



CLIMATE CROWD

Community-driven solutions to help people and nature in a changing climate

CONSERVANCIES IN KENYA KENYA SUMMARY REPORT

APRIL
2023

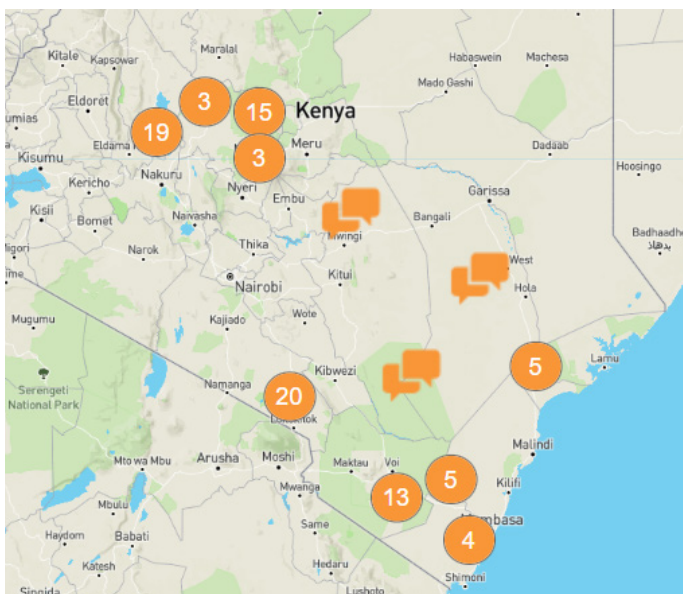
ABOUT



Climate Crowd is a bottom-up, community-driven initiative. Working with communities and local organizations in more than 30 countries, we collect data on climate impacts on communities, analyze the data, present the data back to the communities, and work with them to develop, fund, and implement on-the-ground solutions that help people and nature adapt to a changing climate.

BACKGROUND

This report summarizes what was learned from 90 interviews with key informants (36 female, 54 male) in 18 community conservancies across Kenya. Interviews were conducted in February and March of 2023 by members of the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA). As the sole national conservancies association in the country, KWCA brings together conservancies across Kenya to enhance sharing of best practices, harmonize standards and more to ensure that the voice of this vital group that is at the heart of sustainable wildlife conservancy in the country is firm, united and audible, not just at the grassroots but at the county and national levels.



REPORTED CHANGES IN WEATHER AND CLIMATE (n=90)

- 93% Decreased rainfall.
- 90% Drought.
- 89% Changes in timing of seasons.
- 72% Loss of water source.
- 66% Heat waves/hotter days.
- 59% Changes in wind.
- 33% Erosion/landslides.
- 20% Flooding.
- 11% Other.
- 4% Storms.
- 3% Cold spells/frost.
- 1% Sea level rise.

Almost all of those interviewed observed a decrease in rainfall, substantiated by roughly the same number of people reporting increased prevalence of drought (93% and 90%, respectively). Similarly, 72% of respondents experienced a loss of water source, exacerbated by the increase in heat waves and hotter days, according to 66% of those interviewed. Many people also noticed that there have been changes in the timing of the seasons (89%) and in the wind patterns (59%). Less than half of the respondents made note of increased erosion and landslides (33%), flooding during precipitation events (20%), and other undocumented weather phenomena (11%). These changes in weather and climate—most notably increased drought and aridity—have already begun to have drastic consequences for local communities and their surrounding biodiversity.

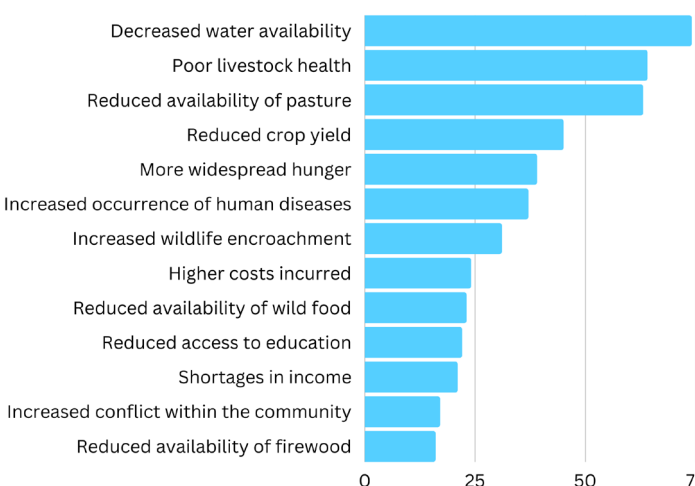
IMPACTS ON COMMUNITIES

The changes in weather and climate are felt by local communities in various ways, with decreased availability of freshwater at the forefront of respondents' concerns (82%). Without water security, respondents noted that the availability of pasture for their livestock has been diminishing (70%) along with their livestock's health (71%). Half of those interviewed also referenced a reduction in crop yields. The dwindling productivity of crops and livestock has resulted in more widespread hunger, as reported by 43% of respondents. A significant number of respondents also

"It has been about four years since people harvested enough food to sustain them and they have definitely not had a surplus to sell unlike before"

—Village leader, Taita-Taveta, Kenya

reported an increase in human diseases and illnesses (41%) with many specifically attributing this to an increase in dust and wind, malnutrition, and consumption of contaminated water. 34% of those interviewed had more interactions with wildlife—especially zebras and elephants—as the animals enter community settlements looking for water and food, often damaging people’s property and jeopardizing their safety. In general, there has been a reduced availability of wild food for both wildlife and people as wild berries, herbs, and other food sources have become scarce, according to 26% of the respondents. About a quarter of the respondents also reported shortages in income (23%) and higher household costs (27%), mainly due to failing agricultural outputs as a result of drought. Similarly, 24% of those interviewed mentioned limited access to education due to being unable to pay school fees or because of extreme weather conditions. Other impacts on local livelihoods reported by the interviewees were reduced availability of firewood (18%) and increased conflict over resources amongst community members (19%).



