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Land Conservation Trusts : A Case Study of Manyara Ranch, Tanzania

AWF Working Papers



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August 2005

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Cover photos clockwise: Cattle on Ranch; Manyara Ranch game scouts; scenery of ranch (credit: AWF)

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Land Conservation Trusts: A Potential Tool for Securing Critical Wildlife Habitats in Africa? A Case Study of Manyara Ranch, Tanzania

Summary: There is growing consensus in the conservation community that large functional conservation landscapes are required to maintain ecological processes and viable populations of wildlife into the future. Given the practicalities and politics of land in Africa, such large landscapes usually require coordinated management over different sorts of land tenures, including state, community or communal and private lands. In some landscapes, however, land units critical to the future viability of the landscape are identified that do not lend themselves easily to any of these three land management regimes. Outside Africa, over 2000 private not-for-profit land trusts have been created with the institutional agility to acquire rights to such critical properties and to manage them in a way that balances multiple objectives including conservation.

In the Maasai Steppe Heartland in northern Tanzania, the proposed privatization of a failing government-owned ranch created a threat to the viability of the Tarangire Manyara ecosystem. None of the proposed tenure arrangements for the ranch was able to balance the concerns of different stakeholders. African Wildlife Foundation proposed the creation of a national land conservation trust for Tanzania that would hold this property and manage it to meet three main objectives: conservation, community development and economic productivity. This paper describes the context that called for creation of a new institutional mechanism to hold this critical piece of land. Today, four years on, there is strong evidence that the overall management and conservation values of the land have been improved by the trust. Community participation in the management of the ranch has also been improved. The commercial success and financial sustainability of the ranch remain to be seen. However the Tanzania Land Conservation Trust has so far not evolved as an organization with a national mandate to look at critical properties beyond Manyara Ranch.

Landscape Level Conservation and AWF approach

In most parts of rural Africa, increasing human populations continue to exert immense pressure on land for agriculture. Scarcity of good arable land has forced people to expand into marginal lands more often inhabited by wildlife. This has not only increased human-wildlife conflicts but has led to habitat fragmentation and conversion of land to other uses incompatible with wildlife. The result is that wildlife habitats have been reduced to small isolated land units, connectivity between key ecological habitats has been blocked and, most importantly, the long term survival of wildlife is threatened. This situation has called for a different innovative approach to conservation – landscape level conservation - if wildlife is to survive in Africa. Landscape level conservation demands that key habitats needed by wildlife are conserved in sizes that can support viable populations. It also ensures that natural processes such as migrations, dispersal and other wildlife movements in search of water, food, mates and other resources between key ecological areas are maintained by bringing under conservation critical land

units that support these functions. More importantly, the approach also provides an opportunity for livelihood needs of the people to be addressed so that they do not continue to threaten the viability of wildlife.

AWF believes that wildlife in Africa will only be conserved if large landscapes are brought under conservation. Therefore AWF is implementing the Heartlands approach in Africa. Heartlands are large cohesive, biologically important conservation landscapes that have scope to support healthy populations of wildlife species and natural processes such as migration and dispersal well into the future¹. Heartlands as defined by AWF range in size from 7000 km² to 100,000 km², and may be located in one country or span international borders. Heartlands typically consist of different land regimes such as protected areas, communal lands, private lands and other state lands. The wide array of land ownership requires AWF to utilize multi-stakeholder participation and partnerships in the implementation of conservation interventions. In addition to their importance to biodiversity conservation, Heartlands are also selected for their economic importance especially in relation to tourism or other natural resource based



activities which can contribute significantly to the livelihoods of the local people.

In each Heartland, AWF works closely with a wide range of partners including national and local governments, communities, research organizations, other non governmental organizations and the private sector to implement priority interventions in the following strategic areas: land and habitat conservation; species conservation and applied research; conservation enterprises; capacity building and leadership development; and policy advocacy. In order to bring land under conservation in Heartlands, AWF uses a variety of tools and approaches that include the design of land use plans which zone lands for various uses such as grazing, wildlife and other economic activities, e.g. tourism. AWF also enters agreements with willing landowners to ensure sustainable land management on critical ecological lands. More recently, AWF has worked with landowners and other partners to form versatile land conservation trusts to secure land for long term conservation. A wide range of legal and economic tools such as easements, direct purchase, management agreements and direct payments exist to help bring land under conservation through these trusts. It is against this background that the Tanzania Land Conservation Trust was formed to acquire the Manyara Ranch in the Maasai Steppe Heartland.

