

**The Kenya Wetlands Forum**

**Strategic Framework**

**Prepared by**

**The Interim Secretariat  
C/o East African Wild Life Society  
P O Box 20110 – 00200  
Nairobi.**

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## **PREAMBLE/PROLOGUE**

This is a Statement of Intents and Purposes of the Kenya Wetlands Forum. It sets to broadly outline the operational direction of the Forum. It seeks to, among others;

- Define and give the Kenya Wetlands Forum a unique identity in a way that clearly distinguishes the Forum from any other entity and to
- Provide guidance to the Forum in all its undertakings.

The Statement takes much recognition of the circumstances under which the Forum will be operating and as such, will be subject to review to transform it in line with the prevailing realities.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Brief History of KWF**

Recognition for the need to have an independent forum where issues of wetland conservation and management could be deliberated on came as early as 1999. This followed the collapse of the Kenya Wetlands Working Group (KWWG). The KWWG had been borne out of a recommendation of a regional workshop on wetlands held in Uganda in 1990. KWWG had been formed to steer the debate and activities geared towards the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands in Kenya. Its collapse therefore did a serious blow towards this course.

In 1999, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) through its Dutch supported wetlands programme, commissioned a study on the feasibility of forming a National Wetlands Forum. The results of this study were presented and discussed at a meeting convened by KWS and IUCN-Eastern Africa Regional Office in February 2002. All the major and relevant wetland sector players in the country attended this meeting. The meeting endorsed a decision for the formation of Kenya Wetlands Forum as a multi-institutional consortium to provide the institutional mechanism for independent discussions and actions for wetland conservation, management and wise use in Kenya.

Much did not happen though after this February 2002 meeting. On realizing that the state of inactivity would adversely affect the future of the forum and wetlands in general, IUCN-EARO and KWS in 2003 requested the East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) to provide and coordinate, on an interim basis, the secretariat and activities of the Forum respectively until such a time that the Forum is capable of independently operating on its own.

### **Organization Of The Kenya Wetlands Forum (KWF)**

As presently constituted, the Kenya Forum consists of three main organs;

- The Membership
- An Interim management committee
- An interim secretariat

Currently, membership of the Forum is open to all institutions, individuals and establishments whose activities and operations impact on wetlands, are impacted on by wetlands and have interest on wetlands. This includes; government, NGOs (both local, national and international), private sector enterprises, community based organizations and individuals. Additionally, this membership is still voluntary and free. Everybody who feels concerned with the well-being of wetlands is welcomed to the Forum. Since February 2005 under the stewardship of the EAWLS, members of the Forum have been holding monthly meetings every last Thursday of the month.

During the monthly meeting of March 05, an interim management committee was proposed. This comprises; EAWLS, IUCN-EARO, KWS, NEMA, WWF-EARPO, UoN, representative local CBOs, and individuals. **This composition is still to be ratified.**

The interim secretariat is housed at EAWLS is composed of EAWLS personnel. This will go on until the Forum is in a position to recruit its own personnel. Once these structures are confirmed and ratified, the Forum will formally write to the East African Wild Life Society requesting to be incorporated as a sub committee of the organization but with autonomy over its activities, planning and budget.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **Basic Principle**

The activities and operations of the Kenya Wetlands Forum will be guided by the overall principle that wetlands, as natural ecosystems are very unique, important and valuable ecologically, economically and socio-culturally and that their conservation, management and use should be based on sound science, economic and socio-cultural considerations for the benefit of the present and future generations both at the local community and national levels.

### **Vision**

Kenya's wetlands are conserved and managed within the Ramsar principles of wise use for posterity.

### **Mission**

Be the platform for constructive dialogue and discussion and sharing of ideas for the conservation and sustainable use of wetland resources in Kenya.

### **Strategic Objectives**

1. To promote good governance and management of wetland resources in Kenya
2. To promote dialogue, network and linkages among wetland stakeholders in Kenya as well as in the regional and the international scenes.
3. To promote the conservation and wise use of wetland resources by initiating and implementing interventions on critical and emerging issues

## **OPERATIONAL DIRECTIONS**

In order to realize its vision and meet/accomplish its mission, KWF will employ the following stated thematic approaches. Care should be taken to note that these are set as guidelines and to implement them, clear action plans will be developed either independently or collectively/integrated and also that the strategies will be subjected to periodic review incorporating progress made with time.

### **A. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: To promote good governance and management of wetland resources in Kenya**

#### **Operational objective 1: Strengthen the structures and functions of the Kenya Wetlands Forum**

The KWF shall be organized into the following structural arrangement;

- The KWF Membership
- The KWF Management Committee
- The KWF Secretariat

Each unit shall have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, but will work in synergy with each other in furthering the objectives of the forum.

#### **Operational Objective 2: Facilitate and support the creation and implementation of appropriate policies and legislation for sustainable wetlands conservation and management.**

Without proper laws and regulations, achieving sustainable management use of wetlands will be next to impossible. For it is on the basis of existing laws that guidelines can be mapped on how best to manage and utilize wetland resources. Additionally, once these laws are in place, it is very important to ensure their implementation through having effective enforcement mechanism and also making compliance a necessary requirement among the users. For this, the KWF will support and facilitate the enactment of appropriate laws and regulations and their enforcement and compliance mechanisms.

