



Initiative for Sustainable Landscapes South West Mau Forest, Kenya

Conserving forests and building better lives

Progress to date

July 2017





Executive summary

The South West Mau Forest Reserve is a critical water catchment area and biodiversity habitat that faces major environmental challenges. Studies done show that it is threatened by encroachment, livestock grazing, wood extraction for charcoal and firewood, fire, poaching, and more.

IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) has brought together key stakeholders under the Initiative for Sustainable Landscapes in Kenya (ISLA Kenya) to address these challenges based on an integrated action plan, which includes policy dialogues and the development of practical and scalable solutions at local and regional levels.

In particular, the ISLA Kenya focuses on three areas: forest conservation; improvement of water flow and access; and sustainable energy. Alternative livelihoods for communities is an important issue that cuts across all three, with livestock intensification forming a major part of the livelihood programs aimed at reducing communities' overdependence on the forest for grazing.

The aim of the program is to conserve the South West Mau Forest by taking a holistic approach that also addresses the need to improve livelihoods and provide economic benefits to the local communities. These three elements balance and reinforce each other: industries and communities can increase their income based on sustainable models for timber, intensified livestock production and alternative income generating activities like bee-keeping.

Forest Protection is a pre-requisite for this, therefore increased production should not lead to further deforestation, but instead contribute to active conservation and restoration of the forest by the community and other stakeholders.

Finally, key to success is to have the community included in all decision-making processes so that they take ownership of forest protection and sustainable production models.



Between April and June 2017, IDH made a comprehensive assessment of the progress and impact of ISLA Kenya's work after two years. As part of reviewing progress on mitigating deforestation in the South West Mau Forest, a wide variety of stakeholders in the region from the public and private sector, NGOs, and the community were interviewed.

Topics that were discussed include the role of IDH in supporting sustainable activities within improving business practices, landscape governance, and sustainability at field-level; whether and how these activities have helped mitigate deforestation in the South West Mau Forest, and/or will by 2020; and changes in business practices and improvements in landscape governance.

The findings show that the ISLA Kenya in the South West Mau Forest has been very successful in aligning key stakeholders and building a strong multi-stakeholder coalition for reducing deforestation since its inception in 2014.

The ISLA Kenya coalition is much appreciated by its members and considered to be critical to conserve and restore the South West Mau Forest, as previously stakeholders had different vested interests that were not well aligned and coordinated.

However, for the coalition to achieve its longer-term goals, it is essential to gain greater political buy-in from national and county governments. In addition, there is a need to better identify roles and responsibilities, not only to create greater transparency, but also to improve accountability and for IDH to strengthen its exit strategy from its current role as the secretariat.

Finally, there is high demand from stakeholders to speed up implementation and to increasingly focus on impact on the ground and actual field-level results, involving communities.



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About the ISLA Kenya program

The ISLA Kenya program carries out landscape-level activities to ensure the South West Mau Forest is protected, while communities and businesses thrive. Our mission is to restore and conserve 60,000 hectares of South West Mau Forest by 2030.

We take into account the interests of companies in tea and other sectors to conserve the South West Mau Forest for its microclimate services, the interests of the Kenyan government to meet their land and forest restoration priorities and those of local communities to improve livelihoods. Together we work towards integrated, holistic landscape management as well as improved livelihoods, water, and sustainable energy. Projects focus on forest conservation, alternative energy sources, access to good-quality water, and sustainable livestock production models for dairy and beef cattle.

The South West Mau Forest in western Kenya is part of the larger Mau Forests Complex: a montane forest covering an area of over 400,000 hectares, and one of the five most important watersheds in Kenya. More than 10 million people depend on its rivers. The South West Mau Forest is the largest of the 22 forest blocks of the Mau Forests Complex, and it feeds into the Sondu-Miriu river basin.

