in Tanzania.

Other than our work combating the Illegal Wildlife Trade (which extends across the southern half of Kenya), our conservation programs are encompassed within this area of operation, though program coverage varies. Wildlife and habitat protection programs are predominant in areas of natural habitat, while in human-dominated areas (e.g., farmland and settlement), our program focus is on mitigating HWC and supporting community development.



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

This Situational Analysis draws on comprehensive research, interviews with key partners and stakeholders across the landscape, and community focus groups to inform an understanding of the context in which BLF operates.



ACHIEVEMENTS & IMPACTS



COMMUNITY-LED PROTECTION FOR ~1M ACRES OF VITAL WILDLIFE HABITAT

Threats to the natural habitats of the GAE have quickly become our greatest conservation challenge. Between 2021 and the end of 2025 we invested approximately \$5m in land-use planning processes, and worked with community and conservation partners to incorporate conservation objectives into these, contributing significantly to the outcome of ~1 million acres (72%) of the ecosystem set aside to remain open and natural for conservation and pastoralism.

We have worked with communities to create new conservancies and protect wildlife corridors in critical areas, including the Nairrabala (38,700 acres), Marite (18,950 acres) and Tulakaria (16,600 acres) Corridors. We have supported the growth and development of nascent conservancies, including the six conservancies of the Amboseli Land Owners Conservation Association (ALOCA) that protect the Kimana Wildlife Corridor (43,300 acres), which is a key wildlife passage connecting Amboseli NP with the eastern half of the ecosystem (and onward to Tsavo West NP). A key element of this success was the protection of the last gap (45m wide at its narrowest) through a dense strip of human development, connecting natural habitats on both sides of a busy tar road and ensuring that animals can move safely.

We played a central role in the recovery of the Kimana Sanctuary, brokering an agreement with a high-end tourism partner that has established a best-practice model in the ecosystem for tourism development and community revenue-sharing, and sustainable finance for conservation.

In 2025 our land lease program protected 120,957 acres of habitat, providing ~\$900,000 in direct conservation payments to landowners.

ELIMINATION OF TROPHY POACHING AS A THREAT IN THE GAE

Anti-poaching efforts have essentially eliminated elephant and rhino poaching in our operational areas, achieved by well-resourced community ranger units working in partnership with government agencies and supported by local communities. This enforcement aspect of Big Life’s conservation model is balanced with conservation-related incentives; both are equally important for achieving conservation goals. The last confirmed elephant poaching in Big Life’s core area of operation was in March 2018, and the last rhino confirmed poached was in September 2015. The ecosystem elephant population, documented by Amboseli Trust for Elephants, has grown from ~500 in the late 1970s to ~2,000 in 2025.



SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Our HWC mitigation interventions – which include 100+ km of crop-protection fencing, rapid-response ranger teams, and our Predator Compensation Fund (PCF) – have significantly reduced conflict and retaliatory wildlife killing, building community tolerance and coexistence with wildlife, especially apex species like elephants and lions. On Mbirikani ranch (330,000 acres) retaliatory lion killing was reduced by 94% after the introduction of PCF, and a similar reduction of 88% was recorded on Olgulului (400,000 acres)¹. Lion Guardians have recorded a more than seven-fold increase in the ecosystem lion population, and in 2024 recorded the highest population (>250 lions) since structured monitoring started 20 years prior.

¹ These outcomes were achieved in partnership with communities and non-profit partners including Lion Guardians.



IMPROVED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

We integrate conservation with community development, grounded in the belief that healthy, educated, and economically empowered communities are essential partners. We have awarded over 3,000 scholarships to support the education of 2,000+ children, while rural health and family planning services, school infrastructure support, and adolescent education programs address critical wellbeing needs. In a landscape where employment opportunities are limited, our creation of 569 local jobs in wildlife conservation roles (and support for an additional 21 pre-existing positions) drives economic resilience and community support for conservation.



STRENGTHENED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE ACROSS THE GAE

We play a key role in GAE governance, blending legal action, land-use planning and management, and conservancy capacity-building. Alongside the affected local community we initiated a court challenge against a farm (KiliAvo) that violated land-use plans in the Kimana Wildlife Corridor, setting a national example for conservation land-use enforcement. Big Life is an active member of both the Amboseli Ecosystem Trust's (AET) Governing Council and the Plan Implementation Committee for the Amboseli Ecosystem Management Plan (AEMP), and our actions contribute significantly to the achievement of the AEMP. We work closely with county and national governments, including support for strengthening policy enforcement.



