

Africa newsletter



ifaw

**Kitenden
special**

3rd Edition 2023



Photo: Donal Boyd / © IFAW

How to protect elephants and communities in Africa?

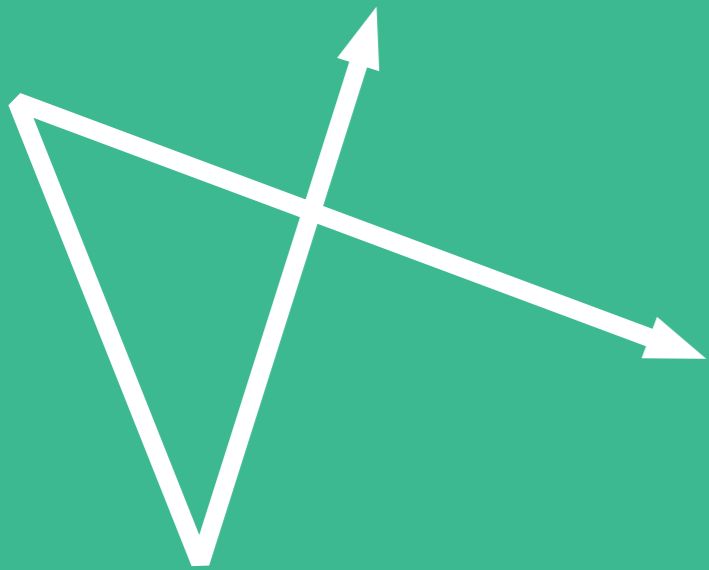


Photo: Donal Boyd / © IFAW

Create room to roam

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About IFAW - IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) is a global non-profit helping animals and people thrive together. We are experts and everyday people, working across seas, oceans and in more than 40 countries around the world. We rescue, rehabilitate and release animals, and we restore and protect their natural habitats. The problems we’re up against are urgent and complicated. To solve them, we match fresh thinking with bold action. We partner with local communities, governments, nongovernmental organisations and businesses. Together, we pioneer new and innovative ways to help all species flourish. See how at ifaw.org

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Cover photo: © Donal Boyd
A herd of elephants walking through Amboseli National Park, Kenya.



Photo: David Brazier / © IFAW

Upgraded Dete Old Age Home officially opened by Zimbabwe's First Lady

Condemned to round up the last years of their mundane lives in the squalid conditions of a facility where their sole source of delight was the occasional visits by wild animals, mostly elephants, with which their homes shared a frontier.

The ablution facilities were dilapidated and without support systems their old and frail bodies required.

The walls to their rooms were decrepit, and the beds they used were care-worn by time and use.

There was nothing with which to help them kill time, their sole mission at the endpoint of their long lives.

This was the sort of lives led by the elderly residents of the Catholic-run Dete old people's home situated on the outskirts of the giant Hwange National Park.

But all that has changed, thanks to an inspired partnership by IFAW and ZimParks, who joined hands to refurbish the home to give it a fresh breath of life and rejuvenate the spirits of its elderly residents.

The facility is now with a sense of grandeur after the revamp and was officially re-opened by Zimbabwe's First Lady Dr. Auxillia Mnangagwa, who is also the country's wildlife ambassador, in April.

Funded by IFAW, the home has undergone a US\$160,000 (ZWD51 million) renovation as part of efforts to demonstrate practical conservation benefits for local communities.

Situated on the edge of the 14,651 km² Hwange National Park, the Roman Catholic-run institution has been upgraded and expanded by the ZimParks-IFAW partnership.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Dr Mnangagwa said: "The upgrade and expansion of this community old age facility is a perfect example of conservation with a human face. "In pursuit of our conservation goals, we cannot afford to ignore the aspirations and needs of vulnerable

members of our society sharing spaces with wildlife. By placing communities at the heart of our conservation efforts, the potential for success and growth is limitless," she added.

Azzedine Downes, IFAW President and CEO, said: "The most successful conservation, in our experience, is that which considers human connection—this is essential for enhancing the stewardship of natural resources across landscapes, regardless of place or culture."

Dr Fulton Mangwanya, Director-General of Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) said the community old age infrastructure revamp showed that practical and tangible conservation benefits can be transferred to marginal local communities and institutions. "Going forward, we commit to continuously pursue people-centered and demand-driven solutions to enhance stewardship of natural resources across the Hwange-Matetsi-Zambezi landscape," he said.

IFAW and ZimParks are also working closely with the buffer communities to mitigate human-wildlife conflict and promote conservation-friendly alternative livelihood strategies.

Community interventions by the ZimParks-IFAW partnership include setting up community nutrition gardens and boreholes in the Hwange and Tsholotsho community areas to improve access to clean water and enhance food security.

Other activities included the upgrade of the 20-kilometre road linking Makona ranger station in the park's southern part to the Tsholotsho community. The upgrade will allow rangers to swiftly respond to incidents of human-wildlife conflict.

On the education front, ZimParks and IFAW also provide educational support to 300 students drawn from 21 schools in Tsholotsho, Lupane, and Hwange Districts under the Environmental Stewardship Programme.

US\$160,000

(ZWD51 million) renovation Dete Old Age Home

20km

road linking Makona ranger station was upgraded

300

students were provided educational support drawn from 21 schools in Tsholotsho, Lupane, and Hwange Districts



Photo: Lex Rea via Shutterstock



Photo: David Brazier / © IFAW

▲ Watering the vegetable garden at the newly upgraded and expanded Dete Old People's Home near Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe.

▲ The Dete Old Age Home was officially opened by Zimbabwe's First Lady, Auxillia Mnangagwa.

▲ Aerial view of the newly upgraded and expanded Dete Old People's Home.



Photo: Luckmore Safuli / © IFAW

Four elephants fitted with satellite collars in Kafue National Park

Part of a post-release monitoring initiative meant to observe their movements and generate valuable data for the sustainable management of the world's largest land animals, led to four elephants being fitted with satellite collars in Kafue National Park, Zambia.

The two-day collaring operation at the end of May was carried out by Game Rangers International (GRI) with support from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), African Parks (AP), and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) Zambia.

The four orphaned elephants, Chamilandu, Tafika, Rufunsa, and Mosi, are GRI-Kafue Release facility graduates who, in 2021, decided to leave the soft release facility and pursue a life back in the wild.