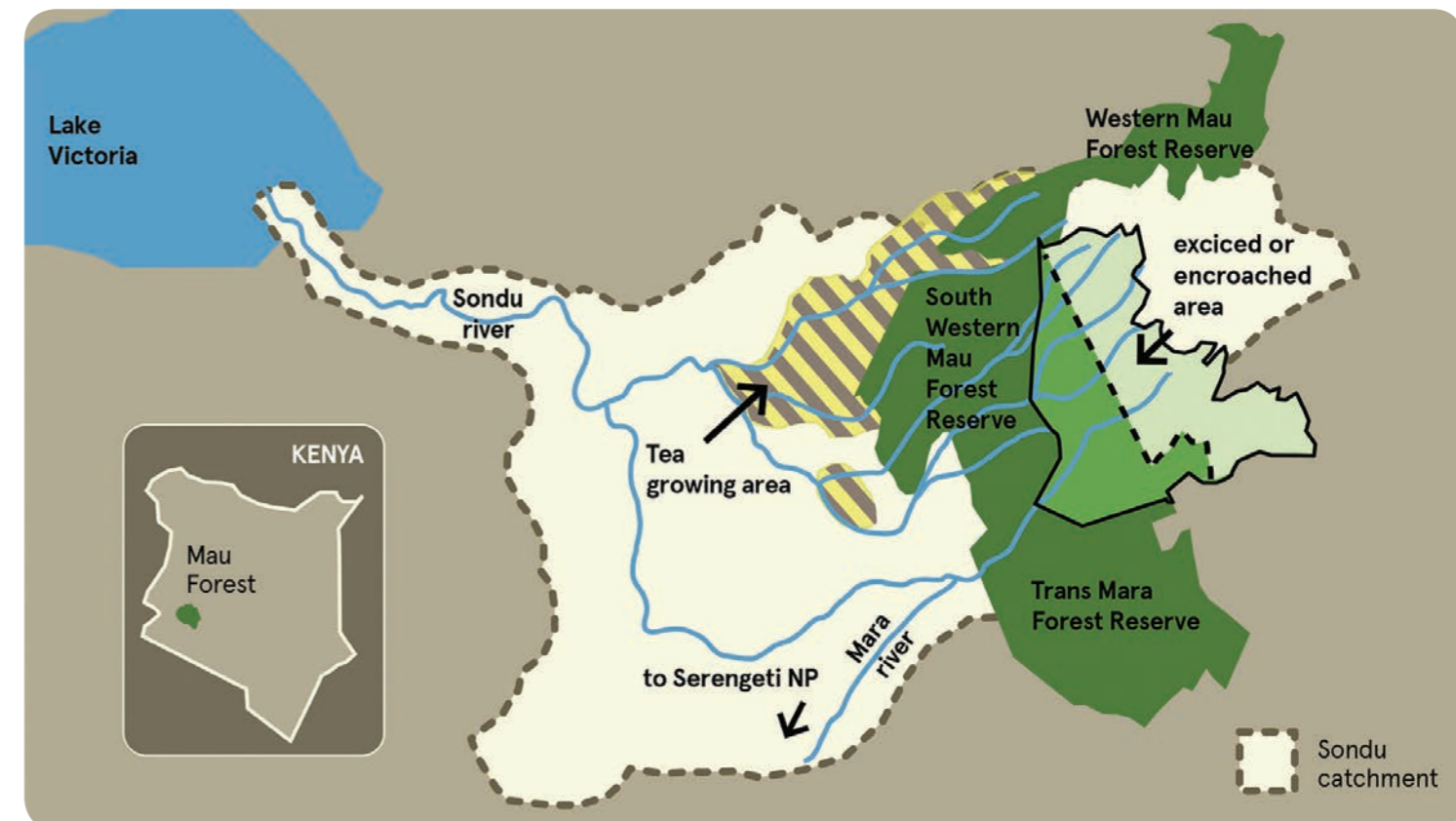
If the forest ecosystem is safeguarded and enhanced, everyone benefits: the community improves their livelihoods; the private sector secures their long-term business that depends on a healthy ecosystem; and government meets their land and forest restoration priorities. But over the last three decades, more than 25% of the forest has either been cut down or degraded due to growing populations, livestock grazing, charcoal burning and illegal timber extraction from the forest.

