



AFRICAN
NATURE  **BASED**
TOURISM PLATFORM

A scenic landscape photograph of a lake at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, pink, and blue. The lake's surface is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding green hills and trees. In the foreground, there are lush green trees and bushes, including a prominent palm tree. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

DATA TO IMPACT 2023



INTRODUCTION

WITH \$1.9 MILLION IN FUNDING from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the [African Nature Based Tourism Platform](#) (African NBT Platform) is connecting funders to communities and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) involved in conservation and tourism across 11 countries in eastern and southern Africa. Operating in Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, the African NBT Platform's goal is to mobilize at least \$15 million to support tourism-reliant communities and SMEs with pandemic recovery efforts and to build greater resilience to future shocks and stressors. The African NBT Platform is now in its third year of implementation. This analysis serves as an update on the data that was collected by the Platform in 2021, the insights that were gained from this data, and how this data has been utilized to identify and mobilize funding for communities.

FOCAL GEOGRAPHIES



PROGRAM CONTEXT

COMMUNITIES AROUND PROTECTED AREAS are subject to multiple hazards, and vulnerabilities are often most acutely experienced by marginalized groups. The global pandemic intersected with the existing climate change and biodiversity crises in the region and created compounding impacts on the most vulnerable, especially for the nature-based tourism sector and the communities that rely on it for their economic and social well-being. These ongoing and intersecting crises threaten livelihoods and affect how people interact with their natural resources, which in turn negatively impacts conservation and development efforts.

Africa supports one-third of the world's biological diversity.¹ The countries of eastern and southern Africa alone contain over 2.1 million km² of protected area and seven biodiversity hotspots². Maintaining effective management of this biodiversity requires sustained funding, a large portion of which comes from nature-based tourism. Nature-based tourism

incentivizes the conservation of these vital ecosystems, landscapes, and species, creating revenue for wildlife authorities, local economies, communities, and national governments.³ The shock to the tourism sector caused by the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of a conservation model based primarily on tourism. Closed borders, grounded flights, and restrictions on movement hit the nature-based tourism sector across the African continent particularly hard, leaving businesses, communities, and individuals without incomes. To sustain development and conservation benefits, support is required to help communities develop diverse, sustainable, and resilient nature-based livelihoods. There has been an increase in demand from donors looking to fund bottom-up and community-led conservation and development.⁴ This is especially true in the context of climate change and biodiversity loss where there is



a growing appreciation that local people and communities have the knowledge, experience, and capacity to develop and implement their own effective solutions.⁵ However, funding for community-led conservation and development remains poorly coordinated with weak alignment to the real needs on the ground.

The African NBT Platform was developed to connect funders to the communities and SMEs most in need of support. Using a bottom-up approach, the Platform developed a network of partners and beneficiaries throughout the focal countries and gathered data on the impact to communities and SMES from the COVID-19 crises. The Platform is now enhancing knowledge sharing between relevant actors, helping to the build capacity of our partners organizations, identifies funding opportunities, and facilitates a participatory approach to the development of funding proposal. Insights from the data collected by the Platform was used [to develop individual country summary reports for 9 countries](#). This data illuminated critical vulnerabilities at the community level which provided insight into the type of support each community needs. This analysis will look at the data in aggregate to further assess the impact of COVID-19 on the overall region and assess how this information has informed the funding mobilized by the African NBT Platform to date.