"Collaring is an important part of our conservation work and provides essential information on how the released orphaned elephants integrate with the wild population. The GPS collars also provide us with data to mitigate human-elephant conflicts," said Mary Muyoyeta, GRI Research Assistant.

"Because elephants are highly sociable, released elephants oftentimes join the wild herds. And by being able to monitor them, we are not only starting to learn about the orphaned elephants but also beginning to understand the dynamics of the wild elephants which they join," said Neil Greenwood, IFAW Wildlife Rescue Director.

A total of 16 elephants have been released back into the wild since the establishment of the GRI Kafue release facility.

Understanding elephant behavior key to conservation

The risky, time-consuming, and difficult mission was successfully executed with expert coordination and communication between the ground teams and the helicopter crew.

When the helicopter crew identified the targeted elephants, the pilot skillfully separated them from the herd and drove them to an open area that the ground teams could access. Once they were in an open area, the vet shot the tranquilizer dart with a gun from the air, after which the ground team rushed to ensure that the collar is fitted correctly around the elephant's neck as soon as possible.

On average, the entire process takes up to 20 minutes. While one team focuses on fitting the satellite collar, another team collects blood samples and takes measurements.

Immediately after the team has finished taking measurements and fitting the collar, the vet doctor administers a reversal drug, and within minutes, the elephant will be back on its feet, ready to roam.

"As we conduct the collaring exercise, the safety of the animal is our main concern. We cannot continue the operation if the elephant is in danger or the environment is not safe. Yes, it might be a bit stressful for the elephants, but the long-term benefits outweigh the minimal stress they undergo during the collaring process," said Muyoyeta.

First to be collared was Tafika, a 14-year-old male elephant rescued in 2008 from South Luangwa National Park at only nine months old after being separated from his mother and herd during a human-elephant conflict.

Next was Chamilandu, one of the first rescues of the GRI Elephant Orphanage Project, lovingly known as Chamma. She has been an integral member of the GRI herd since she was rescued after a group of poachers shot her mother while the two elephants walked through the forest.

She has previously assumed the role of surrogate mother for the other rescued orphans at the Lusaka nursery.

The two-day mission concluded with the fitting of the satellite collar on Mosi. The

team watched with great satisfaction as Mosi stood up after receiving the reversal drug and slowly moved back into the bush to join the wild herd.

"We are incredibly grateful to our partners for contributing to the successful collaring exercise. We would not have been able to conduct this exercise without their financial and technical support," said Muyoyeta.

"By being able to collar these elephants and by starting to understand their movement patterns, this is a major benefit, particularly furthering IFAW's Room to Roam initiative," said IFAW's Greenwood. "When we start to understand where the elephants need to be, we can start focusing our efforts on protecting these elephants within those areas to make sure that they are safe and secure for generations to come."

16

elephants have been released back into the wild since the establishment of the GRI Kafue release facility



Photo: Luckmore Safuli / © IFAW

▲ Preparing to collar elephants in Kafue National Park, Zambia.

◀ IFAW's Neil Greenwood helps collar elephants in Kafue National Park, Zambia.

New Makona ranger station: a game changer in wildlife conservation



Photo: Tyson Mayr / © IFAW



Photo: David Brazier / © IFAW

As the government dignitaries raised their scissors aloft in readiness to cut the ribbon, symbolising the dawn of a new era, elders of the land emerged from the building, erupting in song and dance as they expressed their unreserved elation.

The song, in the Ndebele vernacular, loosely translates to: "We are witnessing a great thing, development is here".

For a moment, the scissor was lowered as the dignitaries joined the gratification until a timekeeper – wary of the passage of the hour – beckoned for silence to allow formal proceedings to commence.

This was the scene in April when a new modern-day ranger station established in Zimbabwe's giant Hwange National Park was officially commissioned by the government.

The song and dance was the community's way of showcasing their full endorsement of the undertaking, which has become fully operational.

The glamorous complex, established jointly by IFAW and ZimParks at a cost of US\$500 000, provides a permanent base to fight wildlife crimes, chiefly poaching, and safeguard communities in the remote southern region of the iconic sanctuary, which explains the ecstatic celebrations witnessed at its commissioning.

The milestone project puts rangers at the centre of what was once a wildlife poaching hotspot.

In a speech read on her behalf, Zimbabwe's First Lady Dr. Auxillia Mnangagwa, also the

country's Tourism and Wildlife Ambassador, hailed the IFAW-ZimParks partnership for prioritising ranger welfare.

"Well-supported, adequately resourced, trained, and motivated rangers are key to ensuring we win the fight against poaching and stop the destruction of ecosystems," she said.

Makona is now a fully-fledged permanent ranger base covering over 5000 km² southern section of Hwange National Park which shares a long and open boundary with both community lands and neighbouring Botswana.

Including an office complex, operations centre, recreational facility, and 12 housing units accommodating more than 24 rangers and their families.

The Makona base is situated approximately 15 kilometers from the Tsholotshlo community, which enables rangers to swiftly deploy to respond to incidents of human-wildlife conflict.

"We are thrilled to celebrate this achievement together with ZimParks. It is a testament to a mutual, long-term commitment to protecting and preserving biodiversity, grounded in a partnership to deliver transformational change for people, wildlife, and the natural environment," said Azzedine Downes, IFAW President, and CEO.

"The IFAW-ZimParks partnership has transformed a large part of Hwange National Park resulting in zero incidents of elephant poaching in the Makona area and the wider park over the last three years,"

said Dr. Fulton Mangwanya, Director-General of Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks).

In 2013, cyanide poisoning killed 300 elephants and other wildlife in the southern part of Hwange National Park near Makona. The new ranger base station is expected to transform and sustain the area as a haven for wildlife.

To date, the IFAW-ZimParks partnership has invested more than US\$3.5 million in the Hwange-Matetsi-Zambezi landscape. These funds have gone towards combatting wildlife crime, ranger welfare, park management (improving infrastructure; game water management), tourism development, wildlife rescue, and mitigating human-wildlife conflict.

US\$500,000

investment into a glamorous complex providing a permanent base to fight wildlife crimes

24

rangers and their families are accommodated in 12 housing units

▲ Group photo at the opening of Makona substation, Hwange National Park's first modern-era ranger station.

◀ Aerial view of Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.



Photo: Steven Ngomba / © IFAW

Elephants thrive in Malawi one year after mass translocation

One year ago, IFAW put the finishing touches on years of work to create a safe home for elephants in one of Malawi's premier national parks—by moving 263 from one of Malawi's smallest parks nearly 500 kilometres across the country to release them into Kasungu National Park.