Background to Maasai Steppe Heartland

The Maasai Steppe is one of the seven AWF Heartlands and is located in northern Tanzania (see map). It covers an estimated area of 35,000 km². It is covered predominantly by wooded savannah and grassland and is one of the worlds last surviving large, intact wild landscapes that still support high concentrations of megafauna. It contains a mosaic of lands including national parks, controlled hunting areas, community lands, national forest reserves and wetlands. Two of Tanzania's most visited and profitable national parks in the northern tourism circuit, Lake Manyara and Tarangire are found in the Heartland. The northern circuit also includes Ngorongoro and Serengeti National Park and is the backbone of the country's growing tourism industry which is estimated to be worth around US\$1.3 billion per year and contributes about 13% of the GDP².

The Heartland has the second largest density of animal biomass in the world after the Ngorongoro³. There is a large population of elephants (about 3500) as well as

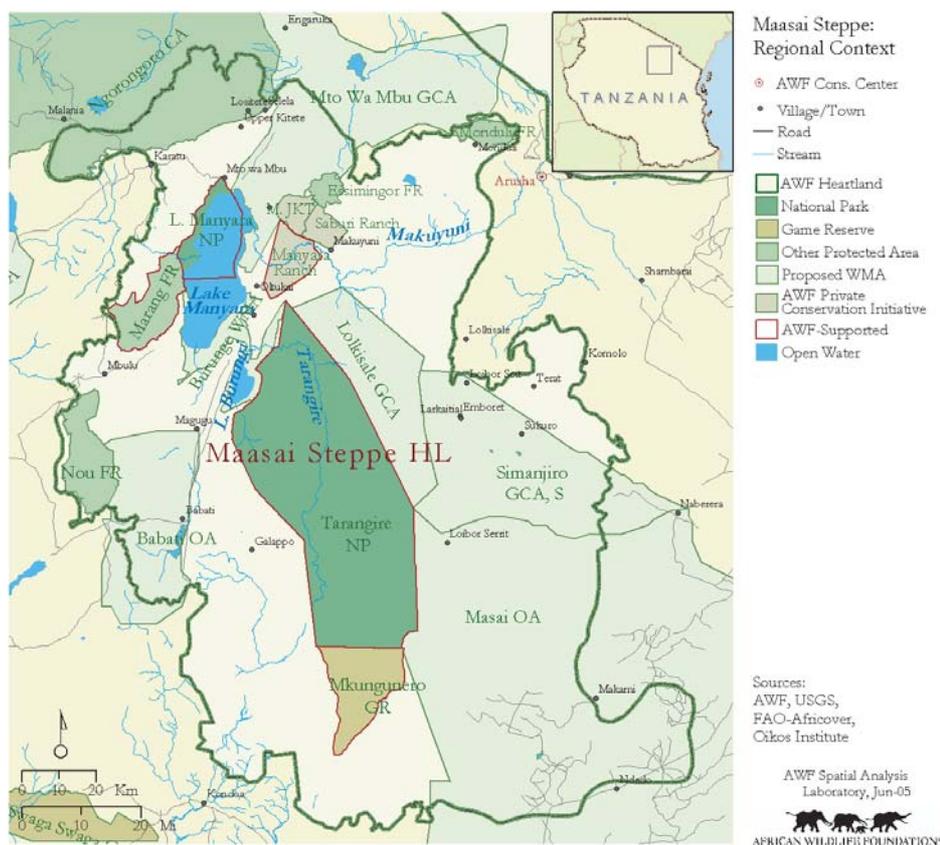
large migratory herds of zebra and wildebeest and locally threatened species such as buffalo, oryx, hartebeest, greater and lesser kudu, gerenuk and eland. Various predators such as lions, leopards and the endangered African wild dog are also found in the Heartland. There is also rich bird diversity in the area with around 350 species being recorded in Lake Manyara National Park⁴.

The maintenance of wildlife populations in the Heartland largely depends on seasonal migration between the core protected areas and other key wildlife areas of northern Tanzania such as Simanjiro plains, Lake Manyara Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Serengeti National Park and Lake Natron. During the dry season, wildlife concentrates along the Tarangire River in Tarangire National Park and in Lake Manyara where surface water can be found year round. In the wet season many species disperse out of the park to surrounding grassland where they come into contact and often conflict with people.