INNOVATIVE CONSERVATION FINANCE MECHANISMS CONTRIBUTING TO IMPROVED FINANCIAL RETURNS

Working alongside other institutions, we are a key partner in the Chyulu Hills REDD+ project— regarded as one of Africa's most successful carbon credit programs. A roughly \$1m investment by a supporting partner has generated over \$50m in returns through innovative conservation finance. The initiative offers a successful example of conservation finance and sustainable land management, alongside other replicable financing mechanisms that Big Life is considering for future implementation.

STRENGTHS

Including the history of the Maasailand Preservation Trust (MPT) before it merged with Big Life Foundation, we have over 30 years of sustained investment and impact in the GAE, with a proven record of delivering results, adapting to challenges, and staying relevant.

Professionalism and consistency have earned us a strong reputation with local communities, donors, and government and field partners, indicated by the stakeholder quotes in the following section.

INTEGRATED CONSERVATION APPROACH

Our programs combine wildlife protection, HWC mitigation, habitat preservation, community livelihood support, education, and health. This holistic model rests on the understanding that people, wildlife, and land are interconnected.

“ Though wildlife-focused, the human benefit angle is key to [Big Life's] work. This separates them from other organisations.”



COMMUNITY-CENTERED

Deeply embedded in local communities, we are recognized as both a conservation actor and a trusted development partner. Employing nearly 600 local staff by 2025, we are among the largest conservation employers in Kenya. Scholarships and school infrastructure support, rural health services, and HWC mitigation initiatives help build trust and community support.

“ Their values of inclusion and empowerment are consistently visible in their work.”

OPERATIONAL STRENGTH & EFFICIENCY

We operate across local, national, and international arenas, balancing a strong grassroots presence with global credibility. Our large spatial and programmatic footprint enables us to achieve strong economies of scale and fill critical conservation and development gaps across the GAE. We have built a reputation for professionalism, consistency, and reliability, while sustaining fundraising efforts despite shifting donor landscapes.

We secure vast areas of the GAE, gaining praise for our ability to

“ do such big things and important work. The team does an excellent job with the available resources.”

ADAPTIVE & LEARNING-ORIENTED

We adapt to evolving challenges while staying true to our mission. Success in navigating the threat of land subdivision and the associated political sensitivities, e.g., rebuilding relationships within Olgulului Ranch after a brief period of separation, highlights this resilience. Our leadership is receptive to feedback and willing to make changes when required. Organizational growth is thoughtful and deliberate, ensuring long-term viability.

“ [Big Life] evolve[s] their work to current circumstances without losing the core of who they are and what they do.”



CHALLENGES & AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

We have identified opportunities for sharper focus, internal reflection, stronger accountability both to communities and our funders, and improved alignment with conservation partners and stakeholders across the GAE.

We face challenges related to our broad scope and risk of mission creep; internal systems that have not all kept pace with the rate of expansion of our field operations; maintaining team culture and cohesion across a large organization; managing evolving partnerships with community, government, and conservation stakeholders; lack of internal capacity to tackle emerging threats; and rapidly increasing budgetary needs.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

We have identified the need for broader, more structured engagement with our partner communities (particularly as land subdivision impacts systems of community governance and representation), including data-driven feedback, and equitable distribution of benefits across our operating area. Periodic questions about the conservation impact of our community support programs highlight the need for a clearer theory of change and a critical unpacking of accountability mechanisms with regard to how all parties fulfill their responsibilities.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Many of Big Life’s programs involve ongoing actions designed to address challenges that don’t have ‘one-off’ solutions, and these need to be sustained if impact is to be maintained. These include anti-poaching, HWC mitigation, and habitat protection through land-leasing (which is a rapidly growing cost). The majority of Big Life’s current funding comes from private donors and grants, and this support base will continue to be critical. However, expanding operations, rising landowner and community expectations and limited funds threaten long-term viability, particularly for contractual liabilities such as land leases. Big Life is working to diversify revenue streams, and increase the proportion of revenue from ‘sustainable’ sources (e.g. private sector partners such as tourism companies). This process needs to be accelerated to keep pace with Big Life’s growing budgetary needs.