One year later, Kasungu's elephant population is healthier, and the park's tourism is on the rise. The ambitious translocation of a record number of elephants has made inroads to resurrecting Kasungu as a star among southern Africa's protected areas.

Earlier efforts to boost Kasungu's elephants

Kasungu once stood proud among Malawi's protected areas. But years of neglect and rampant poaching decimated its diverse wildlife population, reducing elephant numbers to less than 50 from more than 2,000 strong in the 1970s. Once a popular tourist destination, visitor numbers had virtually dried up due to the lack of wildlife.

IFAW has been actively supporting the conservation efforts of the Malawi Department of National Parks and Wildlife

(DNPW) for many years, i.e. building capacity through training and equipment, securing habitats and working with communities. So when Kasungu needed our help, we didn't hesitate.

Starting with Kasungu, our USAID-supported Combating Wildlife Crime project in the Malawi-Zambia Transfrontier Conservation Area aimed to stabilise or increase elephant populations by reducing poaching-related deaths and promoting coexistence between humans and animals.

In 2015, Kasungu's elephant population was just under 50 individuals. By 2022, the six-year effort of IFAW and DNPW had virtually ended all forms of poaching and wildlife crime, developed a cadre of dedicated, well-trained, and motivated rangers, built infrastructure, and revived the community's economy. The elephant population rose to 120.

The next step: translocation

While the success was undoubted, Kasungu's elephant numbers were insufficient to ensure a viable long-term population. But Kasungu was primed to take on the excess of elephants that were testing the carrying capacity of Liwonde National Park, a few hundred kilometres east. Centred in Malawi, the approximately 580-kilometre-squared Liwonde is Malawi's second-smallest national park. Its rapidly growing elephant population made it possible—and necessary—to move excess animals.

Working in partnership with DNPW Malawi and African Parks, the move was a colossal and complicated process, requiring a small army of conservationists, translocation experts, veterinarians, helpers, helicopters, and a fleet of specially modified trucks to move up to 27 elephants at a time, day-by-day, over many weeks in mid-2022. Catching and crating, trucks trundled the nearly 500 kilometres from one park to another as truckload after truckload of elephants were moved and safely released into their new home.

Science leading the way

One year later, Kasungu communities are learning to live alongside their giant neighbours.

IFAW uses science to guide practical interventions—including constructing kilometres of solar-powered electrified fencing to help protect communities from elephants straying beyond park boundaries. The fence construction is ongoing, with 70 kilometres already completed and an additional 20 kilometres expected to be finished by the end of the year. A partnership between local communities employs over 100 men and women to erect the fence, and an additional 17 permanent staff monitor the fence daily to keep it active and make repairs.

Science is also leading the way in providing the facts we need to ensure the success of this ambitious exercise, not only to restock Kasungu's elephant and wildlife population and restore the park's viability as a tourism hotspot and economic, but also to support IFAW's goals to ensure elephants once again roam freely across the borders and landscapes of Malawi and Zambia.

At the time of the translocation, we fitted radio collars to five elephants (four females and one bull) from Kasungu's resident herds; 24 collars (19 cows and five bulls) were put on translocated elephants. The elephants' movements are closely monitored and are fascinating to observe.

Our "eye-in-the-sky" observations show that Kasungu's original resident elephants remain primarily in the same areas they have always occupied. However, the translocated elephants are widely exploring their new environment, not confining their movements within the park.

Working closely with communities

As a critical landscape in the TFCA, part of Kasungu shares a border with Zambia. The national park will always remain unfenced along its international border, allowing elephants to wander freely between the two countries.

This has led to some conflict with communities and, tragically, some fatalities. IFAW acknowledges these with concern and care and provides immediate support to families and communities on the occasions this has been required.

Both Patricio Ndadzela, IFAW's director for Malawi and Zambia and Brighton Kumchedwa, director of the Malawi Department of Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), acknowledge the challenges but explain that invasions are common when translocated elephant populations try to establish themselves in a new environment.

"They are trying to establish their territory. There will be these movements from one corner of the park to the other as they explore their territory until they eventually settle down," Kumchedwa says.

"IFAW works closely with the communities to ensure they are informed and can stay safe when elephants come close," Ndadzela says.

"Community outreach, training, and sensitisation by our teams are helping people better manage their behaviour and how they interact with elephants," he continues. "We also have Rapid Response Units on call round-the-clock to react when elephants come too close to farms and homesteads."

Positive outcomes

Adding 263 elephants to Kasungu National Park has already shown positive outcomes. Tourism in the park is gradually growing, and communities are benefiting from improved employment opportunities. The Kasungu Wildlife Conservation for Community Development Association

(KAWICCODA), a cooperative of surrounding village members, has signed a revenue-sharing agreement with the park. This agreement has enabled the association to undertake various development projects, including constructing teachers' houses, supporting health centres, and establishing a conservation lodge near the park's main gate. Beekeeping and maize mill enterprises have also been made possible through IFAW's support.

Although the Combating Wildlife Crime project concluded in 2022, IFAW remains committed to supporting the completion of the fence and providing interventions that contribute to the wellbeing of the local communities. We assist cooperatives with irrigation infrastructure to enhance farming activities. These efforts aim to develop tourism, promote protected area management, and improve livelihoods in the Kasungu region.

Elephants are at the heart of IFAW'S Room to Roam initiative aimed at creating vast connected landscapes providing wildlife and people with the space they need to live and thrive together. By creating safe passages for elephants and other wildlife to move freely within their home ranges, we can ensure greater biodiversity, a natural resilience to climate change, and a secure future for animals and people.

100

men and women are employed to erect the fence



Photo: © Jonas Straßberger

▲ A sedated elephant is moved into a transport truck.

◀ Elephants just after their release into Kasungu National Park.



Photo: Moses Matofu / © IFAW

Wildlife conservancies signal a bright future for communities neighbouring Tsavo

By Donald Mcharo: Board chairman, Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association

Taita Taveta County has one of the most unique and diverse landscapes in Kenya. We are home to Kenya's largest population of elephants, and the Tsavos, which by any stretch of imagination rank among the world's most iconic protected areas for wildlife.

These two parks—Tsavo East and West—take up two thirds of the land in our county, with ranches, wildlife conservancies, commercial sisal estates, subsistence farms, water bodies and hilltop forests taking up the rest.