Forest conservation is important because of the vital ecosystem services the forest provides, including water flow, micro-climate regulation, erosion control, flood prevention, water purification, and wildlife habitat.

Companies, farmers and communities depend on the forest to grow tea and other crops; communities depend on it for their livelihoods, such as providing drinking water, gathering wood and feeding their livestock; energy companies and other businesses depend on its water for their operations; and sectors such as tourism and timber depend on the forest for their businesses as well.

The ISLA Kenya program has four thematic “building blocks” – the last of which underpins and cuts across the other three. All four are interlinked, and one cannot be seen alone without the context of the others:

1. **Forest conservation**
This is the overarching goal of the ISLA Kenya program, and involves not just forest conservation activities (replanting, creating a forest buffer, and addressing illegal activities) but also finding sustainable energy sources and alternative livelihoods for local communities.
2. **Improvement of water flow and access**
Because soil erosion and lack of tree cover are the main contributors to decreasing water supply and quality, ISLA's water projects focus on these issues in the Sondu river basin, outside of the South West Mau Forest.
3. **Sustainable energy source**
Finding alternative energy solutions will reduce the consumption of fuelwood and charcoal for domestic, institutional and industrial use – which will in turn reduce illegal charcoal burning in the forest and the overall demand for biomass.
4. **Alternative livelihoods**
As a way to increase production and reduce illegal activities, it's crucial to find alternative livelihoods that are more sustainable – such as livestock intensification, empowering communities, and addressing illegal activities in the forest.



Our progress in the landscape

To date, we have convened a strong multi-stakeholder coalition made up of county governments; tea, energy and timber companies; and a range of civil society and knowledge institutions. In close collaboration with the coalition, we have developed an integrated action plan with the aim to conserve the forest, improve water flow and water access, provide sustainable energy sources, and provide alternative livelihoods.

Building a multi-stakeholder coalition

The private sector in the South West Mau Forest that is directly involved in the ISLA program sees a clear business case in conserving and restoring the forest, noting that the ecosystem services provided by the forest directly feed in their commodity production.

This is not entirely new knowledge for the local tea, timber, and hydropower industries, who have been working on small-scale projects addressing the forest's sustainability issues before IDH initiated the landscape program, ISLA.

However, all stakeholders agree that the ISLA multi-stakeholder platform is the biggest success of the South West Mau Forest program to date. In addition, stakeholders generally agree on plans and are aligned with each other.

Not only are all their forest-related activities now directly going through ISLA, the private sector is feeling more engaged in deforestation issues as the multi-stakeholder partnership has created increased transparency and a sense of accountability and shared responsibility amongst key stakeholders.

"The Mau forest is the lifeline of tea industry. Without the Mau forest, there is no tea production in this area." - Private sector



Improving the landscape governance

With relevant stakeholders, a governance model has been implemented to continue dialogue and activities in the landscape. This governance structure consists of a trust, the board, the secretariat (currently IDH), and technical working groups.