THREATS AND RISKS

Once preserved through communal land management and pastoralist traditions, the GAE now faces accelerating change driven by internal and external pressures. These shifts pose major risks to conservation and community development.

SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE ON NATURAL HABITATS

Rapid subdivision of communally-owned ranches—including Mbirikani, Olgulului, Eselengei, and Rombo (with Kuku A and B underway)—is fragmenting vital wildlife habitats and escalating land-use conflicts. Expanding commercial agriculture, settlement and infrastructure projects are accelerating habitat loss and ecological degradation. Meanwhile, a shift toward more individualistic and short-term views of land value is emerging, as many landowners prioritize immediate economic returns over sustainable long-term land-use strategies. This is resulting in conversion of natural habitats to uses that provide short-term gains, such as crop-farming, even if these uses are unsustainable due to resource (e.g. water) limitations.

SHIFTING COMMUNITY DYNAMICS & CULTURE CHANGE

Generational shifts, economic pressures, and land commodification are affecting culture and behavior in myriad ways. Youth are challenging the terms (particularly governance and benefit-sharing mechanisms) of traditional agreements with expectations that are not always attainable. Maasai culture continues to change, leading to a gradual departure from traditional, conservation-compatible activities such as livestock-keeping. The sale of subdivided land to buyers from across Kenya is leading to the fragmentation of previously cohesive communities, creating challenges for achieving a common vision among landowners.

To maintain relevance and navigate these dynamics, Big Life must engage more inclusively, reaching beyond traditional leadership structures to incorporate the perspectives of wider community groups.

WEAK GOVERNANCE & ENFORCEMENT

Poor local governance and leadership, bureaucratic delays, and selective enforcement by government agencies undermines long-term conservation efforts and risks over-reliance on Big Life. Persistent issues – from disregard for land use plans and illegal land conversion, to revenue leakages – create operational bottlenecks and governance gaps.

CONSERVANCY DEPENDENCY

Challenges for the conservancy model persist. Many conservancies remain weakly governed, without a clear path to economic sustainability and self-sufficiency, and are dependent on Big Life’s funding and management support. Dynamics around unclear land tenure, and situations where new landowners buy land within conservancies but decide not to be part of them, or withdraw from them, threaten the sustainability of these conservancies.

INCREASING HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

HWC is rising as habitat shrinks and we must plan proactively for the space and resources that growing wildlife and human populations require. Most conflict mitigation strategies that we have deployed are effective but require perpetual financial support. Additionally, conflict mitigation strategies must be continually adapted to adequately cover the range of species that pose the highest threat, and which have the greatest influence on community attitudes to wildlife.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ecological and human systems in the GAE are adapted to defined annual wet and dry seasons. Resources are limited; wildlife and livestock range widely and depend on rain-fed natural pasture for survival. Changes in the amount or periodicity of rainfall can therefore have significant impacts.

More intense (and potentially more frequent) droughts, greater variability in the timing and distribution of rainfall, and rising temperatures and heat stress will alter vegetation, water availability and the timing of natural cycles that wildlife and local communities depend on. Reduced resource availability will concentrate livestock and wildlife, increasing competition and heightening HWC. Droughts reduce grass and lead to animal die-offs (a major drought in 2009 resulted in the loss of ~75% of large wild herbivores and ~60% of all livestock), while the growing risks and reduced economic returns from livestock-keeping increase the likelihood of land-use change.



EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

There is significant potential for us to deepen our impact and leadership in the GAE. Rising ecological and social pressures make this a critical moment to leverage our strengths and track record for long-term solutions.

LANDSCAPE-LEVEL CONSERVATION & LAND MANAGEMENT

Recent land subdivision requires proactive strategies to secure ecosystem connectivity and resilience, and we are uniquely positioned to address this need. At the end of 2025 we led land-use plan implementation, conservancy development, and wildlife corridor protection efforts across ~615,000 acres of the GAE. There is both a need and an opportunity to further scale this impact, alongside large-scale landscape restoration. Stronger Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems are needed to match continued expansion, while leveraging technology can boost impact and efficiency. We can shape a long-term vision for the GAE, stepping into a stronger convening role alongside AET and regional actors, thereby delivering conservation and land management at scale.

