The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) has turned a camera in its efforts to raise awareness in support of conservation in the 21st Century and beyond. The organization has undergone several drastic changes in its leadership between 1994 and 2004. These changes affected the organization’s financial position and its ability to generate sufficient revenue to meet Kenya’s conservation agenda.

The pre-2004 period was characterized by ineffective financial management: procedures leading to gross mismanagement and loss of revenue. The manual systems hindered the capacity to deal with the financial requirements of the organization. Evidence from the financial reports depicts this gloomy picture. The most telling situation was that of net income, which indicated that, in the seven-year period from 1997 to 2004, KWS recorded a consistent deficit position of KSh65 million at its lowest in 1998 and KSh50 million at its highest in 1999.

KWS traces the roots of its financial recovery to the appointment of a new Director in December 2004, Mr. Julius Kipng’etich, and renewed Government support. The first step to addressing the organization’s situation was the development of the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan to strengthen institutional capacity, among other key objectives.

The ultimate aim was to ensure that fully qualified accountants managed each of the eight regions. Dr. Kipng’etich observed, “We needed to make sure that we were able to achieve our primary mandate of conserving Kenya’s wildlife and to do so with our cash inflows needed to be reliable and sufficient.”

As the revenue collection and management improved, the self-generated revenue from the Strategic Plan of 2005-2010 was being achieved. Indeed, during the mid-term review of its 2009-2010 Strategic Plan in 2008, it emerged that 80% of the targets had been achieved ahead of schedule. This, informed the development of the second Strategic Plan whose objectives were now geared towards growing the movement.

Almost halfway to the end of the Strategic Plan 2005-2010, it was noted that we had accomplished over 80% of the targets set. The new plan is premised on an additional three drivers: People, Technology and Image, which are aligned to the country’s Vision 2030 development blueprint.

Perspectives
The Strategic Plan 2008-2013, which used the Balance Score Card: Performance Management tool, had one of its four perspectives being “Assuring financial sustainability.” The new objective was focused on enhancing resource mobilization, diversification of revenue streams and growth as well as effective and efficient management of resources and strengthening the devolution of financial management to parks and regional offices. Some of the key financial achievements under the new plan include the creation of the Kenya Wildlife Service Fund (the Endowment Fund).

The Fund is designed to provide reliable, consistent funding, despite the fluctuating tourism income, unpredictable national political environments, or the vagaries of international economics. Therefore, the Fund is expected to support wildlife and community conservation efforts over future generations.

The Fund’s goal is to raise KSh4 billion (US$40 million) over a decade. Therefore, at an assumed interest rate of 18% a year, KSh375 million (about US$3.5 million) will then be available per year for conservation activities.

This sum is but a fraction of the cost of equitable representation and conservation today — but will still be invaluable particularly when tourism earnings clip and ensure sustainability,” said Mr. Edwin Waruiyinyi, Head of Resource Mobilization.

The other new approach includes the commercializarion of the Air Wing based at Wilson Airport, Nairobi, so that the KWS aircraft to third parties and undertake repair and maintenance of third-party aircraft. This would ensure that when the aircraft are not in use for park patrols, they could also generate revenue.

In order that visitors to national parks appreciate the role their park entry fees play, it was renamed “Conservation fees.” The change of the name was to reflect the purpose of charging the fee and extend customers to the wildlife conservation as a world heritage. This was also followed by differentiated pricing approach in the parks facilities. Leases of lands in national parks were also reviewed and rationalized.

Another resource mobilization strategy was the creation of innovative conservation fan-funded fundraising events. They include “20 Kilos Case on a Wheelbarrow,” “Cycle with the Rhino,” and “Kilimanjaro Mt. Climb for Conservation.”

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Sponsorship
The support goes directly into the upkeep of the animals by providing food, medical care, transport, education, and other costs. From every sponsorship received, 10% goes directly to the Kenya Wildlife Service Fund, whose objective is to provide a sustainable source of funding for wildlife conservation and its habitats.

Other financial sustainability initiatives include commercialization of the KWS Law Enforcement Academy in Narok county so as to maintain the region from the KWS Wildlife Service Fund, whose objective is to provide a sustainable source of funding for wildlife conservation and its habitats.

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