All photographs by Nikhil Advani

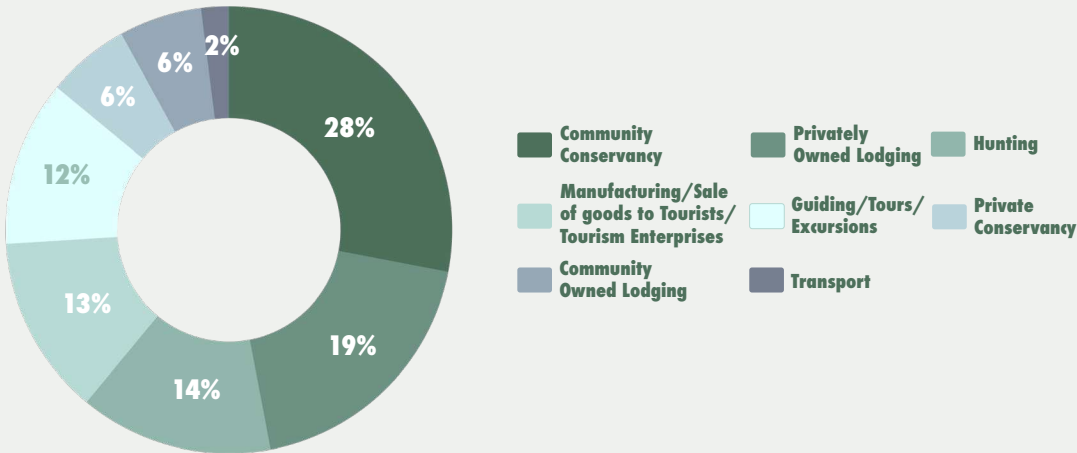


DATA

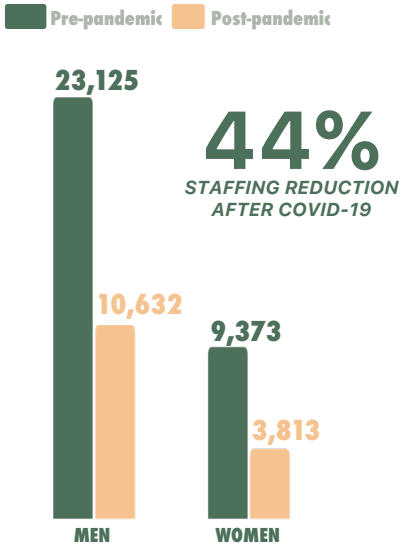
IN EARLY 2021, THE AFRICAN NBT PLATFORM DEVELOPED a survey to assess the degree to which local communities and SMEs in the nature-based tourism sector were impacted by COVID-19. Working with partner organizations in target geographies, the African NBT Platform conducted surveys at the community level. Survey questions sought to better understand respondents' involvement in conservation and tourism, their staffing and financial situation prior to the pandemic, how the pandemic has affected them, and their resulting needs. As of September 2023, the African NBT Platform conducted 687 surveys throughout the projects' 11 target countries.



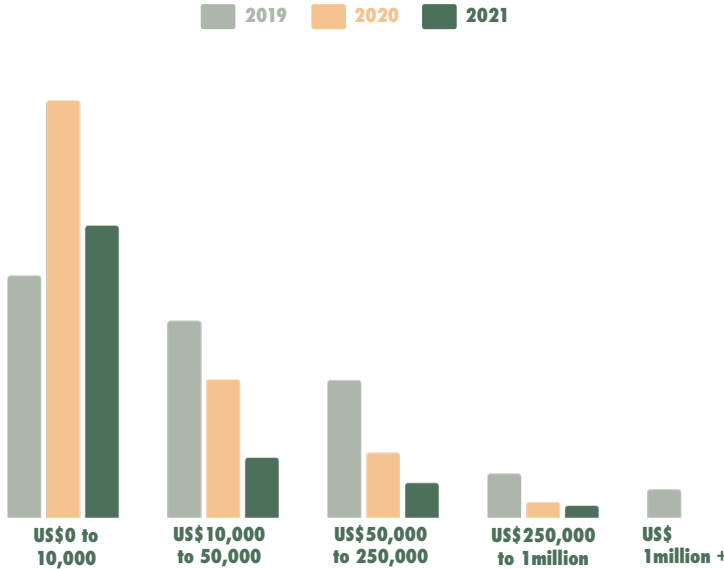
PRIMARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE TOURISM SECTOR



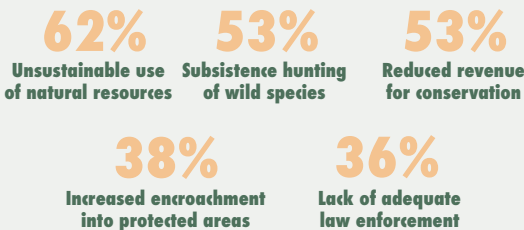
TOTAL STAFF EMPLOYED BEFORE & AFTER COVID-19



REPORTED ANNUAL REVENUE



TOP 5 CONSERVATION CONCERNS FOLLOWING THE EMERGENCE OF COVID-19



TOP 5 COMMUNITY CONCERNS FOLLOWING THE EMERGENCE OF COVID-19





MOBILIZING FUNDING FOR COMMUNITIES

INFORMED BY THIS DATA, the African NBT Platform is collaborating with community partners in each focal geography to develop community-led and community-designed grant proposals focused on sustainable development, conservation, and resilience. The following will detail the specifics of several of these successful projects to demonstrate how their intended outcomes directly address the vulnerabilities identified by the African NBT Platform survey data.

