

Case Study 6 A successful wildlife conservancy management model: Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Kenya

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What started out as a 2,000-ha rhino sanctuary in 1984 has grown to become a leading model for wildlife protection and a catalyst for conservation and community development in East Africa. The Lewa Wildlife Conservancy works as a model for the conservation of wildlife and its habitat. It does this through the protection and management of species, the initiation and support of community conservation and development programmes, and the education of neighbours in the value of wildlife. Lewa Conservancy is an exemplar for many of the guidelines in Part B, Section 2 and specifically of a PPA which has met the standards of the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas (Box 1.1).

Overview

The Craig family first came to Lewa Downs in the 1920s and managed the land as a cattle ranch for more than 50 years. In the early 1980s, a woman named Anna Merz approached the family with a request: horrified by the population decline of black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) throughout Africa, Anna wanted to establish a black rhino sanctuary to protect the last remaining members of this endangered species. This

eventually led to the Craig family devoting their entire 16,000 ha ranch to the formation of the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, which would later be augmented by over 3,000 ha owned by other farmers and over 5,500 ha of national forest.

Today the Conservancy holds more than 12 per cent of the global wild population of the endangered Grevy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*), over 12 per cent of Kenya's critically endangered black rhino and over 14 per cent of Kenya's white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*), an abundance of 70 other large-bodied mammal species native to East Africa and over 440 bird species. In 2013, Lewa received global recognition, being listed as part of the Mt Kenya World Heritage Site and was selected by IUCN as one of the pioneer 'Green List' sites, which recognises organisations which lead as examples in the management of protected areas (see Box 1.1). From its early days as a rhino sanctuary, Lewa has grown and developed its conservation practice. It is now not only protecting endangered species but also translocating animals to repopulate new conservation areas and government-owned national parks, as well as sharing its best practices in community owned conservancies and other private conservancies across Kenya. Lewa's boundaries have well established corridors to Mt. Kenya National Park and



Black rhino © Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

greater Northern Kenya rangelands, allowing connectivity for wildlife movement with surrounding landscapes. Lewa works with its neighbours to encourage collective management of ecosystems. A key example and first crucial step in demonstrating this is the agreement to remove boundary fences between Lewa and its western neighbour, Borana Conservancy (see Box 5.4), allowing free movement of wildlife over more than 37,000 ha.

Lewa supports community ecotourism and cultural tourism ventures and is a destination for those looking for best practice in sustainable tourism, endangered-species management and community-based tourism and conservation.

Changing environment and conservation issues around Lewa

The drastic decline of wildlife populations across Kenya has resulted in a call for the enhanced management of the Conservancy while working to secure the landscape for people and wildlife. This meant effective allocation of resources (Best Practice 2.3.1); promoting of accountability and transparency; embracing community participation in conservation (Best Practice 2.1.3); building partnerships with relevant constituents; and promoting protected area values (Best Practices 2.5.2 and 2.5.5).

Lewa's Community Development Programme has evolved to become a leading example of community-based conservation which generates direct and indirect benefits for local communities through healthcare, education, water and enterprise development, amongst others (Best Practice 2.3.2). Lewa currently supports 21 schools, manages four clinics, 13 community water supply schemes, sustains an adult education programme, a women's micro-credit scheme and agricultural extension programmes. Through this wide range of community development projects, Lewa is leveraging a conservation agenda to meet the needs of communities surrounding the Conservancy, thereby contributing directly towards improving livelihoods. Lewa recognises that its neighbours' engagement in conservation and sustainable use of natural resources is critical to its long-term viability as a core conservation area (Best Practice 2.1.3). Lewa's community work led to the establishment of the Northern Rangelands Trust,¹⁴² an umbrella body of 33 community conservancies whose mandate is to develop resilient communities, transform lives, secure peace and conserve natural resources in northern Kenya and beyond. Lewa also partners with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), community forest associations, neighbouring ranches and like-minded conservation partners who are integral to Lewa's approach and success (Best Practice 2.5.2).

Lewa adopts a rigorous approach to research and monitoring, with well-qualified and experienced staff, covering applied research on topics such as rangelands, carnivores, ungulates, rhinos, elephants, insects and birds. It has a fully-fledged wildlife veterinary unit, led by a KWS Veterinary Officer on permanent attachment (Best Practice 2.5.5). Security and

anti-poaching operations combine cutting-edge monitoring technology with the engagement of the surrounding communities. Lewa's security force protects not only the wildlife within the Conservancy but enhances security for both people and wildlife across the landscape. Members of the Anti-Poaching Team are also National Police Reservists, with a mandate from the Kenyan government to respond to and investigate cases of insecurity on the Conservancy as well as in the neighbouring communities (Best Practice 2.5.5). As the CEO of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Mike Watson, notes: *"Over the years, conservation has remained the best way in which we can steward a present and a future that benefits both people and wildlife. Through conservation, the endangered species that we protect have a future and the people who depend on this landscape can attach direct value to wildlife."*

Summary

- Lewa's Community Development Programme is designed to create a close collaborative relationship with local communities and decrease community pressure on natural resources (Best Practice 2.1.3).
- Lewa optimises its organisational management effectiveness through continued implementation of management plans, best practice and organisational strategic planning (Best Practice 2.2.3) based on the evolving conservation and community livelihood challenges, as well as diversifying income generating streams (Best Practice 2.3.1).
- Partnership with relevant arms of the national and county government, private and community conservancies, local and international conservation bodies, communities and academic institutions include joint wildlife census, security patrols, disease surveillance and diagnostic labs management among others. Lewa also jointly manages two government forests in partnership with the Kenya Forest Service and community forest associations (Best Practice 2.5.5).