(48%). According to 52% of the respondents, there has been an increased reliance on external aid organizations, a few of which have been primarily responsible for constructing the new boreholes. To cope with the loss of available pasture for livestock, interviewees reported having to travel long distances to find grazing areas (43%) and those who aren’t able to make the treks have had to purchase livestock feed (21%). Livestock feed is not the only additional purchase community members have had to make in recent years as 32% of those interviewed have said they increasingly rely on markets for goods that they previously did not have to purchase like food and water. Also in response to declines in agricultural outputs, respondents reported switching to more drought-resistant crop types (31%) and livestock breeds (22%) and also reported reducing their livestock numbers due to increased animal mortality and

COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

As a response to the aforementioned weather and climate induced impacts to livelihoods, community members have begun changing their lifestyles to better adapt. Considering the reduced productivity of agriculture and the intense drought, many community members (57%) who previously relied on farming for income have changed economic livelihoods to

“Most of us have had to look for alternative businesses that cannot be impacted by hot temperatures such as selling secondhand clothes”

—Market vendor, Taita-Taveta, Kenya

less climate dependent and water intensive ones like beekeeping, basket weaving, or tourism. Due to the prevalent water scarcity, about half the respondents also referenced increased use or new construction of wells and boreholes (52%) along with having to trek longer distances to fetch freshwater

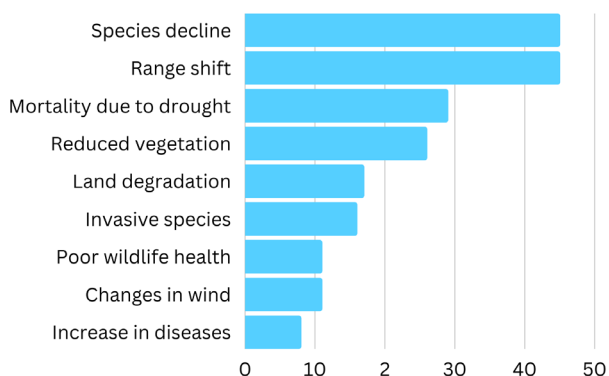


maintenance costs (21%). To reduce their livestock population, some people mentioned selling the animals—an occurrence that

has been happening more frequently with 27% of interviewees referencing selling their assets for additional money. Of those who reported selling their assets, several specified that they have leased their land to conservation organizations. 31% of the interviewees also observed increased legal and illegal logging to use for firewood and to sell, closely related to the 17% of people who reported having to travel to far locations to find firewood—often into protected areas. Other commonly reported responses were relocation (29%), increased reliance on hunting wild animals for food (20%), and new or increased awareness and education surrounding the environment and conservation (17%).

DIRECT IMPACTS ON BIODIVERSITY

While a vast majority of climate and weather changes affect human livelihoods, these effects also directly impact Kenya's biodiversity. Half of those interviewed observed a decline in various species with no specific cause attributed while 32% observed a decline in species due to drought. 50% of the interviewees also observed that some species' ranges have been affected, meaning that species once present in the area have left and not returned or that species previously unobserved in the area are now present.



The drought and extreme heat experienced in these regions of Kenya has also caused a decrease in vegetation cover (29%) and poor health conditions in wildlife (12%), which includes an increase in diseases in wildlife (9%). In addition to heightened drought and heat, 12% of respondents reported changes in wind patterns which is partly responsible, according to 19% of respondents, for the increased land degradation and erosion. Almost the same amount of people (18%) also noticed more pests and invasive species like the *Opuntia* cactus and locusts.

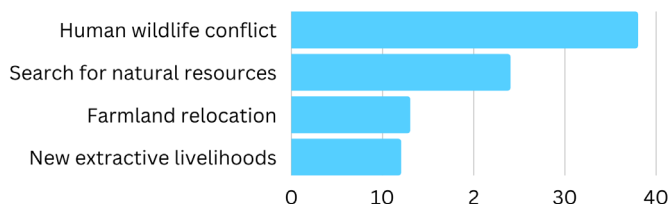
INDIRECT IMPACTS TO BIODIVERSITY

As people attempt to adapt to their changing environment, some of these new practices have indirect consequences on biodiversity.

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For example, as people travel further distances searching for natural resources, they sometimes encroach on wild habitats and disrupt the ecosystem, as reported by 27% of the interviewees. The greatest indirect impact to biodiversity in these regions is human wildlife conflict—any undesired interaction between humans and wildlife that results in negative consequences to the environment, human life, or the conservation of a species.



The respondents who reported an increase in human wildlife conflict (42%) pointed towards elephants as the biggest source of this conflict as both humans and elephants come into contact with each other more often while coping with the changes in their environments. 14% of the interviewees also reported that relocating their farmlands to more viable and previously uninhabited areas has deteriorated the surrounding biodiversity. Similarly, 13% of the respondents explained that some of their new business ventures—which they adopted to cope with the loss of their agricultural livelihood—are reliant on natural resource extraction which consequently affects biodiversity. Examples of these new livelihoods are sand harvesting, animal poaching, and logging for charcoal.