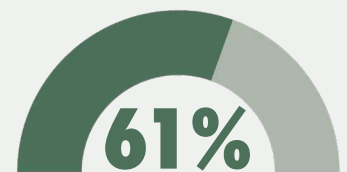
IN MALAWI, African NBT Platform partner Kasungu Wildlife Conservation for Community Development Association (KAWICCODA) secured \$186k in funding from [IUCN BIOPAMA](#) to implement a project focused on climate-resilient alternative livelihoods for communities within the 5-kilometer belt around the Kasungu National Park (KNP). As the second largest wildlife reserve in Malawi, KNP used to boast healthy populations of elephants, buffalos, lions, and other big game in the 1980s but since then, animal population numbers have progressively reduced on account of hunting, habitat encroachment, poor land-use, and weak natural resource management. This situation was made worse during the COVID-19 pandemic as tourism revenues from the park fell along with the revenues for nearby local markets where many women and youth earn their livelihoods.

100%

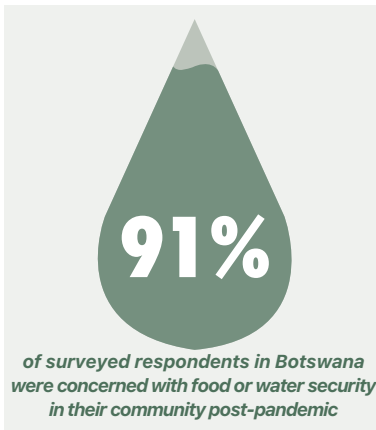
of Malawi survey respondents reported concerns about an increase in the unsustainable use of natural resources post-pandemic

In partnership with [Resource Africa](#), KAWICCODA is working to restore the biodiversity integrity of KNP and its surroundings by reducing poverty and livelihood vulnerability. KAWICCODA is working to improve income generation from the climate-smart agricultural production of cash crops like soya beans, sunflower, and groundnuts. The project is also promoting the small-scale processing of agricultural outputs into food products. Finally, the project is working with smallholder farmers to improve protein supply and income generation from small livestock management. In this way, the project is working to stabilize food and income security and reduce negative livelihood coping strategies such as encroachment, hunting, and other unauthorized harvesting of resources inside KNP.

IN SOUTH AFRICA, the African NBT Platform hosted a proposal-writing workshop with community-based organizations centered around a grant opportunity from the South African Lotteries Commission. Workshop attendee [Nourish](#) was successful in securing a \$14k grant to work on indigenous craft development for communities outside Kruger National Park. Vulnerable populations in these communities, such as women, youth and the disabled, have been historically excluded from active participation in the tourism value chain, a situation that was further exacerbated during COVID-19. In an effort to build more resilience and inclusion back into the tourism industry near Kruger National Park, Nourish is working to provide a platform for indigenous knowledge sharing and cultural expression through skill and capacity building, craft development, and entrepreneurship. This will be accomplished by expanding a pre-existing craft center ([Nourish Eco Village Enterprise Hub](#)) where local Indigenous experts will train community members in craft-making. All participants will have the opportunity to sell their goods in local craft fairs and farmers markets where they can also gain exposure. With the successful production and sale of quality cultural goods, Nourish aims to achieve economically empowered women, youth, and disabled people within the tourism industry.



of survey respondents in South Africa were concerned with the reduction of income/revenue post COVID-19



IN BOTSWANA, food and water security were top concerns following the outbreak of the pandemic. Additionally, of the alternative nature-positive income generating ideas mentioned by survey respondents, **49% were related to agriculture**. With this insight, the [Ngamiland Council of NGOs \(NCONGO\)](#) secured \$87k in funding from the [Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission \(OKACOM\)](#). NCONGO is implementing a horticulture project in the town of Maun, locally known as the “tourism capital” of Botswana due to its proximity to popular nature-based tourism destinations like the Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park. NCONGO is working with 30 farmers in this region to upscale, replicate, and become certified in proven climate-smart horticulture practices. Additionally, the

farmers will receive mentorship from other experienced farmers, be provided with market access, and be introduced to new and improved irrigation systems, effectively increasing freshwater availability. The expected increase in crop yields and freshwater availability will indirectly benefit 150,000 community members living alongside the Okavango Delta.

IN ZIMBABWE, the African NBT Platform helped mobilize \$135k in funding from multiple donors for [WWF Zimbabwe](#) to work on improving community resilience to climate change in the Binga and Tsholotsho districts. Communities in Manjolo, Pashu and Mpanedziba wards near Hwange and Chizarira National Parks are especially vulnerable to external shocks since the western region of Zimbabwe is increasingly threatened by extreme drought. When asked what support their community needed, African NBT survey respondents in Tsholotsho specifically mentioned needing support to drill boreholes. WWF Zimbabwe co-developed, co-designed, and co-implemented projects with communities in Binga and Tsholotsho. Working in nine villages, WWF Zimbabwe is focusing on improving water security through solar powered boreholes and rainwater harvesting tanks in addition to providing alternative nature-friendly livelihoods through community-owned goat farms.