Other than our rich biodiversity, our land is blessed with minerals, pasture for quality beef production and opportunities for tourism and irrigated farming.

When the Tsavos were founded during colonial times in the 1940s, most of the land lying between the two parks was designated as hunting blocks. But when sport hunting was banned in 1976, local leaders petitioned the government to revert ownership of this land back to the people. It is this that paved the way for the formation of private and community owned ranches that today play a pivotal role in maintaining the ecological viability of Tsavo East and West national parks.

These ranches coalesced under the Taita Taveta Ranchers Association and were focused mainly on livestock production. But when Kenya enacted new legislation for wildlife management underlining opportunities for wildlife conservation on community owned ranches, we seized the moment and formed the Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA). We are currently an umbrella organization for 37 ranches—both family and community owned—and we control one million acres of land on which we keep livestock, mine minerals and exploit wildlife through tourism.

TTWCA is by far a more superior institution than its forebearers because it is better governed, with capacity to embrace and use more resources on our lands other than livestock as was the case in the past. We are also able to attract and cultivate more partnerships and investors because we have clearly laid out structures for

continuity. Our partnership with USAID for the sustainable management of the Amboseli and Tsavo landscapes, a project spearheaded by IFAW, has been singularly rewarding.

This project has enabled TTWCA to set up proper governance systems, first, through a board elected from among association members at an annual general meeting. Board members are responsible to landowners and they make policies that guide the running of member conservancies. These policies are implemented by the TTWCA secretariat.

Through our partnership with USAID and IFAW, the Board has been trained on financial management, policy formulation, how to work in committees, interact with the secretariat, and resolve conflicts between our membership and communities. We have secured funding to develop management plans, grazing plans and biodiversity inventories, which will help us to manage the range better. We are also in the process of opening up roads and firebreaks in conservancies and ranches to protect the habitat and attract tourism investors.

One of the most exciting things in this transition has been the increased involvement of women and youth in leadership positions in our ranches and conservancies. We have ranch managers who are barely in their 30s, while one conservancy is led by a woman. I have found these youthful managers and conservancy board members to be visionary, energetic, and technologically savvy. They adapt quickly to change, which is a critical attribute in the highly dynamic conservation sector and is a huge plus for succession planning too.

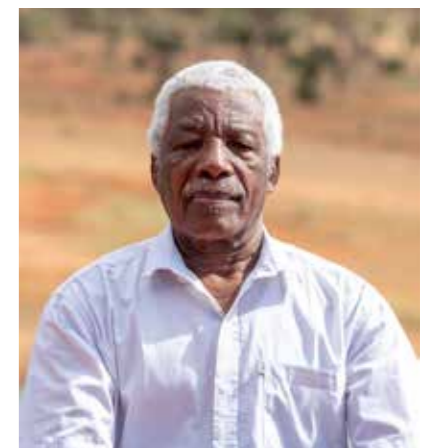
When we started TTWCA, no single conservancy was represented by a woman, which was a shame because women suffer the consequences of environmental degradation more than men do. Now, the majority of boards have elected women representatives. They are resourceful and able communicators, particularly in regard to creating awareness. I have observed, for instance, that more women and young people are now buying shares in community-owned conservancies since more women began coming on board as leaders.

When I look into the future, I see a time when the livelihoods of our people will be transformed through the investments we are making here today for the proper running of our conservancies.

We should be able to farm top quality beef for export, process hides and skins, tap the magnificent sites on some of our ranches for tourism, once the appropriate infrastructure is in place, and leverage minerals and engage in wildlife-friendly forms of agriculture.

I see a wealthy Taita Taveta County emerge from these conservancies. The future is bright.

One of the most exciting things in this transition has been the increased involvement of women and youth in leadership positions in our ranches and conservancies



▲ Donald Bong'osa Mcharo, chairperson of the TTWCA Board.

◀ Elephant walking through Taita Hills Sanctuary.



Photo: Paolo Torchio / © IFAW

Aerial census was no walk in the park

Italian photographer Paolo Torchio has lived in Kenya for 33 years - 15 of them as a professional wildlife photographer, tour guide, and conservation enthusiast.

Now a Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) honorary warden, Paolo describes an IFAW-supported six-day marine megafauna aerial census held in Kenya's coastal waters as one of the most challenging of his career.

"I have photographed the translocation and census of large terrestrial mammals countless times. But this was a first for me, as it was for the observers. Kenya's last marine aerial census was conducted 30 years ago, so everyone was learning," he says.

Unlike in the savanna, where animals are relatively still, marine megafauna are always darting about and on the move, as is the aircraft. This means observers barely have seconds to identify and document what they observe. What's more, the aircraft had windows, which were colored, and he could not use a big lens camera because of vibrations in the plane.

"In a terrestrial census, you can stop the vehicle for a clearer view. But in an aerial

census, the aircraft can't stop or slow down. Add the glare of the sun, and most times, all you got was one swift glimpse," Paolo recalls. He adds that he found it difficult to focus after a while because his eyes got fatigued from staring at the monotonous blue ocean waters for hours on end.

Three images from the census remain etched in his mind. First was a 30-kilometers flight during which observers saw not one single mammal. And then there was this large cement factory within close proximity of the shore.

"Even as a layman, I couldn't help wondering whether the factory impacts marine life in one way or the other and if the necessary safeguards are enforced to prevent marine pollution," he says. He also recalls watching an elderly man stepping out of the ocean with a live shell in his hand.

"The old man lamented that he used to collect as many as 12 shells a day in the past but is lucky to get two on a good day. It was lost to him that there could be fewer live shells in the ocean because there are hundreds, maybe thousands, of collectors like him who are harvesting shells daily for a living," he says.

Paolo believes eco-friendly livelihood projects and increased awareness among communities and tourists could reduce the unsustainable exploitation of marine resources.



Photo: Paolo Torchio / © IFAW

▲ Dolphins seen during the aerial marine megafauna survey.

▲ Paolo Torchio with the anti-poaching unit at Queen Elizabeth National Park.

▲ Patrolling the coastline during the aerial marine megafauna survey.