DEEPENING COMMUNITY BENEFIT & ENGAGEMENT

There is increasing demand for more consistent, equitable household-level benefits, especially for youth and women, and a concurrent need to manage rising community expectations. Systematic community surveys and co-created solutions can ensure programs stay aligned with evolving needs. There is growing momentum for transparent, accountable and broadly representative governance in Maasailand; given our track-record and the trust we have built we can support effective leadership and representation within conservation decision-making structures.

EXPANDING CONSERVATION & NATURE FINANCING MECHANISMS

With increasing global recognition of the economic value of nature and biodiversity, and funding for projects that realise this value in a sustainable manner, we have the opportunity to build on our previous successes to pioneer and scale conservation financing models—such as carbon projects, ecotourism, and high-value livestock chains— to establish revenue flows that can be invested in conservation now and into the future. Other financing mechanisms, such as nature-themed bonds, trust funds and endowments, have potential and will be explored. Attracting funders willing to invest in these conservation financing innovations at the landscape scale is a key need and opportunity.

OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



VISION

A future where nature thrives and communities prosper.

MISSION

Partnering with local communities to protect iconic species and conserve habitat in the Greater Amboseli Ecosystem.

VALUE PROPOSITION

Big Life offers a uniquely powerful combination of scale, experience, and integrated action. With more than 30 years of continuous presence in the Greater Amboseli Ecosystem, we have the credibility, trusted relationships, and operational capacity required to work across approximately two million acres of communal and private land—much of it outside formal protected areas.

Our deep community foundation is reinforced by a highly capable local workforce and a holistic conservation model that links wildlife protection, habitat security, governance strengthening, and community development. This allows us to respond to complex and rapidly evolving challenges such as land subdivision, habitat fragmentation, human–wildlife conflict, and governance gaps, while simultaneously supporting communities to strengthen local livelihoods and stewardship of the land.

Our proven ability to deliver results, mobilize resources, and adapt to shifting ecological and socio-political dynamics positions Big Life as a critical actor in securing the long-term integrity of the GAE and ensuring that wildlife, habitats, and communities can thrive together.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

The Greater Amboseli Ecosystem is facing unprecedented land-use change driven by changing land tenure, expanding human and livestock pressures, weak local governance systems, and limited financial incentives for conservation.

As communal lands subdivide and natural habitats shrink, communities struggle to collectively manage large landscapes or enforce agreed land-use plans. At the same time, poaching and human-wildlife conflict persist as constant threats. Without strong governance, viable economic incentives, and practical tools for peaceful coexistence with wildlife, the ecosystem risks losing the ecological integrity and cultural heritage that have sustained it for generations.

We believe that communities are the most effective stewards of the GAE when they have the authority, incentives, and support to protect wildlife and habitats. Our approach integrates four mutually reinforcing pathways: securing and restoring natural habitats to ensure space and resources for wildlife, people, and livestock; building inclusive, locally grounded nature-based economies and meeting key development needs so communities can benefit directly from conservation; strengthening community governance institutions to improve accountability, cohesion, fair benefit-sharing and sustainable land management; and protecting wildlife while reducing human-wildlife conflict and facilitating coexistence. Together, these pathways create the ecological, economic, and institutional conditions needed to achieve our mission.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

1. Communities prefer long-term value over short-term gain if viable alternatives exist.
2. Governance institutions can function effectively if supported.
3. Wildlife presence can generate net-positive value.
4. Government policy frameworks remain broadly supportive.
5. Climate change impacts remain within manageable thresholds.

A GREATER AMBOSELI ECOSYSTEM WHERE EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES ARE DRIVING CONSERVATION AND NATURE IS THRIVING

Communities actively and effectively protect wildlife and natural habitats

The benefits of wildlife presence outweigh the costs

Communities see conservation as viable, valuable, and worth supporting

Natural habitats are healthy, connected and productive

RESULTING IN SHIFTS IN THE GAE



CREATING ENABLING CONDITIONS

WILDLIFE PROTECTION & CONFLICT MITIGATION

HABITAT RESTORATION & CONNECTIVITY

VIABLE NATURE-BASED ECONOMIES

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

MUTUALLY REINFORCING PILLARS

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Priority natural habitats are secured and restored within the GAE



OBJECTIVES:

1. 400,000 acres of priority natural habitat is secured as conservancies, by 2030, through Big Life's direct actions including conservation leases and/or management agreements.
2. An additional 400,000 acres are protected under conservation-compatible land use, by 2030, through implementation of land-use plans by Big Life and ecosystem partners.
3. Land productivity is improved through restoration initiatives (physical actions and/or livestock management) across 30% of areas that have been zoned for conservation and livestock grazing, and are classified as degraded, by 2030.
4. Public support for restoration and habitat protection is increased, through improved public understanding of sustainable land use, drivers of degradation, and the benefits of proper management.
5. Sustainable natural resource use is achieved through development and implementation of natural resource and livestock management plans and agreements across the GAE.
6. A livestock production model is created and scaled, that restores and sustains rangeland health in an economically productive way.

Goal 2: Wildlife is protected, and coexistence is promoted



WILDLIFE PROTECTION OBJECTIVES

1. By 2030, incidents of all types of HWC are reduced by 50%, through training of 80% of Big Life community rangers, better equipment, and deployment of appropriate technology and solutions.
2. Poaching and other environmental crimes are reduced by a further 20% (measured in number of incidents, from 2025 levels) across the GAE.
3. Zero trophy poaching is maintained in core Big Life operating areas.
4. Key species are protected through increased monitoring, adoption of new technology, improved HWC response time, and a 10% increase in ranger coverage of Big Life’s core areas.
5. Tolerance of wild predators is improved through expansion of the Predator Compensation Fund to cover all new Big Life partner conservancies.

Goal 3: Conservation delivers lasting economic and social value for communities, strengthening local stewardship of nature



ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES

1. All Big Life partner conservancies are positioned to attract investment by developing the necessary enabling environment for one or more of:
 - a. Tourism-related income
 - b. Carbon-related income
 - c. Livestock-related income
 - d. Other nature-financing mechanisms
2. Partner conservancies have mechanisms to equitably share their profits among conservancy members as prescribed in revenue-sharing agreements, which have been approved by beneficiaries following due process.
3. By 2030, at least eight Nature-Based Enterprises (NBEs) are developed in the GAE, including at least one of each of the four priority NBEs listed above, and at least one NBE in each fully established partner conservancy.
4. Within five years of establishment, each NBE is contributing a minimum of 15% of gross turnover towards the cost of community conservation, and revenue from NBEs funds an average of 50% of conservancy running costs in each Big Life partner conservancy.
5. NBE revenue streams increase income to landowners, by 20% per acre for those who are participating in conservation-compatible land-uses.

Goal 3: Continued...



EDUCATION OBJECTIVES:

1. By 2030, 100% of children of school-going age from member households of Big Life partner conservancies are able to access basic education, through provision of scholarships to households that cannot afford the costs.
2. Through provision of scholarships, ensure that 10% of students from Big Life partner conservancies completing high-school education are able to access tertiary education opportunities by 2030.
3. By 2030, achieve a 10% increase in final year average academic results at selected partner schools, by enhancing the enabling environment through improvement of teacher/pupil ratios, basic physical infrastructure, and learning tools (e.g. digital infrastructure).
4. At least 80% of students graduating from Big Life-supported schools across the GAE are reached by conservation education courses.

HEALTHCARE OBJECTIVES:

1. Access to primary healthcare and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services in Big Life's core operating area is improved through partnerships and investment in healthcare facilities and outreach, resulting in a 40% increase in SRH first-time users by 2030.
2. Exposure to SRH knowledge is increased by 50% among women, men, and youth by 2030.

Goal 4: Land and conservancy governance is strengthened



GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVES:

1. By 2030, transparent and accountable leadership systems are established and/or strengthened across 80% of Big Life partner conservancies to ensure governance and management of the highest standards, measured by a SAGE test or equivalent, and in compliance with national legal frameworks.
2. By 2030, all Big Life partner conservancies apply appropriate land management strategies and have up to date management plans (regulating and guiding infrastructure, security, natural resource use, and sustainability).
3. By 2030, 80% of Big Life partner conservancies have critical governance protocols/procedures in place, including but not limited to grievance mechanisms, grazing plans, equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, democratic systems and fair enforcement mechanisms.
4. Land management partnerships in all Big Life areas of operation are formalized, through agreements with private and government stakeholders (e.g., KWS, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), county governments, and tourism operators).