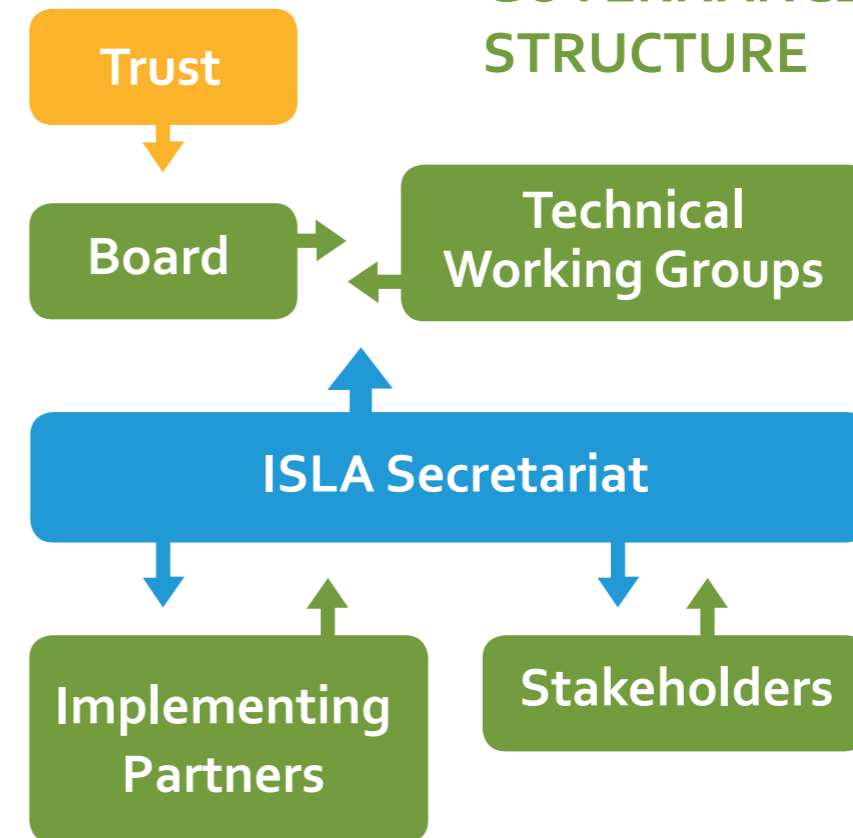
The goal is to have a financially viable governance model established by the stakeholders in the form of a charitable trust, strongly endorsed by the key stakeholders. The other goal is to have an integrated management plan developed for South West Mau under leadership of the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), with support from other stakeholders and knowledge partners. Trustees and founder members will form the most important body that takes forward the sustainability program once IDH has exited the landscape.

A number of stakeholders of the South West Mau region are already committed and participating in the ISLA board. The KFS has already made a valuable contribution by coordinating key interventions and providing overall leadership.

In terms of outputs of the coalition, there are four broad challenges that will need to be addressed to further improve landscape governance: political support, a clearer regulatory framework, greater involvement of local communities, and on-the-ground enforcement to stop illegal activities.

"In the last two years, we have been successfully aligned key stakeholders of the South West Mau forest. This was possible because some pre-conditions for stakeholder cooperation were already in place when we started: the private sector had a business case, there was no conflict with the community, the political sensitivities surrounding the forest were less pronounced than before, and, importantly, most stakeholders already agreed on the need to conserve the South West Mau." - IDH

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Engaging the community

The focus of the South West Mau Forest program on conserving and restoring the degraded forest relies on active collaboration with communities to achieve long-term protection of the forest and its resources.

This both allows the forest to restore, and offers viable alternatives for the community and others that now heavily depend on the forest's resources for their livelihood.

Aiming to protect the South West Mau Forest in order to safeguard its ecosystem services, the program is strongly engaging local communities through CFA by addressing training needs and creating awareness, publicity and a positive story through such activities as tree planting and the Mau Festival, to be held periodically and the publication of newsletters to update the community on progress and plans.

Progress made on forest conservation

The program aims to demonstrate that leveraging private-sector resources can catalyze landscape investments in forest conservation and the improvement of smallholder livelihoods for surrounding communities. The tea, hydropower and timber sectors are working together with the public sector to halt deforestation and protect the South West Mau Forest.

A key focus is on the northeast boundary of the forest block, where deforestation threats by people and livestock are most severe. Activities will focus on forest conservation in parallel with addressing the root causes and threats to the forest by involving the surrounding communities. These will safeguard the long-term production and sourcing of commodities in the landscape, as well as the livelihoods of surrounding communities.

In practice, our efforts to conserve the forest center around various joint activities and projects with our partners and local communities:

- Investigating the possibilities and investment potential for sustainable charcoal production.
- Empowering the Community Forest Associations (CFA) and the community to develop and implement Participatory Forest Management Plans (PFMPs) that help them benefit from the forest based on user rights as outlined in the Forest Conservation and Management Act.
- Implementing protection and enforcement mechanisms such as development of an electric fence and tea buffer zone, addressing illegal activities through aerial and ground surveillance, installation of more outposts, supporting law enforcement officers with training and equipment required for effective operations, and community intelligence.
- Planting trees to restore previously degraded forest.