Photo: Naude Heunis / © IFAW

Kasungu Community helping IFAW co-create a HWC Strategy

Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) and the development of strategy for mitigating this in the Malawi component of the Malawi-Zambia (MAZALA) landscape was the focus of the one-day consultative meeting with the Kasungu community held on Tuesday, 2nd of May.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), in collaboration with the Department of National Park and Wildlife, hosted the event to develop a strategy to the perennial challenge of HWC. As the community most affected by this, the Kasungu community were consulted to ensure that solutions were co-created; an approach that puts communities at the heart of conservation efforts.

The meeting was graced by more than 40 traditional leaders, including Senior Chief Felix Lukwa, providing a perfect opportunity for stakeholders engaged with the MAZALA landscape to share and discuss experiences and key mitigation techniques and strategies for coexistence. It was also meant to provide the IFAW team with an opportunity to better understand the HWC situation from a community's perspective.

Hearing, firsthand, stories of the Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) experienced by the Kasungu community reinforces why IFAW supports the erection of a fence to ensure villagers are safe from elephant attacks and crop raids. Inadequate Park perimeter fencing, increased competition between wildlife and people for scarce resources, particularly water, cultivation of palatable crops along the park boundary, and lack of awareness were cited as major drivers for increased HWC in and around Kasungu.

To date, the IFAW-DNPW partnership, with support from the community, has constructed a 70 km stretch of boundary fence to protect wildlife and surrounding communities.

The HWC strategy discussed at this meeting goes to the heart of IFAW's pioneering Room-to-Roam initiative which secures and connects habitats to create safe passages for elephants and other wildlife to move freely within their home ranges of East and Southern Africa. IFAW envisages a future where animals and communities can not only coexist but thrive.

"Without the people, it will be difficult for us to achieve aspirations under the Room to Roam initiative. It is, therefore, important that we engage our communities and co-create solutions," Patricio Ndadzela - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sA6NryEiA2VMgEsmFEGSHBt3l72cvuXM/view?usp=share_link.

40

traditional leaders attended the meeting to share and discuss experiences and key mitigation techniques and strategies for coexistence

70km

boundary fence was constructed to protect wildlife and surrounding communities

▲ Elephants near a fence under construction in Kasungu National Park, Malawi.

Motorcycle donation empowering security personnel to play landscape management role



Photo: © Donal Boyd

In 2022, IFAW, in partnership with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), donated 20 motorcycles to help rangers combat wildlife crime, respond to human-wildlife conflict incidents and monitor elephants and other wildlife on ten private and community owned ranches and wildlife conservancies within the Tsavo Conservation Area (TCA) in Kenya.

The donation was aimed at benefitting people and wildlife by supporting the ability of communities, through the Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA), to govern their conservancies, sustainably manage rangeland use, increase wildlife security, and engage the private sector.

Bordering Mkomazi National Park in Tanzania, the 43,000km² Tsavo Conservation Area comprising the Tsavo Parks and group ranches and wildlife conservancies spread over an estimated one million acres is Kenya's largest and most significant wildlife and elephant habitat. The private and community owned ranches and conservancies are a lifeline for elephants, as they offer forage, maternity and secure spaces for Kenya's critically endangered elephants to roam during droughts within the Tsavo ecosystem, which extends into Tanzania.

While better law enforcement and protection has significantly increased elephant populations—from a low of 5,400 in 1988 when jumbos teetered on the brink of extinction globally to the current 16,000 elephants in Tsavo—climate change has, in recent years, emerged as a deadly, multi-faceted threat for these ranches and conservancies.

Robert Kitau, a manager whose proposed Choke Ranch received two motorcycles and is part of the Central or Kasigau wildlife migration corridor linking Tsavo East and West Parks, says long-drawn droughts reduce food security and increase poverty within the neighbouring subsistence farming communities. This, he explains, heightens unlawful exploitation of natural resources on ranches and conservancies, among them illegal mining and grazing, and commercial logging and hunting for bushmeat.

“What worries me is that some of the illegal activities such as commercial logging or felling trees for charcoal burning on ranches and conservancies by community members driven into desperation because of drought and the impacts of climate change destroy these habitats and make the crisis worse. This, in the long term, affects both the community and Tsavo elephants that depend on these spaces even more,” says Kitau.

The motorbike donation has enabled Kutima ranch, which is in the process of merging with the adjacent Choke ranch into a

25,000-acre wildlife conservancy, to enhance security patrols.

“Our patrol efforts have improved tremendously. We are now able to cover wider and otherwise inaccessible areas with more frequency, intensity and consistency. This has boosted our security presence on the ranch and surrounding areas to deter illegal activities,” says Kitau.

Offenders would be long gone by the time we arrived

He cites a February 18 joint force patrol conducted by rangers drawn from the two ranches, Kenya Wildlife Service and local conservation NGO, Wildlife Works during which 16 snares were destroyed and a night ambush where two suspects were arrested with bushmeat five days later as some of the direct impacts of the donation.

Head game ranger James Atukutan who coordinates security operations on both Choke and Kutima ranches says the motorbikes have been a godsend for his team of eight rangers because they have improved staff welfare and the general working environment.

“Poaching was rife, and charcoal burning and illegal logging rampant on the two ranches because we were patrolling 25,000 acres on foot. What would have been a two-hour response to a security or human-wildlife conflict incident has now been reduced to a matter of minutes. Previously, we would get intelligence about a poaching incident, but the offender would be long gone by the time we arrived.

“With these bikes, my rangers can now set up an ambush for bushmeat hunters and charcoal burners and lie in wait till midnight, confident that they will be get back to base when the job is done. Before we received these motorbikes, it would have meant walking for hours in the dark in a ranch teeming with wildlife,” says Atukutan.

Ranger Innocent Mwachofi, 23, says before the motorbike donation, a typical working day involved setting off at 8am and trekking for as so long as six hours in stifling heat to investigate or deal with an issue on one corner of the ranch, and then trudging back to base. He also recalls an incident where four rangers on an anti-poaching mission found themselves outnumbered in a dangerous area. It took only a radio call for motorbikes to come roaring through the bushes with a back-up team of rangers. The gang of bushmeat hunters were arrested, prosecuted and jailed.

Philip Mwang'ombe, who manages the 96,000-acre Taita Ranch and Wildlife Conservancy, says the motorbikes have enabled him to open up ranger outposts and patrol areas of the vast ranch that were previously uncovered. They have improved intelligence gathering because they are less

visible than vehicles and provide ranger security to tourists who cycle across the ranch as well.