In addition to its importance for wildlife, the Heartland is home to 350,000 people most of whom are pastoralists. During the last 20 years, non-pastoralists have been steadily migrating into the arable areas of the Heartland, fueling rapid population growth and consequent competition for natural resources and land⁵. As a result pastoralists are finding it increasingly difficult to survive on livestock alone and are now turning to settled agriculture to supplement their livestock oriented livelihoods. The result is that land use in the Heartland is gradually changing with more land, much of it marginal, being taken out of conservation for crop production. This has fragmented the landscape and poses a serious threat to the last remaining migratory routes for wildlife in the heartland.

Various other threats face wildlife in the Heartland. These include overgrazing and degradation of rangeland, deforestation, human-wildlife conflicts, unregulated hunting and poaching. However, land fragmentation and conversion are the most serious threats because they have the potential to block wildlife migratory routes, isolate national parks and lead to a decrease in wildlife numbers and health.

The ecologically important Manyara Ranch - a former government livestock ranch - is a part of the Kwa Kuchinja corridor that facilitates the last remaining movement of wildlife between Tarangire and Manyara national parks. This land unit was potentially under serious threat that would have negatively affected



landscape functionality. In line with its Economic Liberalization and Divesture Program, the Government of Tanzania put up the loss making ranch for privatization. The potential threat was that when privatized, the ranch would be utilized in ways incompatible with conservation, blocking wildlife movement. In 1998, AWF began working closely with the community, its leaders, local politicians and conservation professionals to secure Manyara Ranch so that it would continue to facilitate wildlife movement between Manyara and Tarangire National Parks and safeguard the wildlife populations, the integrity of protected areas and the tourism industry that depends on the wildlife.

Privatization of Manyara Ranch – the Need for an Alternative Solution

Manyara Ranch occupies 17,807 hectares (approximately 45,000 acres) of land and is located 80 kilometers from Arusha in the Maasai Steppe Heartland. Like the rest of the Heartland, the ranch is semi-arid with annual average rainfall of 600-700 mm. The vegetation is mainly *acacia commiphora* bushland and grassland. The main water sources are natural seasonal rivers supplemented by man-made dams. The ranch is used by both resident and

migratory wildlife species such as elephants, impala, buffalo, lion and gazelles as they move between Manyara and Tarangire National Parks.

Since 1975, Manyara Ranch was managed as a commercial livestock ranch by the National Ranching Company (NARCO), a Government of Tanzania parastatal organization. However despite possessing a healthy stock of livestock, it was plagued by poor management and was not profitable. With time its infrastructure crumbled. For instance in 1998/99, the ranch made a loss of Tshs 9 million (US\$10,000)⁶. During this time, the Government had embarked on a privatization strategy that sought to sell off all loss making government assets in an effort to stimulate economic growth. Manyara Ranch was one of these properties that were prioritized

for privatization through sale.

Various options existed for the Government during this time concerning the disposal of Manyara Ranch. Firstly, there was the option of declaring the area a national park and annexing it to Manyara National Park so that it could continue to be used for wildlife conservation. This option was deemed unacceptable because it would disadvantage communities who were using the ranch for dry season grazing, reintroduce animosities that arise with alienation of land for state protection and negate the gains made in community based natural resource management.

The second option involved handing the ranch back to the community for their use as they would see fit. Before the ranch was acquired by white settlers and later the Government, the land belonged to the community. This option was also deemed unacceptable because there was possibility that the community would use the land for livestock grazing and expanded agriculture in line with the prevailing pressures in the neighboring areas leading to fragmentation and blockage of wildlife movement.

The third option involved selling the ranch and all its assets to the private sector at market prices for use either

as a livestock or wildlife ranch or other uses incompatible with overall landscape conservation. At the time, there was interest from various private sector operators who wished to develop private game reserves for tourism. This meant that the ranch would have to be fenced to protect and improve wildlife populations on the ranch for tourism. The move would have blocked wildlife movement that is crucial for healthy populations in parks but would also have excluded communities from using the ranch.

AWF working with partners – communities, their leaders, local politicians, the local member of parliament and conservation professionals from Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) proposed to the Government an alternative disposal option for the ranch whereby the ownership of the ranch would be transferred to a duly registered and representative land trust that would hold the land in trust for community benefit and wildlife conservation. The land trust model was selected because:

- a) It was already widely in use elsewhere in Africa, e.g. South Africa, and in the United States of America by the Nature Conservancy as a mechanism for acquiring and managing land for conservation and therefore guidance was available.
- b) There was an already existing precedent in Tanzania where a land trust has been used to acquire the privately owned Mkwaja Ranch that was added to the Sadani Game Reserve⁷.
- c) The legal framework for establishing the trust existed under the Trustees Incorporation Ordinance, Chapter 375 of the Laws of Tanzania.

