Photo: Felipe Rodriguez

East and Southern Africa

A regional analysis of the status of territories of life

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Eastern and southern Africa comprises an extremely diverse set of countries spanning the area from the Horn of Africa to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. Within this geographically, socially and politically diverse region, certain commonalities exist. Most notably from an ecological standpoint is the prevalence of arid and semi-arid ecosystems, which range from deserts in both the south (Namib and Kalahari) and the northern Horn region to a wide range of savannahs, grasslands and the relatively dry Miombo woodlands that predominate in much of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and western Tanzania.

These ecosystems support tremendous biological and cultural diversity. Anthropologically, the savannahs of eastern Africa are most famous as the evolutionary home of early humans, with Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania all containing key sites for early hominid discoveries. Over the past several million years and up until the present day, humans living in the region's savannahs and grasslands have lived alongside some of the greatest assemblages of wildlife found anywhere on earth. Today, landscapes in areas such as the Okavango Delta, greater Serengeti ecosystem, Luangwa and Zambezi Valleys and other sites are key locations for wildlife conservation, national parks and other protected areas, and multi-billion dollar (USD) wildlife tourism industries that form a major part of national economies from Botswana to Kenya.

These landscapes also support a tremendous diversity of resident and Indigenous communities, including pastoralists who own and manage tens of millions of livestock and whose livelihoods depend on the ecological productivity of savannah rangelands. Indigenous hunter-gatherers, most famously the San peoples of southern Africa, the Hadza of northern Tanzania and the Ogiek of Kenya's montane forests, continue to maintain traditional lifestyles dependent on wild resources. Along the long Indian Ocean coastline, millions of people depend on coastal fisheries and other resources in a region with some of the highest coral reef and related marine biodiversity of anywhere in the world.

Within such a diverse and rich region, it is an inherent challenge to synthesise the status and trends related to community conservation and natural resource governance. Nevertheless, some important generalisations are possible that can help inform an understanding of the key dynamics within the region as well as inform wider global trends and initiatives in community conservation.

Importantly, the region's diverse traditional natural resource governance systems, arising from Indigenous cultures and livelihoods, exist alongside many more recent formal experiments with community-based conservation. Since the 1980s, eastern and southern Africa has been at the forefront of community-based approaches to conservation, influencing global ideas and practice as they have evolved since that time.[2] Today, countries like Namibia and Kenya are global leaders in developing policy and legal approaches for community conservation areas (termed 'conservancies' in both countries), having scaled their local models to encompass areas of land greater than their national parks estates, and involving hundreds of local communities around the country. These models of community conservation at scale possess major lessons for current efforts to expand formal global conservation coverage and ambitions, particularly highlighting the importance of enabling national policy and legislation, strong local

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[2] See, for example, Western, David, and R. Michael Wright (eds.). 1994. *Natural connections: perspectives in community-based conservation*. Island Press, Washington, DC.

and national civil society leadership, and long-term investments in strengthening local institutions.[3]

At the same time, the wider institutional and governance context in the region creates both opportunities and enduring challenges for community engagement in conservation. The historical context of natural resource management – dominated as it is by the legacy of colonialism, and post-colonial state development that tended to centralise political and economic power across much of sub-Saharan Africa – has left a legacy of highly centralised ownership and control over land, forests, wildlife and other natural resources. Most forests and customary communal lands remain formally under the control of the central state.[4] As a result, sub-Saharan Africa as a whole lags well behind Latin America and Asia in recognising local communities' and Indigenous peoples' customary rights to their lands and natural resources, creating insecurity in tenure, weakening local governance institutions and often undermining opportunities for both traditional and more formal local conservation initiatives.[5] Contemporary struggles over land rights and resource use operate within a wider political environment that often remains characterised by high levels of corruption, fragile or emerging democratic institutions and increasing social pressures resulting from high levels of poverty and social transformation.