From security personnel to active participants in landscape management

But other than helping to deter illegal activities, the motorbikes have brought additional benefits. There are incidents where they have saved lives and property through quicker response to human-elephant conflicts and by evacuating sick or injured rangers and members of the community to hospital from remote areas that vehicles wouldn't otherwise access. More importantly, they have expanded the role of ranger from security personnel to active participants in landscape management.

“Rangers now patrol wider areas and, in the process, collect and record ecological data such as wildlife distribution and abundance within and outside the ranch, predation on livestock and human-wildlife conflict incidents on a mobile phone app. This information, when logged into a spatial mapping and reporting tool, helps us to make quicker and informed management decisions.

“We can, for instance, implement livestock grazing plans to minimize predation because we have identified the breeding zones for lions and the precise location of resident lions. We also know which animals are outside the protected area and therefore susceptible to poaching and, are better placed to warn the community and alert Kenya Wildlife Service rangers to respond to impending human-wildlife conflict incidents,” says Mwang'ombe.

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motorcycles were donated to help rangers combat wildlife crime, respond to human-wildlife conflict incidents and monitor elephants and other wildlife



Photo: © Donal Boyd

Community rangers in Mgeno Wildlife Conservancy riding Kibo motorbikes donated through IFAW and USAID.



Special Feature

Kitenden

2023 marks 11 years of IFAW managing The Kitenden Conservancy, a 26,000-acre community-owned wildlife conservancy that is a critical wildlife dispersal and transboundary elephant migration corridor for Amboseli National Park which borders Tanzania.

This feature tells the story of how IFAW convinced 1,600 communal landowners to prioritise conservation, protect natural habitats and promote our own visionary Room to Roam initiative. It also speaks to some of the investments we made in the people living in the landscape to ensure communities are empowered and capacitated to continue the conservation legacy that has protected this landscape for more than a decade.



Photo: Moses Matofu / © IFAW

Kitenden

“We shall rise up”: how Maasai women are transforming their families’ futures

Around southern Kenya’s Amboseli National Park, Maasai families are increasingly in conflict with wildlife over pastures, water, and space. Families rely on farming crops and livestock, but habitat loss and land degradation from climate change is forcing wildlife and people to compete for the same dwindling natural resources—sometimes with deadly consequences.

That’s why IFAW is supporting 60 women from these highly patriarchal communities to lead the way in changing their families’ futures. They graduated in June after their first year of vocational training. They will now learn how to establish a business over 12 months and complete the program with a year of mentorship.

Through the [Jenga Mama](http://www.ifaw.org/projects/jenga-mama-kenya), www.ifaw.org/projects/jenga-mama-kenya, (Swahili for “Empower a Woman”) project, which partners with the German foundation [Margarete-Breuer Stiftung](http://www.ifaw.org/about/institutional-partners-foundations/margarete-breuer-stiftung), www.ifaw.org/about/institutional-partners-foundations/margarete-breuer-stiftung, these barrier-smashing women have followed a year-long vocational training of their choice. Courses included plumbing, hairdressing, garment making, food and beverage production, and information technology.

IFAW and MBS started the program to help women—who are more prone to human-wildlife conflict incidences, given their daily duties of fetching firewood and water and herding livestock—become champions for wildlife instead.

Helping women find more sustainable sources of income gives them more significant opportunities to speak up against poaching and human-wildlife conflict and participate in decision-making with local community leaders.

Inspiring a better future for girls

One of the participants, Penina Lenkishon, chose to study dressmaking. When Penina was in grade eight, she got pregnant and her education stopped. Her father then enrolled her in a dressmaking course, but she left the course to get married and have more children.

Twelve years later, she has finished her training and looks forward to starting her business.

“It is good to go back to school,” she says. “I believe this course will help me and my children, my family, as I will use my skills to make money and take care of them. “I really want to have a good business where I can employ others. I will help my family and community better their living conditions.”

Though her vocational course meant a lot of hard work and time away from her family, she knows she is an inspiring example to her five young daughters.

“The children were really excited to know that even I was going back to school. Especially as they are girls—I am really looking to motivate them to study more than me, go beyond the grade eight that I attained, and get a degree.”

Breaking gender barriers

Maasai women are the pillars of their communities as they take care of their families and livestock, yet they are marginalized when it comes to education, socio-economic empowerment, and participation in decision-making. Like Penina, many drop out of school early to support their families, or for childcare, pregnancies, or early and forced marriages.

These realities stand in the way of further education, leaving many young women with very few opportunities to make their own incomes.

“It is not easy. Ladies are always lowered. Their dignity is always down,” admits [Janet Sabore](http://www.ifaw.org/international-journal/how-janets-plan-to-become-a-plumber-will-help-wildlife-in-kenya), www.ifaw.org/international-journal/how-janets-plan-to-become-a-plumber-will-help-wildlife-in-kenya, who chose to learn plumbing—traditionally a male-dominated career—because her community currently has no plumbers.

About her future customers, she predicts: “They’ll say, ‘This is a woman, she cannot do anything.’ But I’ll have to convince them, and I’ll tell them, ‘Whatever a man can do, a woman can do it better.’”

Transforming fathers

Because the vocational training centers are hundreds of kilometers from the women’s homes, many have left their families for months at a time. In some cases, the experience meant men in their families also challenged their community’s expectations.

When Lucy Nailantei Manja left for a year to study hairdressing and beauty therapy, her husband Festus looked after their four young children, aged between four and eleven.

He says, “There are murmurs and a lot of negative comments about me having just one wife and then letting her leave to study far away from home. But I don’t let them bother me, as staying with my kids—though it was not easy—has been very good, very fulfilling for me. It helped in bonding us together.

“I advise my fellow men to take the initiative and spend more time with their children and support their wives in pursuing careers outside the home.”

Becoming community leaders

By supporting these women to create an additional source of income, Jenga Mama is not only reducing the financial impact families face when wildlife destroys crops or livestock but also boosting the women’s confidence to participate in governance and decision-making. They will become a strong voice for finding solutions to the challenges they currently face—whether those challenges come from living alongside wildlife or changing restrictive gender roles.

Experience shows IFAW that communities are more likely to engage in wildlife protection programs if there is a benefit for the people of the community as well—even if the benefits are indirectly linked to wildlife.

When combined with the conservation work IFAW is already doing alongside the community, Jenga Mama will help create an environment where animals and people can thrive together.

“We shall rise up,” promises Ann Nailantei, a food-and-beverage trainee. “We believe we are going to be important people in the future of tomorrow.”