Key achievements and next steps

The following prototypes are being piloted:

1. Tree-enrichment planting

Sustainable replanting of degraded forest blocks with support from KFS, CFAs, Unilever Tea Kenya, James Finlay Kenya, KTDA, LEL Timber, Safaricom Foundation and others. So far, 200 hectares have been planted and another 300 hectares planned. As focus shifts to the northeast boundary, a survey done by KFS along the boundary has marked 32 plots of 10 hectares each, current and new partners are encouraged to adopt these

2. Intensification of livestock

Sustainable business models for intensification of livestock for smallholders (dairy/beef) including agreement between communities, KFS and livestock product up-takers. A two-year prototype with a selection of 200 farmers from Chepseon, Kiptororo and Tinet Wards is being discussed and agreed with the implementing partner, SNV, and co-funding partners Unilever Tea Kenya and James Finlay Kenya.

Implementation will start in 2017 and run until June 2019. It will be based on a model farm system between 15-25 peers similar to the farmer field school approach. Fundraising with donors continues for scaling.

3. Forest buffer (Electrified fence and tea buffer)

There is a proposal to install a 45-kilometer-long electrified fence along the northeast boundary next to the tea belt (NTZDC) with expertise and resources from Rhino Ark and co-financed by the private sector, IDH and the Kenyan government. In addition to controlling human-wildlife conflict, it will be used by the KFS as a tool to monitor and control access to the forest.

Preparations including the impact assessment have started and the installation of the fence is expected to start in January 2018. Fundraising efforts are ongoing, and about 50% of the fence installation budget has been raised based on commitments from Finlays, KTDA, Unilever, Rhino Ark and IDH.





4. Addressing illegal commercial activities

quarterly aerial surveillance flights, ground surveillance, reinforcement of the cutline with more outposts (Rhino Ark), reinforced joint ground operations (KFS, KWS and BSP) and CFA capacity building are ongoing, while the development of a community intelligence model and training on law enforcement are planned.

Since the last quarter of 2015, law enforcement officers from KWS, KFS and other government departments participate in quarterly aerial surveillance flights co-funded by Finlays and IDH, and guided by Rhino Ark, during which they fly over the South West Mau Forest to spot illegal activities (e.g. charcoal kilns, logging, cultivation, livestock and associated structures).

After the flight, a follow-up enforcement plan is devised with KFS, KWS and Bongo Ground Surveillance Team based on the results of the flights. An analysis of the observations during flights shows a decline in the count of most illegal activities, especially charcoal kilns, until end of 2016, and then a reversal in the trend in 2017.

It is suspected that this is due drought and increased activities in the forest and possibly people taking advantage of in the period ahead of August elections and the confusion following the ruling on the Ogiek case in East African Court in Arusha.

5. Community empowerment

Bee-keeping, planting of indigenous trees under the Adopt-a-Forest scheme, livestock intensification and other income generation activities carried out by the community that promote conservation of the forest directly or indirectly will be supported by various implementing partners, including Rhino Ark and the Social Impact Institute.

6. An integrated management plan / REDD+ strategy for the South West Mau (UNEP, KFS, Rhino Ark) proposal has been developed and is being discussed with donors.
7. Geothermal energy for tea drying is being explored through a feasibility study (IF Technology).
8. Organizing awareness events, targeting households and communities in the landscape to raise awareness and create a positive story around the South West Mau.



As well as continuing the ongoing projects outlined above, activities the pipeline include:

- Supporting CFAs to develop and implement PFMPs in collaboration with KFS with the aim to improve landscape governance and field-level sustainability.
- Developing a pilot on alternative energy options for households, industry and institutions.
- Sustainable Timber Based Forest Products



Progress made on water flow and access

The program aims to implement various joint activities that improve water supply and quality in the landscape. The water quantity and quality in the Sondu river basin are declining. Soil erosion, resulting from limited tree and ground cover outside the South West Mau Forest, is the main contributor to decreasing water supply and quality. The sediments in the river limit hydropower generation and water supply to communities and towns downstream.

Soil erosion often increases poverty levels, by leaving smallholders with less productive soil for agricultural production. To improve tree cover and control soil erosion, ISLA's water projects are focused in the Sondu river basin, outside of the South West Mau Forest.