Amidst these tensions and legacies, the future of the region's biological diversity and human well-being are closely tied to developing effective systems for community natural resource governance and management, both by introducing new legal reforms to enable those and by strengthening traditional systems, values and institutions.

Key regional trends

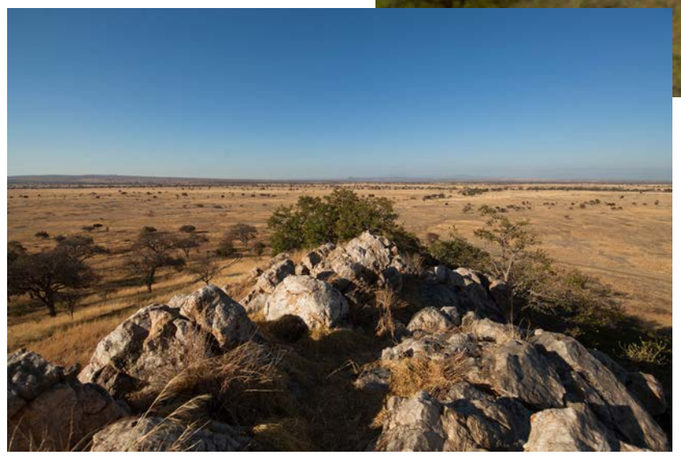
Livestock, people and wildlife

A core feature of landscapes across eastern and southern Africa is the co-occurrence of large numbers of domestic livestock alongside wildlife and other forms of biodiversity. In eastern Africa in particular, traditional pastoralist communities and land use systems have long shaped – through fire, grazing and settlement patterns – the savannah and grassland ecosystems that support exceptionally large migratory wildlife populations. This wildlife continues to move across largely unfenced landscapes and a mosaic of state, community and private lands in places like northern Tanzania and most of Kenya.[6] With both livestock production (with most stock held by small-scale pastoralist producers) and wildlife tourism being multi-billion dollar economic engines in these countries, conservation increasingly focuses on how to

Conservancies that generate benefits from wildlife for local landholders and pastoralist communities have spread rapidly in Kenya over the past decade. Photo: BaseCamp

Community management and Indigenous knowledge are central to many ICCAs in Kenya and other parts of East Africa. Photo: Guy Western

East Africa's savannah landscapes support pastoralist livelihoods and migratory wildlife populations. Photo: Honeyguide



effectively integrate pastoralism and wildlife conservation. These efforts tend to focus on strengthening pastoralist communities' tenure rights over their communal rangelands and supporting traditional land use systems based on seasonal reserves of grazing areas. It also entails creating improved economic opportunities from both livestock and wildlife in these areas.

For example, the **South Rift Association of Land Owners** is a leading Kenyan grassroots organisation that represents about 16 communities of pastoralists in southern Kenya, working with them to integrate customary land use systems with modern opportunities from tourism, livestock markets and other activities. They support communities to formalise and strengthen traditional multi-use grazing reserves as core to their overall land management systems in ways that also provide high-quality seasonal habit for wildlife. In turn, this helps to restore species like giraffe, zebra and lion within this landscape.[7] These Maasai communities establish seasonal grazing reserves based on traditional transhumant pastoralism, which restricts livestock access to dry season grazing reserves. This effectively protects forage and habitat for wildlife, benefiting wild grazers such as zebra and wildebeest while also improving the availability of dry season forage for livestock during periods of drought.