In the wake of COVID-19, Zimbabwe survey respondents reported the following concerns:

84%
reduced income

79%
water security

IN NAMIBIA, \$159k was similarly mobilized to implement climate adaptation projects for communities near Bwabwata National Park, Salambala conservancy, Bamunu conservancy, and Balyerwa conservancy in the Zambezi region of the country. To address issues surrounding water security, [WWF Namibia](#) is working with partners to install rainwater harvesting systems and drill solar powered boreholes. WWF Namibia is also implementing several alternative nature-friendly livelihood initiatives, including training on beekeeping and basket weaving for youth and women. Market access will also be provided for their products.

IN KENYA, African NBT Platform partner [Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association \(KWCA\)](#) secured \$208k in funding from IUCN BIOPAMA to address governance related challenges in Lumo Community Conservancy. Lumo, a KWCA member and African NBT Platform survey respondent, primarily receives revenue from an on-site ecolodge which was greatly impacted during COVID-19, leading to staff layoffs, budget cuts, and reduced investment in conservation efforts. Through the funding secured from IUCN BIOPAMA, KWCA is directly supporting critical operations and salaries as Lumo rebuilds itself following COVID-19. A key part of this support involves building more inclusive governance structures into the conservancy—such as greater participation from marginalized community members, specifically women and youth—to improve the sustainable management of natural resources. Interventions include the



support of regular annual meetings for the conservancy, a youth and women forum, training for rangers on human rights, and the development of a framework for revenue improvement and diversification. The work currently underway by KWCA will improve the biodiversity and socio-economic outcomes of Lumo and build more sustainability into the conservancy's business model.

Top concerns mentioned
by survey respondents

84%

unsustainable use of
natural resources

70%

reduced revenue for
conservation

IN TANZANIA, African NBT Platform Partner [Community Wildlife Management Area Consortium \(CWMAC\)](#) secured \$1.4M in funding from the European Union to work on governance related issues within 12 community-owned Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), eight of which were African NBT Platform survey respondents. CWMAC—an umbrella organization for all authorized associations that manage WMAs in Tanzania—plays an important role in representing community wildlife managers and their constituents, giving these rural and underrepresented groups a voice. In partnership with the [Honeyguide Foundation](#), CWMAC is working with each WMA to strengthen their governance and natural resource management, paying particular attention to those in southern Tanzania where tourism investment has historically been lower. This already low investment made southern WMAs, and the communities and conservation efforts that rely on them, especially vulnerable to tourism-related revenue losses caused by COVID-19. Key goals for the project include the introduction of professional management and good governance practices, the development of sustainable nature-based enterprises, and the establishment of long-term partnerships to help fund the WMAs' operational costs and community services. CWMAC has also been successful in engaging several WMAs in the carbon credit market, effectively offering an alternative nature-friendly revenue source for these associations and the communities they represent.

CONCLUSION

Now in Year 3 of implementation, the African NBT Platform is continuing to support its community partners in mobilizing funding for community-led development, adaptation, and conservation. The projects described above are addressing the vulnerability of a conservation and development model based primarily on tourism while also highlighting the African NBT Platform's impact across diverse regions in eastern and southern Africa. Informed by data, the Platform will continue to collaborate closely with local partners to create sustainable, resilient solutions that align with both ecological goals and community needs. The Platform's participatory approach to proposal development responds to increasing donor interest in supporting community-led initiatives, and the African NBT Platform is connecting these donors with local organizations. These collaborations integrate community knowledge, promote equitable benefits, and nurture sustainable livelihoods, yielding tangible outcomes that benefit both communities and ecosystems while building resilience to future shocks and stressors.



¹IUCN ESARO. Closing the gap. The financing and resourcing of protected and conserved areas in Eastern and Southern Africa. (2020). Nairobi, Kenya: IUCN ESARO; BIOPAMA.²IUCN ESARO. Closing the gap.³Lindsey, et al. "Conserving Africa's wildlife and wildlands through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond." Donor Statement on Supporting Locally Led Development." USAID - United States Agency for International Development, <https://www.usaid.gov/localization/donor-statement-on-supporting-locally-led-development>.⁴Nature-Based Tourism Africa. (2022). Case Study: Enhancing Nature-Based Tourism in Kenya and Namibia.



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