STRENGTHENING BIG LIFE FOUNDATION



To effectively deliver our objectives, and to continue navigating our growth and evolution as an organization, we will prioritize investment in the following areas:



TEAM & LEADERSHIP

Our biggest asset is our team. They are the heart and soul of the organization, and the driving force behind our success. Over the next five years we will strategically grow our team, based on a review of our organizational structure to identify both capacity gaps and opportunities to improve coordination and efficiency. Human resource needs have already been identified in the fundraising, finance, procurement, and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) departments, and additional capacity is needed to develop and manage non-philanthropic revenue streams.

We will invest in and strengthen professional development, providing team members avenues to grow their skills and specialize in areas that serve them and the organization. We shall also deepen the leadership bench across the organization, ensuring that we are more resilient and less dependent on individuals, improving succession planning and team growth at all levels. We will continue efforts to ensure the senior leadership team is diverse and inclusive, reflecting the context and communities we serve.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Our mission and goals are ambitious and will require significant resources to implement. In the face of a growing budget and the current unpredictable global fundraising climate, the financial sustainability of the organization and our conservation programs is at risk.

We will need to diversify our revenue streams and develop innovative, non-philanthropic finance and business models. This will occur at two levels: at the organizational level to support the team and its operations, and at the program level to ensure our work is more self-sustaining.

PARTNERSHIPS



The needs and scope of work in this landscape cannot be met by us alone. We need to continue working in partnership with other actors – including communities, local and national government, other conservation organizations, donors, and the private sector. Our collaborative approach, while impactful, needs to be broadened and diversified, made more resilient, and translated into concrete programs of work. Our approach to partnerships needs to be more intentional and aimed at long-term collaboration.



EXTERNAL VISIBILITY

Our external communications have historically focused on the importance and beauty of the landscape and wildlife we’re working to conserve. While this serves to attract and retain like-minded donors, it doesn’t capture the full breadth of our work and engage a broader group of stakeholders, funders, and supporters.

Our external communications will be deliberately broadened to demonstrate all aspects of our work and its positive impacts. Particular focus will be placed on showcasing the impacts of our community work, including improving the understanding of our health and education programs, and how this holistic approach links to our core mission. Our communications strategy will also be tailored to engage more with a range of partners within the GAE, with an emphasis on local communities and decision-makers.

It will be critical to make ongoing improvements to our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system, including integration of technological advancements, and ensure that this is linked with our communications work. We will review and refine our Key Performance Indicators, to improve our monitoring and adaptive management practices, and better measure and communicate our impact.

RESOURCING OUR STRATEGY

Big Life's total budget, including operations in East Africa and strategic support in the USA, has increased consistently, reflecting sustained growth in scale and impact. Combined annual expenditure has grown at a compound annual rate of 12.2% over the seven years from 2019 to 2025, and the total of Big Life Kenya and Big Life USA budgets is \$12.18m for 2026. Implementation of this strategic plan requires further significant increases in budgets over the next five years, with combined expenses projected to rise to \$18.2m by 2030, a 50% increase.

A primary driver is the planned increase in land leased for conservation (which is fundamental to our mission and to the survival of the ecosystem), with lease costs growing from \$1.7m to \$3.7m between 2026 and 2030 and accounting for ~36% of the increase in the Big Life Kenya budget over that period. This has a knock-on effect on other key cost centers, particularly wildlife protection, which must scale accordingly.

The majority of Big Life's funding (consistently >90%) has historically come from philanthropic sources. The larger part of this is raised by Big Life USA, which has achieved compounded revenue growth of 10–11% annually, with peak performance reaching ~15%. Philanthropic revenue directed to Big Life Kenya comes almost entirely from non-profits, family foundations, and zoos.

Total philanthropic revenue has largely met our historical needs, but the scale of projected expense growth in future will require a more aggressive expansion of philanthropic and other sources of revenue.

Through continued execution of current fundraising strategies, Big Life USA projects 8–12% annual growth in US revenue over the next five years, achieving annual revenue of \$9.8m–\$11.3m by 2030. New initiatives are being considered that may position Big Life USA to push beyond this.