Similarly, in northern Tanzania, the Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT) focuses on securing communal land rights for pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities as the foundation for protecting their

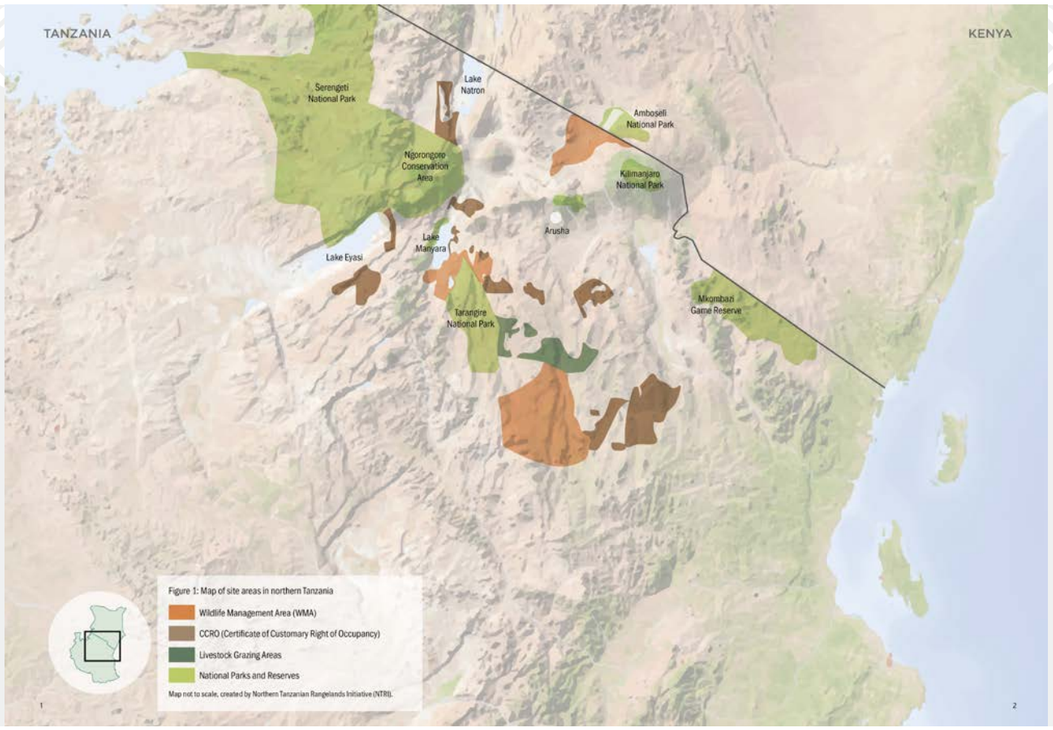
[3] Nelson, F., Muyamwa-Mupeta, P., Muyengwa, S., Sulle, E., & Kaelo, D. 2021. Progress or regression? Institutional evolutions of community-based conservation in eastern and southern Africa. *Conservation Science and Practice*, e302.

[4] Wily, L. A. 2011. 'The law is to blame': The vulnerable status of common property rights in sub-Saharan Africa. *Development and change*, 42(3), 733-757.

[5] Nelson, F. (Ed.). 2012. *Community rights, conservation and contested land: the politics of natural resource governance in Africa*. Routledge.

[6] Reid, R. S. 2012. *Savannas of our birth: people, wildlife, and change in East Africa*. Univ. of California Press.

[7] Russell, S., Tyrrell, P., & Western, D. 2018. Seasonal interactions of pastoralists and wildlife in relation to pasture in an African savanna ecosystem. *Journal of Arid Environments*, 154, 70-81.



Wildlife Management Ares (red), CCROs (brown), livestock grazing areas (dark green) and National Parks (light green) in northern Tanzania. Map: Northern Tanzanian Rangelands Initiative

territories from the threat of land fragmentation and encroachment. This approach safeguards key seasonal habitat and migration corridors for both wildlife and livestock. This work has helped communities secure over 940,000 hectares of land in these communal customary titles (called Communal Customary Rights of Occupancy, CCRO) across northern Tanzania over the past decade, including the last remaining traditional lands of the Hadza and Akie hunter-gatherers, cultures unique to northern Tanzania's savannahs. This tenure security creates new economic opportunities for marginalised communities such as ecotourism and a novel **carbon crediting project** carried out in partnership between the Hadza and Carbon Tanzania, a local social enterprise. This project was awarded an Equator Prize in 2019.

