



COVID-19
R E S P O N S E
IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa

The background of the slide features a blue gradient with several 3D rendered virus particles. These particles are spherical with numerous green, cone-shaped spikes protruding from their surfaces. They are scattered across the slide, with some appearing larger and more detailed than others, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Building Resilience for Nature and People

IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa COVID-19 Response

Urgent action is needed in both the short and long term to make societies more resilient to the impacts of the economic, social and environmental changes due to COVID-19



The COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in global lockdowns, succeeded by unprecedented economic shocks and human society weathering an existential crisis. The crisis further magnified by the already existing drastic environmental challenges including the impacts of climate change, land degradation, growing water shortages and the loss of important plants and animals, puts millions of lives and economies at stake – perhaps none more so than those in Eastern and Southern Africa. Acknowledging that the resilience of the global economy is intricately linked with the state of the environment, IUCN ESARO believes that urgent action is needed in both the short and long term to make societies more resilient to the impacts of the economic, social and environmental changes.



This document highlights IUCN's efforts in Eastern and Southern Africa, working with governments, members, communities and partners to embed environmental considerations into their responses.

THE CONTEXT

The pandemic is affecting African countries differently given their varied strengths and vulnerabilities. While it is too early to know the full impact of COVID-19 on Africa, at a macro-level, nearly all countries are struggling given reductions in foreign direct investments, reduced inflows of remittances and foreign aid, and lower overall earnings¹. At the national level, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is on average projected to contract by 4% , while most governments face reduced tax revenues and devalued currencies. This is resulting in severe budget deficits and knock-on effects on economies and livelihoods. In Eastern and Southern Africa, quarantine lockdowns, movement restrictions and the resultant loss of jobs are a matter of survival for the majority; 70% youth and poor households who are totally dependent on daily wages for subsistence.

Like elsewhere in the world, the COVID-19 crisis has brought into sharp focus the fragility of environmental management and conservation efforts in Africa and exposed many shortcomings². A majority of conservation areas where the primary source of revenue has been nature-based tourism and hospitality services have experienced drastic declines. Rural communities dependent on this industry have been hard hit as jobs, supply contracts, conservation lease fees and other benefit streams have dried up. Similar impacts are visible in other natural resource dependent communities including artisanal fishers who have experienced restrictions on movement and night fishing activities.



In a number of countries (most already struggling from economic downturn), pandemic containment measures have tested and stretched governments' capacity to institute and sustain appropriate relief support for vulnerable communities and households. Closure of livestock and other nature-based product markets has made it difficult for rural communities to trade, thus exacerbating household poverty among vulnerable households. Furthermore, a large number of people who either lost their jobs or those fleeing the COVID impacts in crowded cities returned to the rural land thus increasing the pressures and the numbers in these households. Consequently, there have been reports of increase in illegal offtake of bushmeat and notable encroachment in forest conservation areas for illegal firewood harvesting and timber extraction as incomes dwindle. Moreover, conflicts over scarce resources, including water and pasture, are on the rise as COVID-19 restrictions disrupt seasonal movement patterns and resource access agreements.

Indeed, the COVID-19 crisis has brought into focus the underlying financing and resourcing challenges facing environmental management and conservation across the countries of Eastern and Southern Africa². The need to diversify revenues and innovate around increasing locally-generated opportunities and developing more diversified and sustainable financing mechanisms is more urgent than ever.

A crisis, especially one of this intensity, inspires reflection and evokes difficult questions. Beyond the human tragedy, much attention has turned towards humanity's relationship with the natural world and the negative impact of our activities.

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As a short gap measure, IUCN ESARO was able to directly deploy up to USD 1.7m in response to COVID-19 through re-programming of its portfolio and provision of emergency grants funds and another USD 2.4m indirectly through the creation of 8,700 jobs over a 3 month period through restoration programmes.

1. Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the African Economy (African Union, 2020); <https://icsb.org/covid19ontheafricaneconomy/>

2. Lindsey, P., Allan, J., Brehony, P. et al. Conserving Africa's wildlife and wildlands through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. *Nat Ecol Evol* (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-020-1275-6>

COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Our COVID-19 response in Eastern and Southern Africa is focused on 4 areas:
Conserving nature for a resilient future;
Promoting good governance of nature;
Deploying nature-based solutions and
Fostering collaboration for collective action.**

Response 1:

Conserving Nature:

While the COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis, its impact is more than just a health and humanitarian crisis. COVID-19 has negatively impacted Africa's economies and the livelihoods of people who are heavily dependent on Nature for food, water, energy and incomes derived from tourism and its supply chains.

Africa's rich and unique natural heritage includes a wide range of landscapes and seascapes, ecosystems and species, including many centres of endemism mostly preserved by protected and conserved areas. Conserved and protected areas (including Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas) safeguard Africa's wildlife, conserve biodiversity, provide ecosystem services and support sustainable development and human well-being. Diverse plant and animal species provide life-supporting ecosystem services and defence against the spread of zoonotic diseases; supporting national economies and local livelihoods.

Sadly, measures put in place to control the spread of the pandemic have impacted protected areas through loss of revenues, forcing a downscaling of operations potentially leading to rise in illegal activities and human-wildlife conflicts and a loss of local jobs.

IUCN's response to these emerging challenges is focused on:

Emergency response grants

- Channelling emergency rapid response grants amounting to more than €50,000 each to help support the resilience of protected areas and the local communities dependent on them.
- Assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on conservation activities in protected and conserved areas, while providing technical advice for development of appropriate response strategies.

Conservation Finance

- Promoting and catalysing more diversified, resilient and sustainable protected area and biodiversity conservation financing and resourcing models focused on the COVID-19 stabilization and recovery phase, using available resources (such as the Closing the Gap – Financing and Resourcing of Protected Areas in Eastern and Southern Africa) and associated awareness-raising and capacity building activities, including planned investors' roundtables.



Response 2:

Good Governance of Nature

The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the functioning of many governance structures especially state capacity to provide public services. The collapse of local economies and livelihoods equally affects the effectiveness of community governance structures to deal with increased inequality, social distress and lawlessness.

IUCN believes that good governance is a necessary foundation for a just world that values and conserves nature and to the achievement of the global Sustainable Development Goals. IUCN ESARO's response is focused on stabilising and promoting effective and equitable mechanisms for natural resource governance during these challenging times by:

Natural resource governance at community level

- Enhancing the capacity of various community natural resource governance structures in Mozambique, Seychelles and Kenya including local community organisations, fishing councils and conservation associations to secure rights and share power for the benefits of people and biodiversity.
- Empowering local communities to enforce their by-laws, manage and control access and use of the natural resources on which they depend for their livelihoods and survival in Uganda.



Mainstreaming rights & biodiversity into recovery planning

- Prioritising rights-based approaches (RBA) for economic and social inclusion and enhancing economic opportunities for poor and marginalised communities in Uganda
- Supporting the mainstreaming of RBA into natural resources management in the recovery planning processes and facilitating equitable community-private sector engagements to create new investments and inclusive access to finance for sustainable business and ecosystem management in Tanzania and Mozambique.

A gender-responsive approach to the recovery

- Promoting gender equality throughout our portfolio for better environmental outcomes by working with Community-Based Organisations and Civil Society Organisations engaged in communication and advocacy activities to support prevention, protection and response to Gender-Based Violence at this unusually vulnerable time.

Multi-actor cooperation

- Convening stakeholders from multiple sectors across Eastern and Southern Africa including government, civil society and private sector to strengthen natural resource governance by securing rights and sharing power.

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Response 3:

Deploying Nature-based Solutions

COVID-19 demonstrably exacerbates the ongoing impacts of climate change, food and water insecurity causing enormous hardship and suffering. Nature-based solutions are a powerful ally to address these societal challenges through the application of interventions which use nature and the natural functions of healthy ecosystems to benefit both biodiversity and human well-being by increasing resilience to current and future crises. IUCN ESARO's response is focused on:

Nature-based recovery plans

- Supporting the incorporation of nature-based solutions to recovery plans by encouraging governments across Eastern and Southern Africa to mainstream environmental value through accounting for natural capital and investing in ecosystem protection and restoration.
- Promoting the adoption and application of IUCN's new Nature-based Solutions standard to help turn theory into practice across our areas of operation.