Key achievements and next steps

The following achievements have been made so far:

In collaboration with GIZ, the Water Resource Management Authority (WRMA), Water Resource Users' Associations (WRUAs) and county governments, the ISLA Kenya program's water-related work started with an assessment study to review proposed projects involving 15 WRUAs, all with their own priorities for action. Proposed projects include spring protection, riparian restoration and rainwater harvesting.

In addition to the review of the proposed projects, through the International Water Stewardship Programme (IWaSP), GIZ is carrying out an assessment of the training needs for the WRUA groups based on a self-assessment tool developed by WWF. Based on the results of this self-assessment, capacity building measures are implemented based on specific training needs that are identified per WRUA.



IWaSP is a co-financier and lead implementer of the water component within the ISLA-South West Mau Partnership. Since June 2016, IWaSP has been active in the region by bringing together private companies, civil societies and public institutions to address shared water risks within the river basin.

The following prototypes are being piloted:

- Institutional strengthening of the WRMA and WRUAs – see above.
- Catchment conservation activities and water availability projects (green and gray infrastructures) with and for the communities – including replanting riparian zones, income generation from other crops, climate-smart agriculture, and collaboration with county governments and WRMAs.
- Developing a hydro-meteorological data-sharing platform between all the relevant departments/institutions in the river basin.
- Improving water resource monitoring – CIFOR and GIZ will develop a low-cost monitoring system that can be used by WRUA/WRMA to monitor the impact of pilot projects; results can be used for awareness creation and prioritization of future projects.
- Developing a water allocation plan by GIZ and WRMA – Activities to be undertaken include capacity building, geo-referencing of water resources, abstraction and discharge points, and an abstraction and pollution survey to provide insight into current water use and update the WRMA database.



Progress made on sustainable energy sources

Our aim is for sustainable energy options for domestic, institutional and industrial use to be developed and adopted by 2020. Finding such alternative energy solutions will reduce the consumption of fuelwood and charcoal – which will in turn reduce illegal charcoal burning in the forest and reduce the demand for biomass in the landscape.

Key achievements and next steps

The following achievements have been made so far:

- A pilot is being developed on alternative energy options for households, industry and institutions.
- Hydropower generating company KenGen is part of meetings and informal support; KenGen Foundation has shown an interest in co-funding joint actions.

The following prototypes are being piloted:

- A report commissioned by IDH to the Living Earth Foundation in 2016 on the availability of biomass and opportunities for briquette-making in the South West Mau Forest showed some potential for briquette-making (solution units of compacted dry biomass, through bamboo growing) as an alternative energy for tea drying, but this was later considered not feasible by the tea industry.

This was confirmed through a study done by the NTZDC which showed that although there is potential to grow bamboo for biomass along the northeast boundary, the uptake was not strong in the tea and other sectors. Neither study provided a clear strategy for briquette-making to be used by local communities as an alternative energy source, and it was not taken any further.

- IF Technology has been contracted by IDH with co-funding from Unilever and Finlays to carry out a feasibility study on the use of geothermal energy to dry tea. Depending on the outcome of the study, next steps will be agreed.
- Options to support households and institutions to use energy-saving stoves are also being explored.
- Some training on sustainable energy will be provided from 2017, with schools as focal points under the 2017/2018 agreement between Rhino Ark, Safaricom Foundation and IDH.



OUR PARTNERS

Private sector partners

- Unilever
- James Finlay (K) Ltd
- Kenya Tea Development Agency
- Safaricom Foundation
- KENGEN
- Timber Manufacturers Association

National government agencies

- Kenya Forest Service
- Kenya Wildlife Service
- Water Resources Management Authority
- Nyayo Tea Zones Development
- Kenya Water Towers Agency

Local governments

- Kericho County
- Bomet County and Nakuru County

Ministries

- Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
- Ministry Water and Irrigation

Civil Society

- Community Forest Associations
- Water Resource Users Associations

International partners

- IDH
- GIZ
- Rhino Ark
- CIFOR
- the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs



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