Scaling up Community Conservation Areas: Kenya and Namibia

Over the past 20 years, following their own unique paths and circumstances, Namibia and Kenya have emerged as notable leaders in the region, and indeed the world, in taking community conservation models to a scale of large and growing national impact. Importantly, while there have been many calls and policy statements across the region to devolve greater rights over wildlife and other natural resources to local communities, Namibia is the only country in the region that has actually created a clear legal framework that does this. Its wildlife and conservation laws enable the creation of communal conservancies where local bodies have broad management rights and are entitled to retain 100 per cent of the revenue from wildlife utilisation.

After the passage of the reforms that created conservancies in Namibia during the mid-1990s, these areas have spread dramatically. They now cover over 16 million hectares and encompass **roughly 20 per cent of Namibia's land area**. State protected areas, community conservancies, and private conservancies account for roughly 43 per cent of the total land area under some form of conservation management. Wildlife numbers across conservancies have widely recovered alongside the spread of conservancies. For example, the country's elephant population has tripled since the mid-1990s and lions and black rhinos have recovered in the region of north-western Namibia.

In Kenya, conservancies started to emerge in the 1990s through local initiatives, often involving tourism companies and groups of landowners or pastoralist communities, in key ecosystems such as Amboseli or the Maasai Mara. In 2013, following the passage of the new Kenyan constitution in 2010, the government passed a new wildlife law that formalised a definition of conservancies for the first time, giving them state sanction and support. Since then, the number of conservancies has taken off, with over 160 now covering an area around 6 million hectares, **roughly 11 per cent of the country's land area**. As in Namibia, this has had the effect of approximately doubling the area of land under conservation management beyond that contained within state protected areas. Conservancies in Kenya provide critical habitat for a wide range of endangered species, including the near-endemic Grevy's Zebra, hirola antelope and more widespread species such as elephant, lion, cheetah and giraffe.

Keys to the changes and progress made in scaling up community conservation models in both Kenya and Namibia include the following factors:[8]

- The creation of clear and supportive legal and policy frameworks for community-based conservation, which took place in Namibia in the mid-1990s after independence from South Africa, and in Kenya more recently after the adoption of the 2010 Constitution and its important provisions around devolution of authority.

- Critical leadership from government and civil society, including relatively strong collaboration between those two spheres, as well as from many private sector tourism operators in Kenya in particular. Innovative locally-based organisations like Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation in Namibia and the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya, as well as key associations such as the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association and Namibia Association of Community Based Natural Resource Management Support Organisations (NACSO), have been critical to the developments in these countries.

- Significant large-scale financing for conservancy development in both countries, from USAID and other external funders as well as international

[8] See Nelson et al. (2021) for discussion.

Integrating pastoralist livestock husbandry and conservation of wildlife is central to community conservation in Kenya and northern Tanzania. Photo: Nicholas Lapham

conservation organisations. Notably, the current crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused the loss of millions of dollars in tourism revenue to these countries, including to local conservancies, is **causing governments in both Kenya and Namibia to step up their financial support to conservancies**. For example, the Community Conservation Fund of Namibia, set up with government, conservationist and local civil society support as a long-term financing vehicle for conservancies, has received critical investment to support conservancies during the pandemic, accelerating its growth as a long-term support vehicle. These developments are potentially significant for the long-term financing of community conservation, born in part from a mainstream recognition of how important conservancies now are for conservation and for the tourism industries in both countries.

Community Forest Management

While many conservation initiatives in the region focus on wildlife in savannah ecosystems, community forest management represents another area of action and investment, both important innovations and entrenched challenges.

Tanzania has been a regional leader in community-based forest management since the early 1990s. The country's village-based local governance system, combined with land and forest law reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s, led to the creation of over 2.5 million hectares of Village Land Forest Reserves. These areas have created new economic opportunities for communities from sustainable timber and charcoal harvesting, carbon credits and for securing rights over locally valued resources.[9] However, in recent years the spread of these areas has stalled and government support for community-based approaches seems to have retrenched.

