

People: Enterprise

Rural communities in Africa live alongside wildlife but often see little value in their lion, elephant and other wildlife neighbors, which sometimes eat their livestock, trample their crops and otherwise threaten their livelihoods.

The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) firmly believes, however, that conservation of wildlife and wild lands can offer economic benefits for Africa's people. The key is to create successful business ventures that provide communities with the economic incentives to conserve wildlife and their natural surroundings.

| AWF's Conservation Enterprises

Establishing enterprises that benefit communities and enhance conservation can be challenging, but with innovation and perseverance, AWF has developed countless ventures in cooperation with communities across Africa. These businesses have:

- Opened employment and training opportunities for locals;
- Increased incomes for communities; and
- Protected critical ecosystems and wildlife populations.

| Case Studies

While conservation enterprises differ based on community capacity and needs, AWF has established everything from conservation tourism ventures to sustainable agriculture businesses to livestock or fisheries management:

- **Conservation lodges.** In areas where wildlife tourism is economically viable, AWF often assists communities in establishing lodges, in exchange for conservation commitments from the community. The five-star **Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge** in Rwanda attracts international tourists eager to see the region's mountain gorillas. Through a partnership between the local community and a private lodge operator, local individuals are employed at the lodge, and the community receives regular income—on the order of US\$30,000 per month—from the lodge based on guest stays. Because the community recognizes its livelihood is directly tied to the mountain gorillas, it has an incentive to protect the great ape.
- **Sustainable agriculture.** AWF works with rural communities to provide training and improved seeds that increase agricultural output. Through the **Kenya Heartland Coffee Project**—a groundbreaking initiative between AWF, the Starbucks Corp. and the U.S. Agency for International Development—AWF worked with about 7,000 small-scale coffee farmers in Central Kenya to improve the quality and quantity of their coffee production through environmentally friendly practices. The project improved local management of natural resources, increased farmer



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productivity, decreased environmental impact on wildlife and landscapes and enabled the implementation of reforestation schemes around Aberdare and Mt. Kenya National Parks.

- **Market access.** In the Congo landscape, many farmers who fled into the forests during the civil war abandoned agriculture because of an inability to get their products to market. They instead turned toward bushmeat hunting. Under the **Congo Shipping Project**, AWF negotiated the use of a barge and provided regular transport for local people to bring their agricultural products to urban markets, reducing reliance on bushmeat hunting for survival.
- **Fisheries management.** Overfishing in southern Zambia led to depleted fish stocks in the Zambezi River. AWF established the **Mwandi Integrated Fish Farm** to provide nearby communities an alternative source of protein in their diets, as well as a new source of income. Meanwhile, part of the fish population raised through this aquaculture project has been, and will continue to be, used to help repopulate the native fish species in the Zambezi.

These and the other AWF conservation enterprises allow people to earn additional income, learn new job skills, get training and generate steady revenue for their communities—all while playing an active role in conserving the natural resources around them.

Evaluating Opportunities

All of AWF's conservation enterprise projects pass through a proven development process that ensures projects:

- Are based on proven wildlife conservation logic and are ecologically sound;
- Address community needs and cultural issues;
- Are commercially viable and have the opportunity to provide financial benefits to the community; and
- Meet all legal requirements.



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