

Unlocking the ecological value of Mukutan Conservancy to benefit local communities

Beneficiary: Fauna & Flora International
Location: Kenya, Africa
Grant Cycle: 2023 - 2026
Type of Grant: three-year program support
Animal Welfare & Protection
Website: fauna-flora.org

Established in 1903, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) is the world's oldest international conservation organisation. For more than 120 years FFI has been working with its partners around the world to protect and conserve threatened species and ecosystems. The Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation's commitment to protecting the environment dates back to its founding in 2000 and Flora & Fauna was one of the first organisations the Foundation partnered with to help preserve the world's biodiversity. Since 2001, the NaEPF has worked with Flora & Fauna on several projects, and in 2023 the NaEPF renewed its support for the organisation with a grant of over EUR 3 million that will fund six new projects to preserve the environment and biodiversity worldwide. Mukutan Conservancy spans 88,000 acres of indigenous woodland, forest and savanna, and is the cornerstone of the wildlife and resource-rich Laikipia County that overlooks the Great Rift Valley in Kenya. Mukutan plays a key role in maintaining connectivity across the wider landscape, and it is widely recognised for its floristic diversity (including over 200 indigenous plant species, such as Kenya's last remaining stands of native cedar forests). It also supports abundant fauna, with around 4,800 recorded bird species and healthy populations of elephants and lions. However, the conservancy has faced a range of challenges over the last ten years, including poaching and land incursions, and has seen a subsequent loss of flagship species such as black rhinos. The region is home to a diverse mix of indigenous communities, who hold great potential for preserving the Mukutan Conservancy's ecosystem. Mukutan supports local enterprises, such as

essential oils production, avocado and organic herb farming, which generate an income for local farmers, women and elders all of whom have traditional knowledge of the region and its goods. Mukutan has also developed a community grazing and fattening scheme to support local pastoralists. They have also developed a climate-change resilient grazing management plan for the whole landscape, which will reduce conflict over natural resources. Since 2019, Fauna & Flora International and Mukutan have been working in partnership to realise the potential of the Conservancy. Over the last four years, FFI has committed to technical support, institutional capacity building and fundraising support. Most recently, this has included support for the development of a land management plan to help address grazing pressure; the gathering of socio-economic baseline information from neighbouring communities to inform inclusive engagement plans; capacity building through support for key positions such as the Community Engagement Officer; and support to develop the local enterprises. However, there is still more to do to maximise the delivery of social, economic and ecological benefits.

The funding from the **Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation** will help local communities and Mukutan Conservancy to work together to design inclusive methods of land use that allow and encourage economic development, whilst simultaneously providing conservation space for the benefit of flagship and other species.