In neighbouring Kenya, the dominant theme related to community involvement in forest conservation has been conflicts over the rights of Indigenous peoples to their customary territories in highland forests. Groups such as the Sengwer and Ogiek have struggled to receive recognition of their rights, even after the Ogiek won a landmark case before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in 2017, and there have been recurrent conflicts and in some cases violent evictions.[10]

By contrast, recent forestry governance reforms in Zambia have created important new opportunities for local communities to secure legal recognition of communal rights to manage and benefit from forests, and also created new opportunities for developing locally-based conservation models though forestry regulations. The 2015 Forests Act provides for the establishment of Community Forest Management Groups/Community Forest Management Areas (CFMAs), which can secure rights to manage and capture revenues from locally established forests. Since supporting community forestry regulations were passed in 2018, **over one million hectares have already been established as CFMAs**. A number of entrepreneurial organisations such as BioCarbon Partners and COMACO are using this framework to collaborate with communities to establish and secure large areas of community-managed forest in key wildlife areas and to generate new sources of revenue for local communities from carbon credits and other forest products.[11] This creates one of the most notable opportunities for strengthening community rights over forests, in a country with some of the region's most extensive forests and woodlands, as well as high levels of deforestation.

In northern Tanzania, the Ujamaa Community Resource Team has led efforts to secure Indigenous communities' land rights through legal titles, in areas such as the Yaeda Valley and other savannah landscapes.
Photo: Felipe Rodriguez

Community land use planning based on traditional rangeland management systems is central to many ICCAs in East Africa.
Photo: Roshni Lodhia

[9] See: Blomley et al. **IIED brief April 2019**.

[10] See: **Mongabay, 24 Sept. 2018** and **IWGIA.org**.

[11] While there are important debates about carbon credits and REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) in relation to their interaction with Indigenous and community land and forest tenure, the experiences in Tanzania and Zambia over recent years suggests that approaches are possible – and in fact indispensable – that both strengthen local rights to manage forests and control customary lands as well as generate new economic opportunities from carbon credit markets. See the following reviews for detailed discussions of these case studies, within the wider national policy and legal context around community forest management: Davis et al. 2020. **Community-based Natural Resource Management in Zambia**; and Trupin et al. 2018. **Making Community Forest Enterprises Deliver for Livelihoods and Conservation in Tanzania**.

Locally Managed Marine Areas

Millions of people living along the region's long Indian Ocean coastline depend on fisheries and other marine resources for their livelihoods. Marine ecosystems here also contain exceptional levels of biodiversity, from coral reefs to mangroves and estuaries.

A key focus of environmental conservation efforts in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) over the past two decades, which also reflects global trends, has been strengthening local management institutions. Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs), whereby near-shore ocean zones and fisheries are managed through community-level institutions, have spread across different countries, covering around 1,100,000 hectares in the WIO region by 2014.[12] In Kenya, for example, where 25 LMMAs had been set up by 2015, these areas are managed through Beach Management Units that comprise fishery users and other local stakeholders.[13] They are responsible for developing management plans, monitoring and enforcing local rules to govern the LMMA in collaboration with government authorities. Evidence of fish biomass and diversity increases have been recorded in areas such as the **Kuruwitu LMMA**, one of the earliest of these LMMA sites in Kenya, which was awarded an Equator Prize in 2017.