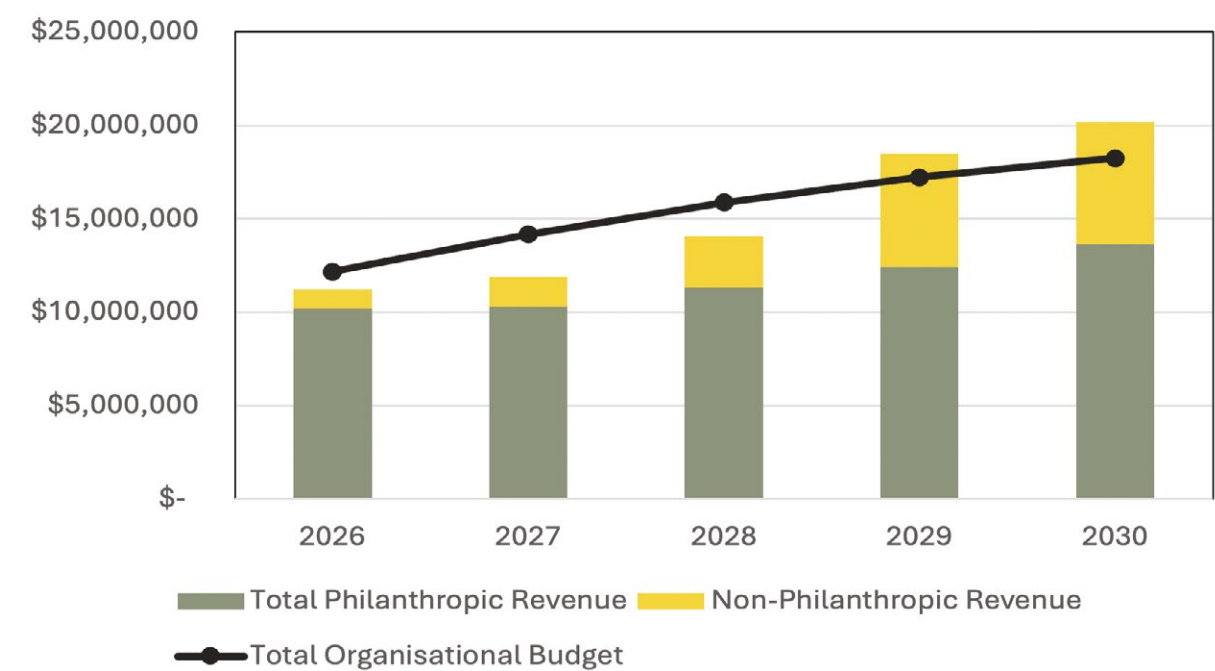
Big Life Kenya projects \$1.9m in philanthropic funding raised directly into Kenya in 2026, with plans to grow this at a target rate of 8% per year in the future, achieving annual philanthropic revenue of \$2.7m by 2030.

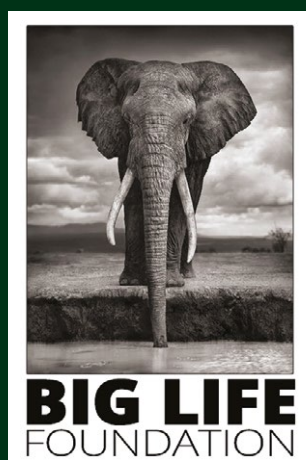
These projected increases in philanthropic revenue will not cover future budgetary needs, and it is vital that Big Life develops new and expands upon existing non-philanthropic income streams. This is also important for reducing philanthropic dependence.

Big Life Kenya has made progress in this regard, but more needs to be done. We have grown ‘sustainable’ recurring income from \$470k in 2023 to an anticipated ~\$1m in 2026 (118% increase), including through the development of 7 tourism partnerships. Big Life Kenya also receives variable but significant ongoing non-philanthropic revenue as an implementing partner of the Chyulu Hills REDD+ carbon project.

In order to support and increase revenue from a range of nature-based initiatives, Big Life Kenya has developed a sustainable finance strategy with a particular focus on tourism, as well as a number of nature financing mechanisms. The goal of that strategy is to generate \$5m or more (~30% of the projected Big Life Kenya budget) in sustainable funding annually by 2030.

This diversified funding strategy indicates that the revenue growth required to implement this strategic plan is attainable (see figure below), although shortfalls will be expected in the short-term before new non-philanthropic revenue streams reach maturity, and addressing these will be a priority.





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IMAGE CREDITS

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