

Conserving and managing Kenya's wildlife



Mr. William K. Kiprono , Director - KWS



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Q. Kindly explain your organization's mandate.

Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is an agency of government with the mandate to conserve and manage wildlife.

The organisation has a broad mandate which includes providing security for visitors and wildlife. It also oversees wildlife conservation and management across the country, stewardship of national parks and reserves, conservation education and training and wildlife research. KWS also contributes to national wildlife-related law and policy as well as adopts and implements international conventions and protocols.

Q. How does the organisation plan to achieve its set objectives and goals?

KWS is guided by its Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017 titled "Strategy 2.0" which gives us focus and direction for the next five years. We will implement it in four-phases which involve translating the strategic plan into operational terms. In the wake of numerous

challenges - climate change, loss of wildlife habitat, regional insecurity, natural calamities such as droughts and floods, upsurge in wildlife crime, volatile economy and political instabilities – Strategy 2.0 helps set the stage for us to do what we are mandated do namely, conserve Kenya's wildlife heritage.

Q. How would you describe your style of leadership?

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Q. How do you get staff to work together as a team?

Employees are our most valued assets – 'People Excellence' is one of the pillars of our new Strategic Plan. By providing an enabling and conducive working environment, we enable our staff to tap into their full potential thereby encouraging innovation.

Q. Explain how your leadership has helped transform the organisation.

I am proud to say that when I joined KWS, the organisation was already on the road to transformation. This has made my job easier as I now focus on taking KWS from 'Good' to 'Great'. In order to do this, I have focused on streamlining communication structures to emphasize the role of the field staff with the headquarters team providing more support. This has required a culture transformation to ensure that staff are inculcated in the right values of Passion, Innovation, Professionalism and Quality.

Q. What is your vision for the organisation and how are you going about realising it?

Our shared vision as KWS is to 'Save the last great species and places on Earth for humanity'. Spaces left for wildlife are diminishing and communities and wildlife are competing for dwindling resources. If left unchecked, we may find ourselves in a situation where future generations will learn about their heritage in books or in zoos as is the case in many Western nations.

This means that we have to provide incentives for communities living near wildlife protected areas to protect our natural heritage. In order to do this, we have increased our community projects support budget to Ksh150 million a year.

We have also worked towards aggressively marketing our national parks and reserves to Kenyans for them to appreciate their heritage. It is only by Kenyans feeling a connection with wildlife that they will feel a sense of ownership and move to conserve it.

Q. How is your vision aligned to the organisation's mission?

The KWS vision is carefully tied to the mission to 'Sustainably conserve, manage and enhance Kenya's wildlife, its habitats and provide a wide range of public uses in collaboration with stakeholders for posterity'. KWS has aligned its actions to growth priorities outlined in the national development blueprint Vision 2030. In this document, KWS is charged with the mandate of acquiring more space for wildlife, species management, development of infrastructure, in particular roads and with

increasing Kenya's competitive edge as a tourist destination.

Q. Specifically, what strategies did you implement to bring about this change?

Strategy is about focusing on the important areas that will bring about a huge impact in the organisation. In the 2005 – 2010 period, we focused on market presence, use of science to drive park management and use of the right information. In 2008 – 2012, focus shifted to having the right people, promoting our image and leveraging technology to drive park management. In our current strategic plan, we are now focusing on our core business which is conservation, having the right people and working with communities and other stakeholders through strategic partnerships since a significant population of our wildlife is found outside protected areas.

Q. Can you put your team's achievements in perspective considering how far the organisation has come?

Since taking over the organisation, KWS has seen a number of milestones that include:

- A marked increase in the population of species as a result of species conservation and management plans for some of the endangered species such as Grevy's zebra, sable antelopes, lions, cheetahs to name but a few.
- Even with the current upsurge in poaching, Kenya has been able to nurture its rhino populations to the 3rd largest in the world and its elephant population to be the 4th largest in the world. With this growth in numbers, our target is to have 2,000 rhinos and 50,000 elephants in the wild by 2030.
- Park revenue has significantly grown. This has helped in funding the operations of the Service which are heavily cash intensive.
- Staff welfare has not been left out with improved staff housing and remuneration taking centre stage.
- Service modernisation – Through the provision of better equipment, uniforms and cutting edge training for our disciplined forces and benchmarking with the best globally.

Q. What would you want to be remembered as your legacy at KWS?

As a director who confronted poaching head on and brought it to an end and one who built and maintained a cohesive team.

Q. What measures have you put in place to ensure the foundation of success you laid is not destroyed?

There is a proper succession plan in place and even if I were to leave, the organisation would continue to function. I have also put in place strong management systems guided by policies and procedures that ensure the core functioning of the organisation runs



Cheetah cubs at one of the National Parks

smoothly regardless of the top leadership. KWS is also ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management Systems (QMS) certified.

Q. With the discovery of oil in Kenya how is it likely to change the business outlook?

We expect infrastructure, especially roads, to improve drastically. This will open up tourism in areas that were previously not well visited. Visitor numbers will thus increase and this will be good for our country.

Q. What would you wish to see more improved in your business environment by the government to fast track growth?

Infrastructure development, general security, and aggressive marketing of our country as a preferred tourist destination. Increased funding for scientific research and wildlife protection is particularly important to KWS since conservation is an expensive business.

Q. How important has been ICT to your business growth?

For organizations to remain competitive, they need to invest in technology which has become a major business driver. Globalisation has dramatically increased competition so that one competes against world leaders. In order to remain competitive, KWS has heavily invested in ICT so as to improve operations as well as communication. ICT has helped in improving our efficiency and effectiveness in revenue collection, entering of new tourist markets, communication with our customers and working with our stakeholders and partners.

Q. What is the one thing that inspires you as a leader and would thus encourage the persons who see you as their role model to look up to you for inspiration?

I believe in looking at challenges as opportunities and the trust bestowed on me to look after our treasured resource.

Q. Any other comment?

We shall endeavour to create public awareness and foster partnerships with stakeholders and development partners to support our conservation efforts. I also appeal to citizens of the world to participate positively in conservation agenda.