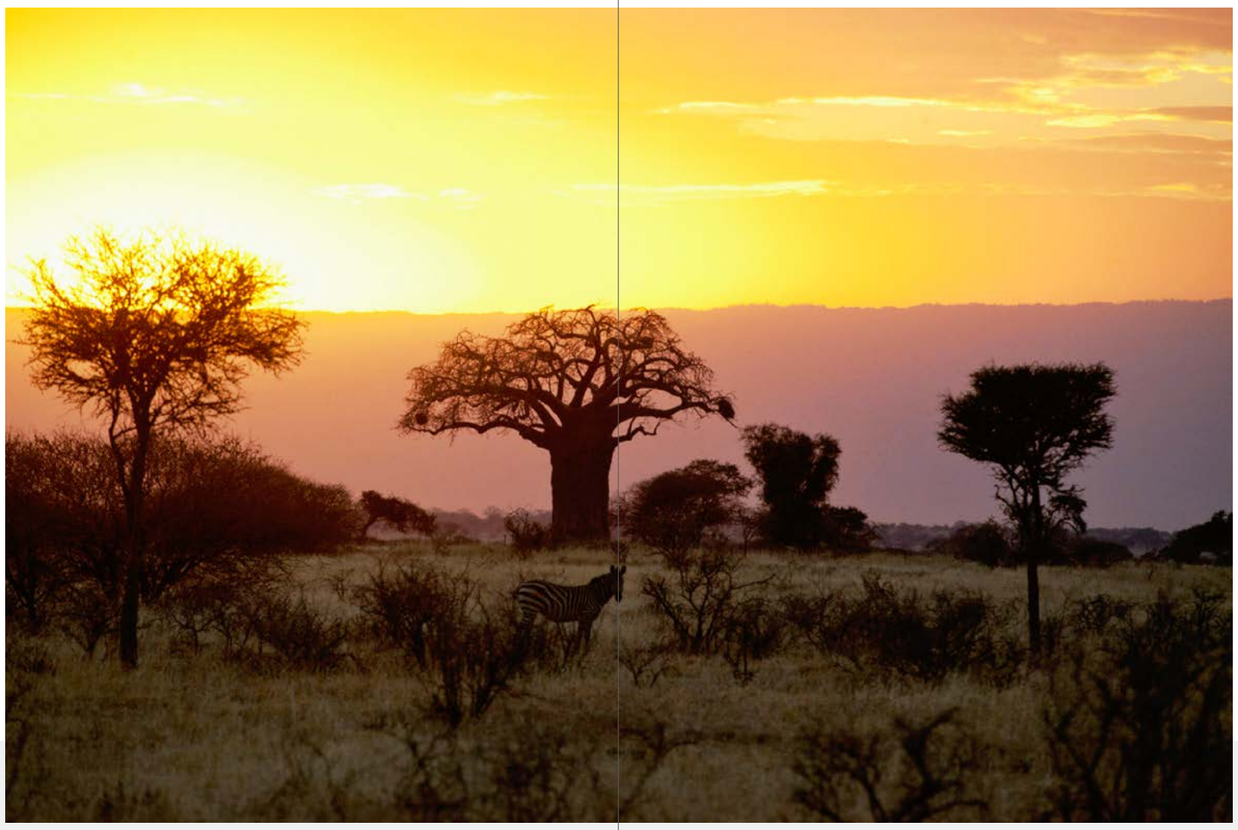
The movement towards LMMA establishment in eastern Africa is creating important opportunities to strengthen local marine management and conservation institutions, potentially improving food security, the sustainability of fisheries and conservation of marine ecosystems through these models. Like other forms of community conservation, LMMAs generally remain constrained by a combination of regulatory or policy barriers and limited local capacity and resources. In particular, local collective rights to govern territorial waters and marine resources are critical and need to be clearly recognised and enforced. Continued improvement of this policy and legal environment, while strengthening Beach Management Units and other local institutions, is a key priority across the region. A recent example of reform is the passage of an important **new fisheries law in Mozambique**.