#### **Operational Objective 3: Support the development and strengthening of institutional frameworks for effective wetland conservation and management**

The level of institutional development and capacity for wetland conservation and wise use is still very nascent in the country. And yet, strong institutional frameworks and mechanisms are very important for effective handling of wetland conservation, management and wise use issues. The KWF will approach this issue from three dimensions; self-improvement and strengthening and support for national and local level institutions.

First, within itself, the Forum will undergo systematic self-improvement programmes to strengthening both its institutional structures and objectives. Its strategic approach will also undergo periodic review from time to time to make the Forum as relevant and realistic to prevailing conditions and circumstances as much as possible.

Secondly, KWF will strive within its capabilities to ensure that institutions arising from policy and legislative adjustments are strengthened right from their formative stages so that they perform their stipulated functions to the best of intentions. Additionally, KWF will mobilize every effort and resources to support other national institutions to offer the best services for sustainable and wise wetland conservation, management and use. At the local level, the Forum will make every effort to empower the local institutions for them to participate effectively in wetland management and conservation issues and sustainably derive benefits from use of wetland resources.

## **B. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: To promote dialogue, network and linkages among wetland stakeholders in Kenya as well as in the regional and the international scenes.**

### **Operational objective 1: Provide a platform for constructive dialogue and discussions among stakeholders**

One significant feature of the wetland sector is the lack of a credible forum for discussions on matters pertaining to wetlands. There seems to be a general concern for the deteriorating conditions of wetlands in general, but these concerns are limited to individuals and institutions as they go about their individual businesses. The Forum will tap on this potential synergy for collective responsibility among the various stakeholders to freely and objectively deliberate on the prevailing wetland issues and also design appropriate intervention measures to those that influence wetlands. The Forum will also provide an independent medium for resolving any issues with negative impacts on Kenyan wetlands.

### **Operational objective 2: Promote and provide leadership in coordination and networking, linkages and communication among stakeholders in the national, regional and international scene.**

Keeping all the relevant wetlands stakeholders in regular and close contact is very important for maintaining and sustaining the sense of collective responsibility. Information needs to be shared among the stakeholders as soon as it is available to necessitate quick response actions and; stakeholders need to know what is happening in the wetlands scene not only in the local context but regional and international as well. The KWF will be that engine to keep all the wetlands stakeholders in the country, in contact and up-to-date with all the events and happenings in the wetlands sector using the most cost-effective and efficient means available.

### **C. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: To promote the conservation and wise use of wetland resources by initiating and implementing interventions on critical and emerging issues**

#### **Operational objective 1: To design and implement a continuous advocacy and awareness programme on wetland conservation and sustainable use issues**

Popular understanding, appreciation and acknowledgement of the importance, value and attributes of wetlands are very vital for their sustainability. For it is on this basis that everybody concerned will feel responsible for the welfare of wetlands. As such, KWF will endeavor to raise the level of concern for wetlands among all levels of stakeholders to ensure that, among others; present existing laws and regulations governing wetland management are not only relevant but also complied with, institutions charged with wetland management perform their functions to expectations, there is favorable conditions for the effective participation of all stakeholders especially local communities. All relevant, effective, efficient and appropriate approaches will be used to achieve this.

#### **Operational objective 2: To facilitate and support capacity building and empowerment in wetland management**

Wetland management is a serious discipline in itself but comparatively a rather new phenomenon. This means that there is not only a huge demand for competency (proper, quality and high calibre training) in this area but also serious inadequacy (very few trained experts). This is a big challenge for sustainable conservation, management and wise use of wetlands.

To address this, KWF will, from its own initiatives, identify and implement, in collaboration with relevant authorities and institutions, short-term training seminars targeting different segments of the stakeholders, identify training opportunities available in the diaspora and facilitate participation in such trainings for selected individuals. The KWF will also strive to ensure that a capacity building and empowerment strategy for wetland management in Kenya is instituted.

#### **Operational objective 3: To strengthen information generation, acquisition and communication among stakeholders.**

Information, its availability and accessibility and usage, is very important for effective management, not just for wetlands alone. The information available within the domain of resource planners, managers will affect the quality and effectiveness of management decisions and approaches. Likewise, the information available within the domain of wetland resource users will influence their use patterns.

It is the intention of the KWF to support, facilitate the acquisition and make readily accessible information related to wetlands and wetland issues in the country in particular and internationally in general. All relevant, effective, efficient and appropriate approaches will be used to achieve this.

**Operational objective 4: Promote and support initiatives aimed enhancing local community participation and livelihoods from sustainable wetland use**

While the local adjacent riparian communities are considered one of the most important wetland stakeholders, their participation and contribution to sustainable management and use of the wetlands resources should not be taken for granted. Out of desperation for survival, the community members often engage in activities that are not complementary to sustainable wetland management and wise use ideals. To undo this, it is thus imperative to help identify and support community-led initiatives that will doubly enhance the conservation status of wetlands and the people's livelihoods. This is an undertaking the Forum will spare no efforts to ensure its achievement.

**Operational objective 5: Develop and implement fundraising mechanisms for current and future operations and activities of the Forum**

In order to safeguard the implementation of this strategy the Forum will employ a number of strategies to secure the required financial resources. For its operations and the implementation of the three **strategies**, the Forum will employ both independent and integrated approaches to secure funds both from internal (national) and external (international) sources. More emphasis will however be placed on integrated approaches to maximize impact of achievement.

Additionally, the Forum will strive to institute internal and long-term financing mechanisms for the foreseeable future of the Forum.