

Mobilizing Resources for Wildlife Conservation in Kenya beyond the 21st Century

Edwin W. Wanyonyi

KENYA'S WILDLIFE IS A RESOURCE OF NATIONAL PRIDE AND A WORLD HERITAGE. It provides the base for the country's tourism industry, wildlife research, and conservation education. The country has set aside over 8% of its land as national parks and reserves to ensure wildlife is protected for posterity.

Conserving viable wildlife populations in the 21st century and beyond is becoming more complex and expensive because of many competing interests and other compounding factors. Conservation work today is supported primarily by tourism revenue. But tourism is notoriously volatile: for instance, visitor numbers plunged 85% in 2008 following Kenya's post-election violence, while in 2010 the global financial crisis and the vagaries of nature saw the revenues slump by 40%.

Kenya's economy and tourism industry

The government has, in its medium-term planning, identified tourism as one of the growth engines for the country's economy. The strategy is designed to contribute to the achievement of the broad national macro-economic objectives as stipulated in the Vision 2030 which aims at making Kenya a "middle income country providing high quality life for all citizens by the year 2030." The plan also incorporates the ongoing policies and programs aimed at attaining development objectives, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), while sustaining the gains made under the *Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (2003–2007)*, especially those relating to the tourism sector.

Tourism currently accounts for about 10% of the gross domestic product (GDP), making it the third largest contributor to GDP after agriculture and manufacturing. It is also Kenya's leading foreign exchange earner, generating about Ksh75.2 billion (about US\$1 billion) in 2010. The tourism sector's contribution to employment generation has grown by about 3% annually, and earnings per employee have grown by 18% over the last five years. The sector also generates revenue for the government through taxes, duties, license fees, and park entry fees, among others. The existence of tourist attractions in most parts of the country contributes to equitable distribution of economic and infrastructural development.

Kenya has on average posted a positive economic growth of about 3.6% per annum since 2003, apart from 2008 when growth was interrupted by political instability. Since 2008, economic growth has been supported by a resurgence of activities in the tourism sector and resilience in the building and construction industry. However, a mixture of unfavorable

The George Wright Forum, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 118–125 (2012).

© 2012 The George Wright Society. All rights reserved.

(No copyright is claimed for previously published material reprinted herein.)

ISSN 0732-4715. Please direct all permission requests to info@georgewright.org.

weather and sluggish internal and external factors have conspired to restrain growth from attaining its full potential. Kenya aims to be one of the top ten long-haul tourist destinations in the world, offering a high-end, diverse, and distinctive visitor experience. Equally important are intraregional and domestic tourism, which are expected to grow significantly over the planned period.

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is a key stakeholder and enabler in the implementation of Vision 2030. The organization has broadened its capacity to contribute to national development through initiatives promoting both premier parks and under-utilized parks, niche products, and wildlife corridors and migratory routes. Specific strategies include improved infrastructure in protected areas, increasing the quality of service, reviewing entry fees in the premium parks, improving facilities, marketing under-utilized parks, minimizing human-wildlife conflicts, and strengthening conservation efforts and related enterprises along wildlife corridors and migratory routes.

Conservation challenges

Wildlife conservation in Kenya today is facing many challenges. These include decline in wildlife populations both inside and outside protected areas, illegal trade in wildlife species and products, unplanned settlements in wildlife areas, conversion of wildlife migratory routes into other incompatible uses, encroachment into wildlife habitats due to human population growth, human-wildlife conflicts, climate change, and volatility of the international tourism market. Today, Kenya's cherished wildlife is more endangered than ever before.

The elephant population in Kenya dropped from 167,000 to 20,000 between 1973 and 1989 due to poaching. Recent studies show that Kenya has lost a significant amount of its wildlife over the last 30 years as a result of poaching, habitat destruction, and climate changes. Elephants, lions, cheetahs, rhinos, flamingoes, sea turtles, and other wildlife are in danger and hence the need to step up efforts to ensure their survival. Human-wildlife conflicts have escalated in many parts of the country. Dangerous animals such as elephants and lions move out of the parks and wreak havoc on private property. Sometimes people are injured or killed by wildlife. Existing evidence shows that wildlife populations decline at alarming rates where they are in conflict with people.

Managing these challenges requires a substantial amount of resources. Most of the conservation efforts are labor-intensive, with rangers having to physically patrol the parks to keep off poachers from wildlife. KWS also uses air patrols to supplement ground efforts. Some individual rhinos are monitored daily. In some instances, expensive wildlife translocation operations are done to mitigate against human-wildlife conflicts, or to move animals to safer areas.