Green infrastructure

- Promoting nature-based 'green' infrastructure in recovery programmes in Rwanda and South Africa so as to simultaneously address the impacts of climate-related disasters and improve quality of life through job creation.

Ecosystem-based adaptation

- Scaling up tried and tested workable models of nature-based solutions such as ecosystem based adaptation in Kenya, restoring forest landscapes in Rwanda and building drought resilience to stimulate economic growth in Kenya & Uganda.



Response 4:

Fostering Collaboration for Collective Action:

The COVID-19 crisis exacerbates existing inequalities within and between countries and communities, while exposing how vulnerable our socio-economic systems are to external shocks.

Recognizing the interdependencies between human and environmental health, IUCN ESARO's response focuses on enabling business, government, civil society, communities and other actors to advance shared goals and achieve results at scale by working together through innovative partnerships that inspire action for conservation while protecting the most vulnerable. This includes:

Inclusive platforms and forums

- Catalyzing conversations around specific initiatives aimed towards building action to create lasting change and sharing learning from these experiences. Organizing dialogues and debate on some of the most pressing issues of the time and bringing together a wide range of actors from a wide range of sectors including youth, women, indigenous peoples and local communities.

Develop targeted responses to COVID-19 at country and regional levels

- Engaging SADC and EAC, governments of Eastern & Southern Africa, development partners, private sector, academic institutions, media, IUCN Members and Commissions on potential solutions for COVID relief and recovery efforts by leveraging collective knowledge and resources for collective action.

IUCN ESARO

IUCN – the International Union for the conservation of Nature is the largest global environmental organisation that has been finding pragmatic Solution to the most pressing environmental and development challenges.

In the Region of Eastern and Southern Africa (ESARO) through the One Programme approach, IUCN offers the unique opportunity for IUCN members, Commissions and Secretariat to use their collective strength to address the environmental and development issues in the region.

Through the region wide membership, IUCN builds links between countries in the region and more broadly in Africa and the rest of the world through experience sharing, convening multi stakeholder platforms for consensus building and facilitation of transboundary processes.

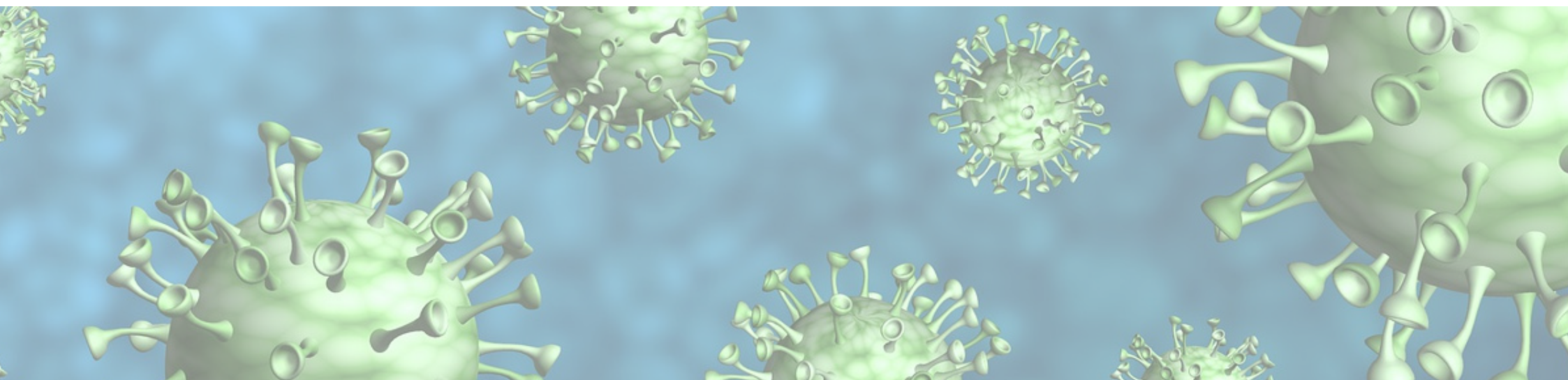
IUCN membership includes states, government agencies, conservation and development organisation and individuals as members of commissions interested in environmental management and conservation of natural resources.

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For more information:

<https://www.iucn.org/resources/covid-19-resources>



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