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woman from highly patriarchal communities to lead the way in changing their families’ futures



Photo: © Dornal Boyd

▲ Jenga Mama graduate Tajeu Ann Nailantei with her mother, grandmother, and daughter in her community entrance just outside of Amboseli National Park, Kenya.

◀ Guest artist Susan Moirana leading graduates to the graduation grounds.

Two men, an old jeep and a conservation vision



Photo: © Donal Boyd

In 2012, Evan Mkala and Bernard Tulito drove and trudged across vast hectares of land deep in the Kenyan wilderness for six months to convince thousands of landowners to create space for elephants and other wildlife.

In doing so, the two men helped build a conservation model that has become a global example of how communities, animals, and the application of conservation science can shape an entire ecosystem.

Thanks to their efforts towards one of IFAW's boldest conservation initiatives, we established the Kitenden Conservancy from an initial 16,000 acres of communal land between Kenya's [Amboseli National Park](http://www.ifaw.org/international/journal/kenya-drought-community-resilience), www.ifaw.org/international/journal/kenya-drought-community-resilience, and Mt. Kilimanjaro National Park in Tanzania, helping secure a critical migration route for African elephants that crosses the Kenya-Tanzania border. Since 2013, [Kitenden](http://www.ifaw.org/international/news/coordinated-efforts-kenya-tanzania), www.ifaw.org/international/news/coordinated-efforts-kenya-tanzania, has now grown to 26,000 acres.

Kitenden serves as proof that discrete and fragmented ecosystems, which face threats of population growth, land use changes, and climate change, can be merged through community-led conservation initiatives, sound judgement, and conservation goodwill.

Establishing trust in unfamiliar territory

Born and raised in Taita Hills on the fringes of Kenya's Tsavo East National Park, Mkala learned about human-wildlife conflict as a child from the [elephants](http://www.ifaw.org/international/animals/african-bush-elephant), www.ifaw.org/international/animals/african-bush-elephant, that trumpeted through his village.

His experience sparked an interest that led him to study for a wildlife conservation and management degree. When he then became IFAW's Amboseli Project Officer, he had only a laptop and a dream: to convince 1,600 landowners to sign up their 10-acre pieces of land in a lease agreement to secure space for elephants.

He was on unfamiliar ground, walking in the dark.

"IFAW was an unknown entity in Amboseli, and word had spread that we were coming to take people's land," Mkala recalls. "I had never negotiated a land lease, did not speak the local language. Where would I begin? How would I win their trust?" He realized he needed to establish trust between IFAW and the locals. "I immersed myself in the community, attended their

functions, broke bread with them," Mkala says. "In time, the *morans* (young warriors) accepted me, gave me a Maasai name—Menye Laiyok, or father of the morans."

The community made it clear that they needed to understand each step of the lease agreement.

"I explained to every group I met that our interest went beyond merely leasing their land," he says. "We were setting out to develop a wildlife conservancy owned and managed by the community, so that landowners could 'milk' elephants through tourism revenue and other benefits, as they would the cows they treasure."

He credits Maasai community leader and chairman of the Olgulului-Ololarashi Group Ranch Mr. Daniel Leturesh for assuring the community that IFAW could be trusted.

Patience and persuasion

Bernard Tulito, Community Liaison Officer, born in Amboseli and a landowner in Kitenden, became Mkala's strongest ally and wingman.

Mkala and Tulito recall trekking across vast spaces of thorny scrubland with a surveyor, marking boundaries and enduring the scorching sun, ticks, and torn clothing. Next, they traveled from village to village, seeking out landowners and ascertaining that land share certificates matched the details on their map.

This meant setting off at 4 a.m., driving 100 kilometers daily on cattle tracks, and then walking from village to village, door to door, sometimes working until midnight by torchlight. Such are the nights they spent in the villages, or when their now battered little jeep broke down.

"The [Olgulului-Ololarashi group ranch](http://www.ifaw.org/international/news/community-rangers-wildlife-crime-training), www.ifaw.org/international/news/community-rangers-wildlife-crime-training, is four times bigger than Amboseli National Park," Tulito explains. "Maasai villages and homes are scattered, so you can picture the vast terrain we had to cover and the amount of work required to get the signatures of 1,600 landowners."

Mkala and Tulito faced challenges building trust among the diverse array of landowners. Convincing members of the local community, some of whom had never interacted with a bank, to open accounts where they could receive their lease payments and, collecting land share certificates—some of which were torn—called for patience, persuasion, and immense determination.

Conservation efforts change lives

As a Kitenden landowner, Tulito says he is proud of what they achieved because he has been able to help provide his people with incentives such as employment at the Conservancy, [livelihood projects for women](http://www.ifaw.org/international/journal/maasai-women-transforming-their-families-futures), www.ifaw.org/international/journal/maasai-women-transforming-their-families-futures, and scholarships for students. This, he says, has raised the value of their once-barren land and improved awareness for conservation within the community.

The experience was profound for Mkala, who describes securing Kitenden as the most challenging but most rewarding assignment of his career.

"Getting these leases signed pushed my endurance to the core, what with the heat, off-road driving, and long, daily treks," he says. "But I have made lifelong friends here, built networks, impacted lives, and learned incredible lessons that will last me a lifetime."



Photo: © Donal Boyd

▲ IFAW's Bernard Tulito (second from right) and Evan Mkala (center) engaging with the community in Kitenden Conservancy, Kenya.

◀ Kitenden Conservancy was established by IFAW's Bernard Tulito and Evan Mkala travelling from community to community to engage and gain the trust of the people to agree to leases for the Conservancy—these are lease documents with signatures.

How IFAW negotiated a new lease of life for Kenya's elephants



Photo: © Donnal Boyd

55,000 acres
secured for conservation

Nestled between Kenya's Amboseli National Park and Tanzania's Mt Kilimanjaro National Park lies a sliver of land known as the [Kitenden Corridor](http://www.ifaw.org/international/news/coordinated-efforts-kenya-tanzania). This land is vital for the Maasai and elephant communities who share the space.

But an increase in droughts, agriculture, and human and livestock populations in the area has also led to an increase in conflict between the two communities. Kitenden is a critical space because it is a daily dispersal area for Amboseli elephants. They spend the day in the park because it has water, and they retreat to Kitenden at dusk in search of fodder and saltlicks. Importantly, it is also a migratory route to the bigger Tsavo and Mt Kilimanjaro National Park ecosystems.