Financing conservation

Wildlife conservation in Kenya is primarily financed by income raised from park entry fees (conservation fees), accommodation facilities, rents and leases, government subventions, donors, and fundraising events held in various national parks. The income raised is then used on security of visitors and wildlife, protected areas conservation, biodiversity research and monitoring, management of endangered species, rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems,

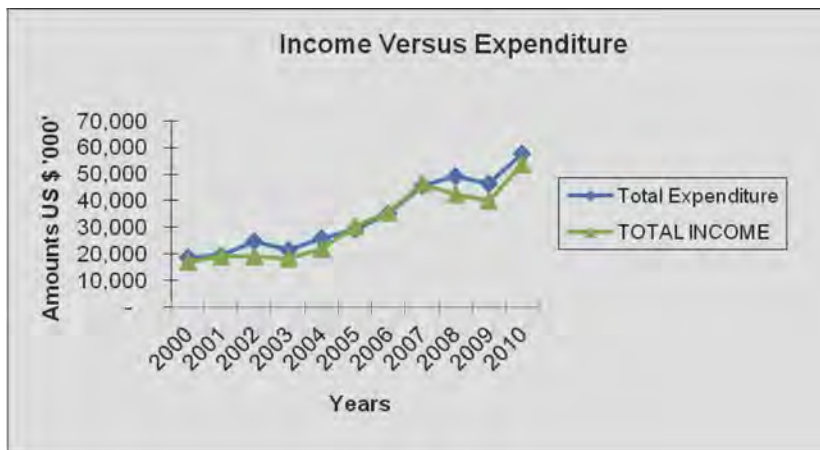
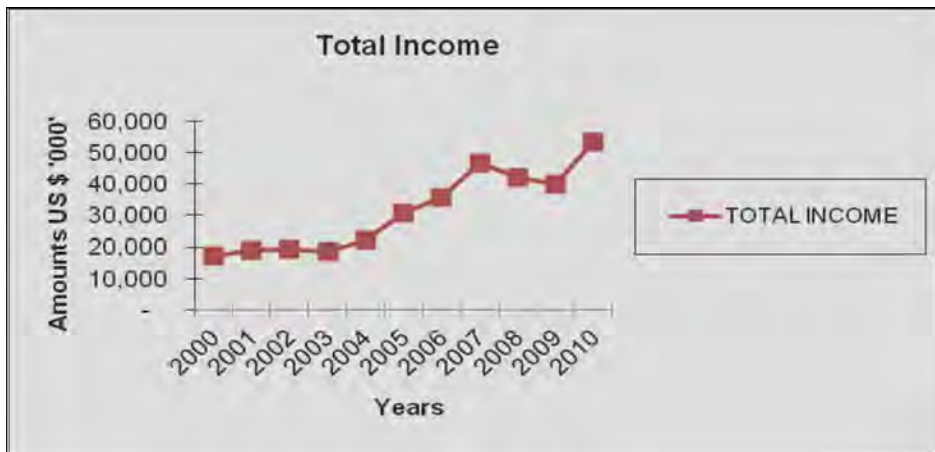
conservation education, and enhancing the visitor experience through marketing and improving infrastructure. The revenue demands for conservation are much higher than what is annually generated.

Figure 1 shows the total revenue collected by KWS over the last ten years. The increase in revenue over this period has been attributed to aggressive international and local marketing, enhanced e-marketing and social media, development of new revenue streams that include corporate fundraising events in parks, and enhanced government support. The revenue versus expenditure trend is shown in Figure 2.

The cost of conservation as reflected on the graph is very high. This is mainly attributed to the vast nature of the protected areas, high costs of providing security for wildlife and visitors, widespread human-wildlife conflict issues, vagaries of weather, and constant needs for infrastructural development and maintenance.

Figure 1 (top). KWS total annual income, 2000–2010.

Figure 2 (bottom). KWS total income versus total expenditure, 2000–2010.



Conservation fees

Park entry fees were renamed “conservation fees” as from January 2011. The change of the name was to reflect the purpose for charging the fee and endear customers and make them feel obligated to support wildlife conservation as a world heritage. The main source of this revenue is the tourist arrivals in Kenya. Tourist arrivals by air and sea for the last 10 years have generally posted an upward trend.

According to the Kenya Tourist Board’s annual report for 2009, the highest source market for international arrivals by air and sea have been the United Kingdom, followed by the USA, Italy, Germany, and France. Regionally, the leading sources of tourists are South Africa, Uganda, and Tanzania. From Asian markets, visitors mainly come from India, China, and the United Arab Emirates. Table 1 shows the trend of visitation to national parks over the last 10 years.

As indicated in Table 1, the increased visitation alone does not translate to increased revenue for conservation. There are a number of strategies that have been put in place by KWS to ensure that most of the foreign guests visit at least one national park or reserve. These include review of tariffs based on seasons and park use to give visitors a discount incentive during the low-tourist seasons. Second, KWS has undertaken aggressive marketing both locally and internationally. Marketing campaigns target the World Tourism Exhibitions in United Kingdom, USA, Germany, Italy, United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. KWS is also making great efforts to open up less-visited parks that have high tourism potential. This arises from the fact that KWS is responsible for over 59 national parks and reserves, but only 10 of them account for about 90% of the total tourism revenue.