AWF then led the process where a task force chaired by the Monduli District Commissioner was formed to develop a land conservation trust that would be used to acquire and manage the ranch. AWF served as the secretariat for the task force and provided funding for its activities. Other members of the task force included community representatives, the Regional Administration, WWF, TANAPA and UNDP. The activities of the task force included sensitizing the community on the trust approach and resolving competing claims of local villages over use; ownership of Manyara Ranch; lobbying the Government for title of the ranch; raising funds and pursuing legal processes such as registration of the trust. The work of the task force led to the establishment of the Tanzania Land

Conservation Trust (TLCT) which was formally registered in July 2000.

The Trust is managed by a board of trustees under the chairmanship of the local MP and its trustees are drawn from representatives of AWF, WWF, TANAPA, UNDP, the local Maasai community and the private sector. AWF serves as the secretariat. The objective of the Trust is to promote nature preservation and conservation and economic activities compatible with conservation for the benefit of present and future generations throughout Tanzania. A local steering committee, whose membership includes representatives of the local community, serves as an advisory body and effectively links the community with the ranch management.

After intense lobbying by the communities, the area MP and the trust, the President of Tanzania approved the request for the ranch to be allocated to the Tanzania Land Conservation Trust on 19th April 2001 and the 99-year title deed for Manyara Ranch was issued gratis to the Trust. The Trust assumed ownership of the land and assets worth US\$233,000. It also assumed responsibility for and settled the terminal dues of the former NARCO employees with funding from donors. Besides other infrastructure like dams, cattle troughs, buildings most of which were dilapidated and not functional, there was a Government owned boarding primary school located at the center of the ranch.

Critical Issues in the Management of Manyara Ranch

The trust is responsible for the management of Manyara Ranch for wildlife conservation and community benefit. To date, immense progress has been made in the management of the ranch aimed at transforming it into a viable commercial enterprise. The trust has hired a Ranch Manager and support staff including game scouts to manage the ranch. This has helped reestablish the administrative and management capacity at the ranch, improved operations and especially security for both livestock and wildlife. A community liaison officer has also been hired and he has been instrumental in improving communication with the communities. Infrastructure that was dilapidated such as dams, buildings and cattle troughs has been rehabilitated to a greater degree and is now functional. This can be attributed to an interim management plan that was developed to guide initial rehabilitation works and restore the ranch to functional status. The next planning step will involve the development of a strategic plan



through a multi-stakeholder participatory process in which a common vision for the ranch will be identified. This plan will lay the basis upon which operational management and business plans will be developed. However some issues that are critical for the ranch to be successfully transformed into an economically viable concern for wildlife conservation and improving community livelihoods still remain.

Livestock: Livestock production has been identified as one of the revenue streams with potential to contribute to the commercial viability of the ranch. The ranch had 1200 Boran cattle and 600 sheep inherited from NARCO. Three key challenges face the management with regard to livestock production, namely predation by wildlife, diseases transmitted from wildlife and marketing of livestock products.

Today livestock predation is not a serious issue. For example, in 2004, 12 livestock were killed by predators. However as wildlife numbers increase on the ranch, livestock predation is bound to increase imposing considerable losses to the ranch.

The presence of wildlife also carries the risk of various diseases such as tick-borne diseases, foot and mouth disease and malignant catarrhal fever being transmitted to livestock. Disease is a more serious threat for livestock production on the ranch because during outbreaks, it not only causes decline in livestock numbers but also affects marketing of livestock products for the duration of the disease cycle. Today foot and mouth disease outbreaks are frequent on the ranch, occurring on average, twice a year. Though its impact on productivity is minimal, a reported outbreak causes the ranch to be placed under quarantine under Tanzanian law. Livestock sales are also stopped and therefore impacts on associated income can be considerable.

The ranch management has, in line with the goal of allowing community use of the ranch, signed a watering and grazing agreement with communities that allows them to graze their livestock on the ranch during certain periods. This carries the risk of livestock predation, disease transmission between wildlife and livestock belonging to ranch and pastoralists and degradation due to overgrazing. This has potential to generate conflicts especially between the community and the ranch. However considerable progress has been made to solve overgrazing through access and enforcement protocols that have been developed by the community and are being implemented by the ranch management. For instance fines are levied on errant community members through existing community peer pressure systems. The

main challenge now remains the lack of capacity to provide adequate management oversight for the process.