That's why IFAW has spent over a decade working with the Maasai community to turn parts of the Kitenden Corridor into the Kitenden Conservancy.

This is the story of how an ambitious IFAW vision has grown into a benchmark for securing conservation areas by leasing land from the communities who own it.

Crisis looms for Amboseli elephants

Amboseli National Park is part of a vast, cross-border wildlife ecosystem about 200 kilometres south of Nairobi. An oasis supporting over 1,800 elephants and other megafauna in the dusty shadows of Mt Kilimanjaro, it is a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve and the only national park in Kenya established through negotiations with community landowners. The park's elephants have thrived in this small, semi-arid landscape. Water from seasonal swamps sustains them, and the community lands provide safe and secure spaces to graze.

But when IFAW started work in Kitenden in 2012, land use changes and climate change had taken a toll. Crisis loomed for the park and its fragile habitat.

Julius Cheptei, a retired Kenya Wildlife Service assistant director, was Amboseli chief warden at the time. He explains, 'Only less than 10% of Amboseli National Park is viable for conservation. It cannot support the park's elephant population without the dispersal spaces and migration corridors on community-owned land—especially with droughts becoming more

frequent and prolonged as a result of climate change.'

The problem with farmland around Amboseli

Amboseli is surrounded by the Olgulului-Ololarashi Group Ranch, owned by the Maasai community. The community subdivided the land into 10-acre lots, giving owners individual titles with leeway to sell or lease their land to agricultural investors. Dispersal land and migratory corridors risked falling to agriculture—2,000 acres were already gone. But elephants don't stop migrating just because their routes have become farmland. It's more likely that people will lose their crops or suffer damage to their homes and corrals, putting their livelihoods—and even their lives—at risk. And that can lead to retaliation against the creatures.

'An ecological disaster was imminent,' says Amboseli Project Manager Evan Mkala.

'Fortunately, the leadership of the Olgulului-Ololarashi Group Ranch understood when we explained that agriculture, while seemingly better paying on the surface, only presented short-term gain,' he continues.

'Amboseli soils are loose, volcanic, and prone to leaching. Farmers, most of them investors from urban areas, would have degraded the land and moved on when profits dipped, leaving landowners empty-handed.'

Finding a solution

IFAW presented an alternative: leasing the land for conservation. IFAW's model is tailored to improve people's livelihoods while investing in infrastructure to make Kitenden a fully community-owned and -managed wildlife conservancy. The lease agreement promised tourism revenue for landowners in the long term and secures Kitenden as an open, safe, and secure space for elephants.

But would landowners buy in?

Julius Cheptei says it was a hard sell. 'When I reported to Amboseli as senior warden, what immediately caught my attention was the tension between my staff and the community. The Maasai were angry and frustrated by human-wildlife conflict incidents. This animosity made it

difficult for my staff to engage with or associate with the community.' Success came through extensive discussions with the group ranch—from the leadership to individual members—and by finding a meaningful project to show them the lease programme's potential. That project was rehabilitating a dilapidated, 50-year-old water pipeline stretching from the depths of Amboseli park to the group ranch.

Project Manager Evan Mkala explains, 'As an incentive for hiving Amboseli off a community-owned game reserve—where the Maasai could graze and water their livestock—to a protected national park, a 90 kilometre pipeline was built in 1974 to pump water from springs in the park for use by the community in the group ranch. But the pipeline had fallen apart over the years, and the community suffered for want of water for domestic and livestock use.'

By spearheading the rehabilitation of this pipeline, IFAW won the community's trust. Kitenden Conservancy sign against Mount Kilimanjaro landscape.

From leasing land to changing lives

What followed was a year-long series of spirited meetings between IFAW and the leadership of the group ranch and the community's eight clans. Finally, approximately 9,000 landowners attended an annual general meeting where IFAW's five-year lease agreement was presented. Around 1,600 group ranch members signed up. Another thousand signed up when the lease was renewed in 2017.

Together, they secured 26,000 acres for conservation.

The US\$1.2 million per year lease agreement included scholarships for bright students from the community, a management plan, livelihood projects for women, and employment for community game scouts—including [Team Lioness](http://www.ifaw.org/international/projects/team-lioness), one of the first all-women community wildlife ranger units in the world. IFAW also partnered with the Kenya Wildlife Service to establish park infrastructure for wildlife conservation and security.

◀ IFAW's Bernard Tulito (second from left) and Evan Mkala (right) with community leaders showing the signatures of community members who signed the lease for the Kitenden Conservancy, Kenya.

Animals and people



Building resilience in the community

IFAW worked with a local bank to provide financial literacy within the community by driving bank officials into the villages to open bank accounts, so each landowner could access their lease cash without intermediaries.

The team also set up a governance structure, training elected community leaders to manage the conservancy under a board of trustees.

Bernard Tulito, who was born and raised in Amboseli and has been IFAW's Community Liaison Officer for the Amboseli project since 2012, coincidentally also studied for a diploma in wildlife conservation and management through an IFAW scholarship. He says 90% of the first scholarship beneficiaries have secured employment and that this, together with livelihood projects, is making the community more resilient to droughts.

Is IFAW's Kitenden a model for conservation?

IFAW's lease model was a groundbreaking initiative that is today regarded as the benchmark for community conservation.

'The Olgulului-Olorashi Group Ranch is about four times bigger than Amboseli National Park,' says Julius Cheptei. 'Kitenden is evidence that we can create four community-owned "Amboselis" out of the group ranch, each charging visitors US\$40 in tourism fees and accruing other benefits, such as scholarships and livelihood projects to uplift the community.'

Evan Mkala believes the Kitenden lease agreement is a game changer because it proves that subdivision of community land next to national parks can be positive. It's an opportunity to turn individual holdings into community-owned wildlife conservancies, giving each titleholder ownership, responsibility, and a stake in the management of the ecosystem.

But perhaps the best proof is the fact that [thousands more landowners signed the agreement](https://www.ifaw.org/international/press-releases/secure-space-wildlife-kenya) in 2021, www.ifaw.org/international/press-releases/secure-space-wildlife-kenya, bringing the total conservation area to over 55,000 acres.



▲ Zebra at sunset in Kitenden Conservancy, Kenya.

▲ Zebras and livestock in Kitenden Conservancy, Kenya.



thriving together

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