Figure 3 shows the internally generated revenue from park entry (conservation) fees, accommodation facilities, leased properties, license fees, and air-wing.

Government subvention

The government has increased its financial allocation for supporting wildlife conservation programs. In the last 10 years, the government subvention has increased fivefold (Figure 4).

Table 1. KWS parks and reserves visitor statistics, 2001 -2010.

Year	Total	Non-Residents	Residents	Children
2001	1,268,901	487,600	85,855	694,064
2002	1,467,002	501,756	92,182	879,064
2003	1,274,847	305,090	92,186	777,611
2004	1,408,298	587,448	78,097	747,901
2005	1,674,076	640,686	76,572	957,748
2006	1,770,662	748,355	72,304	949,963
2007	1,980,058	532,552	67,808	1,079,698
2008	1,997,591	371,703	75,887	1,052,101
2009	1,810,801	508,083	89,305	1,098,780
2010	2,290,260	701,226	106,600	1,482,434

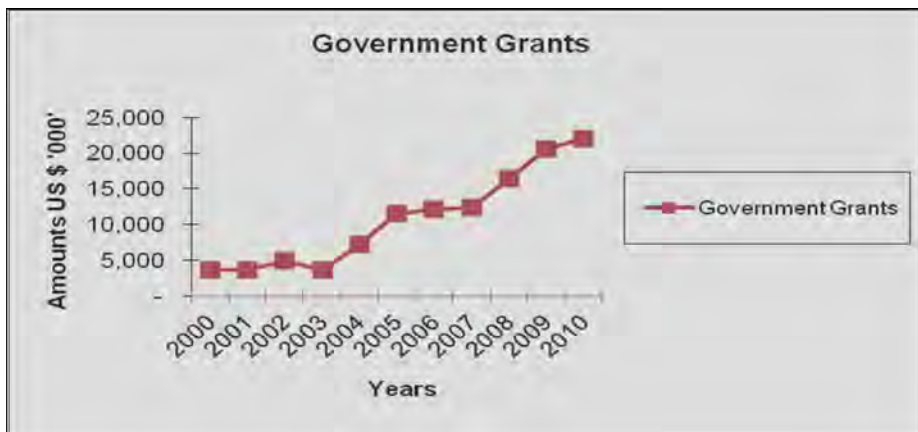


Figure 3 (top). KWS internally generated revenue, 2000-2011.

Figure 4 (bottom). Ten-year government subvention to KWS, 2000-2010.

Development partners

Development partners mainly provide their support in the form of grants and loans to the government of Kenya that is then passed over to KWS to undertake specific projects. The main supporters for conservation in Kenya are the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Global Environment Facility (GEF), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), European Union, World Bank, French Development Agency (AFD), and UK's Department for International Development (DFID). Furthermore, we have established memoranda of understanding with specific partners to collaborate in conservation programs and share experiences. The main external agencies with which KWS has developed working partnerships include Parks Canada and bureaus in Brazil and the United States.

The Kenya Wildlife Service Fund

The Kenya Wildlife Service Fund is an endowment fund dedicated to wildlife conservation. The fund is designed to provide reliable support to cushion against fluctuations in tourism income, unpredictable national political environments, or the vagaries of international economics. Therefore, the fund is expected to support wildlife and community conservation efforts over the long term. By definition, the principal investment capital of an endowment fund cannot be used; only the accrued interest and other income may be made available for ongoing operations.

The KWS fund borrows from experiences in North and South America. An example is the Grand Canyon Wildlife Endowment Fund, established by Grand Canyon National Park. It is a special investment that is solely devoted to conserving wildlife in the area, a number of species of which are threatened or endangered.

Substantial funding is required annually for wildlife security operations, monitoring and research, mitigation against human–wildlife conflict, translocations, infrastructure development, and other programs inside Kenya’s national parks, reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, marine parks, and KWS-run wildlife stations outside protected areas.

The endowment fund’s goal is to raise Ksh7.5 billion (US\$100million) over a decade. At an assumed annual interest rate of 10%, Ksh750 million (about US\$10 million) will be generated annually for conservation activities. This sum is but a fraction of the cost of conservation countrywide today—but still an invaluable backstopping subsidy, particularly when tourism dips.

A total of US \$829,458 has already been raised towards the endowment fund kitty. New initiatives are being put in place to raise more funds for conservation, including having fundraising arms both locally and internationally in the important source markets. Everyone is able to contribute to the fund, including governments, multilateral and bilateral donors, corporations, individuals, and concerned citizens in Kenya and around the world. Table 2 shows the contributions to the funds as of December 2011.