Marketing of livestock products is crucial for the viability of the ranch as a commercial enterprise. Already, the ranch has assisted the community to form a community based organization, RAMAT, to which they sell their livestock for onward marketing to high end markets for profit. The main challenge is how this relationship can be consistently used to generate the revenues required to make the ranch commercially viable.

It appears that for livestock production to contribute sufficiently to the commercialization of the ranch, wildlife predation, disease and marketing will have to be better managed. Various options are available for addressing these challenges. These include increasing livestock numbers to increase profits through economies of scale; focusing on livestock breeding to supply high quality breeds to buyers and the community; and phasing out livestock production in recognition of the marginal opportunity that it presents in comparison to wildlife tourism. The Trust and the ranch management will have to consider the strategic direction that needs to be taken with regard to livestock production as a revenue stream.

Education: This carries implications for the success of the ranch because of its potential either to impose a cost burden on the Trust through the school or to enlist the support of the community for the objectives of the branch through improvement in literacy.

The Trust inherited a boarding primary school that was built on the ranch by the Government in 1970. The school has a reputation for good performance in national examinations in Tanzania. It has about 1000 pupils drawn from the community and beyond. When the trust inherited the school, it was in poor condition besides being inappropriately sited within a corridor and wilderness area. The trust has now identified a new site to move the school to. This site is close to the northern boundary of the ranch and key amenities like water and electricity. The trust has also secured funds from donors that are being used to construct school facilities including offices, classrooms and teachers accommodation. The main challenge lies in how the ranch and trust will be able to provide continual resources from existing revenue streams needed to manage the school to required standards.

Like any rural pastoral area, the level of illiteracy among the community members is very high. Initial conflicts between the ranch and community over grazing, ownership and benefits have been caused by lack of understanding due primarily to illiteracy. Therefore community education is crucial for the community, who are key stakeholders in the management of the ranch, to support the objectives of the ranch and make it a success. Direct support from the trust to primary schooling through the boarding school is seen as a fundamental step in addressing peripheral community literacy constraints and building capacity for future leadership and management. This education focus will have to be sustained and broadened over time if it is to translate positively into overall support for the ranch.

Conservation: One of the principal objectives of TLCT is to conserve the intrinsic natural resource values of the Manyara Ranch. It is this natural resource values that provide an opportunity to develop through wildlife tourism, a primary revenue stream to facilitate the commercialization of the ranch. Various management initiatives have been implemented in order to enhance the conservation values of the ranch upon which any commercialisation will be based. A game scout system has been established on the ranch improving security for wildlife. As a result, wildlife numbers have increased. For instance in September 2004, 100 elephants, 20 endangered wild dogs and 50 buffalos were resident on the ranch⁸. The presence of wildlife has then generated potential for enterprise development that should tap into the vibrant northern tourism circuit. AWF, using its core expertise in appropriating wildlife values through enterprise development and conservation, is supporting the ranch to exploit this potential. AWF has conducted enterprise feasibility studies of the ranch and identified available options including campsites and lodges that can be developed to take advantage of the northern tourism circuit and generate needed revenue for the ranch and the community. Negotiations are currently in progress with interested private sector partners for the development of enterprises.

Although security for wildlife has been considerably improved, various challenges still remain as the wildlife population increases. The ranch covers a relatively large area but is not fenced. It is therefore open to intrusion from different areas and will be much harder to protect. More personnel and equipment will be required to stem critical threats to the viability of wildlife, such as poaching.

Another key challenge that the Trust faces that has already been alluded to concerns how it will manage interactions between wildlife and livestock in order to avoid livestock predation, the risk of overgrazing and consequent conflicts. Overgrazing has the potential to lead to degradation of the range threatening conservation values. The communities peripheral to the ranch own large numbers of livestock (in excess of 26,500) and these together with livestock from the ranch will exert considerable pressure on the ranch water and grazing resources during droughts. Although there is a grazing agreement between the ranch and the community that stipulates penalties for non-compliance, enforcement is already and will continue to be a significant management challenge especially if livestock will need to be excluded from sections of the ranch that may be dedicated to enterprises in future.