Conclusions and recommendations

Community-based approaches to conservation and natural resource governance and management in eastern and southern Africa face new opportunities and entrenched challenges. There is significant momentum behind some new formal community-based approaches, such as conservancies in Kenya and Namibia, as well as new reforms such as Zambia's new community forestry law and regulations. Importantly, the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a spotlight on the critical role of local communities in supporting conservation, including through traditional resource management institutions, at a time when many government agencies and external initiatives have been shut down or slowed down due to the crisis or loss of revenue. The pandemic may actually lead to important new opportunities to invest in community institutions, develop stronger partnerships and expand support for community conservation.

In the context of the emerging global conservation policy agenda being developed in 2021 and implemented over the next critical decade for the earth's biodiversity and living systems, there are two key and general priorities across this diverse region.

Photo: Honeyguide



First, where new models and community-based approaches have momentum and greater demand for uptake, with the right combination of community demand and government support, international efforts need to prioritise scaling such models. This applies, in different ways, to conservancies in Kenya and Namibia, CFMAs in Zambia and legal mechanisms (called Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy, CCROs) for securing community rights over pastures in northern Tanzania. These offer some of the best opportunities for expanding spatial conservation coverage and impact, particularly in ways that also support communities' resource rights, livelihoods and economic opportunities. Similar opportunities also exist with LMMAs in East Africa, which also have momentum and are critical to reconciling conservation, food security and local economic interests throughout the Western Indian Ocean.[14]

Second, the single greatest barrier to making progress and supporting the ability of communities to secure and protect their territories and resources lies in the continued struggles around local land and natural resource rights and tenure. While community land rights reform has achieved much greater prominence as a development and environmental priority around the world over the past decade, the pace and scope of reforms in this region, as in all of sub-Saharan Africa, remains insufficient. Communal and customary rights over land, forests and marine resources need greater recognition both in the law and in the enforcement of legal provisions that recognise those rights. There is an enduring gap in the institutional foundations needed for community conservation action, including expanding protections of valued local resources and territories, and the ability to enforce traditional conservation rules and customs. Tenure reforms, such as the recent land and forest reforms that have taken place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, are critical to the conservation agenda and greater collaboration, attention and investment are needed. Strengthening local rights to not only manage, but govern and exercise tenure over, forests, lands and other natural resources, is critical to any support to community-based approaches to conservation in the region.

To achieve both of these priorities, international conservation efforts need to prioritise enabling support and investments in the grassroots initiatives and local organisations that are often the key agents of change in their communities and societies. Countries that have adopted frameworks for new community conservation approaches, such as Namibia and Kenya, have done so based on strong local civil society leadership, national advocacy networks and strong collaborations between NGOs, grassroots groups, government and the private sector. National associations such as the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association foster learning, exchange and collective action at a national scale, as well as links to initiatives in other countries in the region. Accelerated support to these groups and the collaborations that are needed to bring about change must be a priority if conservation solutions are to be expanded on the ground.

[12] Rocliffe, S., Peabody, S., Samoilys, M., & Hawkins, J. P. 2014. Towards a network of locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) in the Western Indian Ocean. *PloS one*, 9(7), e103000.

[13] Kawaka, Joan A., et al. 2017. Developing locally managed marine areas: lessons learnt from Kenya. *Ocean & Coastal Management* 135: 1-10.

[14] Rocliffe et al. 2014.

About this report

This chapter is part of the Territories of Life: 2021 Report, composed of local, national, regional and global analyses of territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities (sometimes abbreviated as “ICCAs” or “territories of life”). The report is part of an ongoing process to develop the knowledge base on territories of life in support of Indigenous peoples’ and local communities’ self-determined priorities. It is produced by the **ICCA Consortium with the support of several partners**.

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About the ICCA Consortium

The ICCA Consortium is a global non-profit association dedicated to supporting Indigenous peoples and local communities who are governing and conserving their collective lands, waters and territories. Its organisational Members and individual Honorary members in more than 80 countries are undertaking collective actions at the local, national, regional and international levels across several thematic streams, including documenting, sustaining and defending territories of life, as well as youth and intergenerational relations.

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