The fund aims to combine grassroots fundraising drives with conservation education to catalyze the culture of giving. In collaboration with KWS and other partners, the fund is

Table 2. Kenya Wildlife Service Endowment Fund contributions as of 30 December 2011. (Ksh = Kenya shillings.)

Donor / Fundraising Event	Amount, Ksh	Amount, US\$
Kenya Wildlife Service / Government of Kenya	60,000,000	750,000
Cycle with the Rhino	2,896,750	36,209
Hell’s Gate on a Wheelbarrow	1,800,000	22,500
KLM Royal Dutch Airlines	380,000	4,750
Dr. Scott Rogers	12,500	156
KWS Staff	1,074,000	13,425
Community and Wildlife Service Division	1,900,000	23,750
Honorary Wardens & Groups – Coast Conservation	1,235,000	15,438
Regine Hess – German Embassy Nairobi	30,000	375
Animal Adoption	1,026,676	12,833
Bill Clerk	80,000	1,000
Total	70,429,926	880,437

developing novel ways—such as mobile phone campaigns, using celebrity spokespeople, and collaborating with wildlife clubs, schools, and drama festivals—to make contributing easy and satisfying.

Other fundraising efforts

KWS also undertakes other fundraising initiatives. The most recent ones include “Kenya Wildlife Adoption,” “To Hell’s Gate on a Wheelbarrow,” and “Cycle with the Rhino.” These events raised a total of US \$200,000 in the last year. The sponsorship for the events came from corporations such as Standard Chartered Bank, Safaricom, Kenya Electricity Generating Company (Kengen), Kenya Commercial Bank, Resolution Health, Coca Cola, and Kenya Airways, among others.

The KWS wildlife adoption program lets individuals or corporations sponsor an animal at the Nairobi Animal Orphanage. The orphanage is famed for its efforts in caring for abducted, abandoned, and injured wild animals. The adoption program operates on the premise that every animal at our orphanage has specific needs. The support goes directly into the upkeep of the animals by providing food, medicine, toys, translocations, cage construction, maintenance repairs, and other supplies. From every sponsorship received, 50% of the funds go directly to the Kenya Wildlife Service Fund.

KWS also hosts a number of activities in its conservation areas. “To Hell’s Gate on a Wheelbarrow,” which has been held for the last three years, has continued to gain momentum. This is an annual Corporate Team Building challenge whose primary objective is to raise funds for the construction of a conservation education center in Hell’s Gate National Park. The facility, once constructed, will play a key role in the mobilization and sensitization of over 1 million local community members in the Naivasha area on the importance of protecting and conserving wildlife, as well as educating them on alternative enterprise. In 2009, “To Hells Gate on a Wheelbarrow” raised a total of Ksh7million (US\$93,000). Another Ksh10 million (US\$133,000) was raised in 2010.

“Cycle with the Rhino” is a spectacular and unique cycling event held every September at the Lake Nakuru National Park and part of Nakuru Municipality. The money raised is used to maintain the park’s baboon-proof electric fence as well as to support community projects that are linked to the park. The park is highly threatened by the increasing urbanization, pollution, land degradation, decreases in quality and quantity of water in the lake, and loss of biodiversity as a result of deforestation in the Mau, Eburru, and Bahati forests. In 2010 and 2011, “Cycle with the Rhino” raised Ksh7.5 million (US\$100,000) and Ksh8million (US\$106,000), respectively.

Conclusion

KWS is focusing on making a significant contribution to promoting Kenya’s economic growth through wildlife conservation and tourism. By strengthening existing programs and developing new innovative approaches, the organization is well prepared and strategically positioned to face the challenge of financing wildlife conservation despite the volatility of the tourism industry. The responsibility of protecting Kenya’s wildlife heritage will remain an expensive endeavor, but KWS will continue to use every resource at its disposal to create a

future for wildlife that is brighter than the present. We will continue to rely on the support of our partners—and the selfless efforts of our staff.

References

- Government of Kenya. 2008. *Kenya Vision 2030: First Medium-Term Plan (2008–2012)*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- KWS [Kenya Wildlife Service]. 2005. *Strategic Plan 2005–2010: Preparing for the Opportunities Ahead*. Nairobi: KWS.
- . 2008a. *Kenya Wildlife Service 2009 Annual Report*. Nairobi: KWS.
- . 2008b. *Strategic Plan 2008–2013*. Nairobi: KWS.
- . 2009. *Kenya Wildlife Service 2010 Annual Report*. Nairobi: KWS.

Edwin W. Wanyonyi, Kenya Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 40241-00100, Nairobi, Kenya; ewanyonyi@kws.go.ke