Results to Date

Three years on, the strategy adopted for acquisition and management of Manyara Ranch has demonstrated some preliminary results. Firstly, the immediate threat to the Maasai Steppe landscape of this critical land unit being subdivided, cultivated or fenced has been averted. Secondly, the critical interests of the main stakeholder groups – communities, conservation organizations and Government - have been addressed to a considerable extent. National parks and conservation concerns have secured their corridor, improved security and now wildlife numbers have increased. Communities are involved in the management of the ranch and are enjoying improved services, including the school and support to their livestock production activities. The Government of Tanzania can be happy that the ranch is now well managed, is attracting investment in the country from various donors and is playing a productive role in the economy. The potential for increased investment exists as private sector entrepreneurs show new interest in the ranch for tourism enterprise development and to take advantage of the vibrant northern tourism circuit.

Challenges

The main challenge facing the ranch is how to achieve economic viability using the available options – livestock production and wildlife tourism. Currently, the ranch has high recurrent costs for managing livestock production, the school and conservation functions but does not generate enough revenue to cover the costs.



The ranch will have to increase and diversify available revenue streams if it is to become economically viable.

Commercialization and achievement of economic viability for a ranch normally takes a long time. The Manyara Ranch was very run down and had been a loss making enterprise for years. Efforts to commercialize and convert the ranch into a profitable enterprise will require substantial investments in infrastructure, human and financial capacity. This in turn will require time, focus and skill. The ranch also needs time to recover tourism values and restructuring costs if it is to be viable.

Since its acquisition, the operations of ranch have mainly been funded by donors. Most of the processes to turn the ranch around will take considerable resources invested over a long period of time. The key question remains whether the trust will achieve sustainability in conservation, community development and economic terms before donor fatigue sets in.

Next Steps for Manyara Ranch and the Trust

Based on the experience of Manyara Ranch, some recommendations can be made to practitioners that would consider adopting the land trust as a mechanism for acquiring critical lands.

A three step process may be used with land trust. The first step involves the acquisition of the land/property using legal and economic tools and instruments that the flexibility of the trust provides in a given policy context. These tools include leases, conservation easements, direct land purchases, management agreements and covenants that will normally be defined by the prevailing legal and policy framework in the country of operation. It is crucial that extensive consultations are conducted to address competing interests and buy-in is secured from all the key stakeholders of the land that is being acquired for the trust mechanism to function effectively.

After acquisition, the second step for the trust is the restructuring/reform of the property or land or enterprise so that it is positioned to meet its key goals that may include conservation and community development and wildlife tourism. As has already been demonstrated in this paper, this step takes more time and resources than expected. The trust must therefore secure sufficient resources to invest in the restructuring phase.

Finally, the trust must manage the property using appropriate structures to move it to financial sustainability. It is crucial that the trust identifies and develops revenue streams that are required to move the land/enterprise to financial sustainability. Ultimately, the enterprise should be able to pay for its operations and not depend on subsidies such as donor funding.

Although TLCT was formed as a national institution, Manyara Ranch remains the only property that it has acquired. Therefore it currently lacks the mandate to operate nationally. TLCT will need to evolve into an organization with a national mandate by broadening its coverage to consider and acquire lands throughout Tanzania with critical and threatened conservation values. It will also need to broaden its representation at the trustee level to acquire a national outlook and gain acceptability in the areas that it proposes to work. The conservation challenges in Tanzania are huge but available resources are scarce. TLCT offers a mechanism where these resources can be channeled for addressing conservation challenges in Tanzania without duplication.

Conclusion

Each landscape in Africa has its own challenges and therefore different approaches will be needed for the conservation of critical lands. The concept of a land trust that has the flexibility to buy, sell and manage land may become more important in the future. Manyara Ranch in Tanzania under the TLCT is an important learning example in this regard.

Endnotes

¹ www.awf.org

² www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook

³ The Manyara Ranch: Report to the TLCT trustees. November 2003-September 2004

⁴ www.tanzania-web.com/parks/manyara.htm

⁵ Anon (2005) The Manyara Ranch: an overview. 6pp

⁶ Kahurananga, J., Sumba, D., Ole Lengisugi, N. and Ole Mako, R. (1999) Manyara Ranch: current situation, future disposal and impact on the Kwa Kuchinja wildlife corridor. AWF, Arusha, Tanzania. 12pp.

⁷ www.ecologyfund.com

⁸ The Manyara Ranch: Report to the TLCT trustees. November 2003-September 2004.





Ministerie van
Buitenlandse Zaken

This Publication is funded by the Netherlands
Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Directorate General
for International Cooperation (DGIS).



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This document was produced by AWF's Program team
with assistance from DGIS

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