



**UMOJA WILDLIFE
CONSERVANCIES**
OF UGANDA

Strategic Plan
2024-2028



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This strategic plan was facilitated by Maliasili with support from the African Nature Based Tourism Platform

Letter from the Chairman of the Executive Board

We are excited and enthused by the groundbreaking strides taken in ushering in the concept of conservancies in Uganda. This approach to community conservation holds immense promise, not only for the conservation and protection of our rich natural heritage but also for the empowerment of landowners and local communities who share their land with wildlife.



I extend deep gratitude to the Uganda Wildlife Authority, whose recommendation paved the way for the registration of Umoja as a pioneering organization driving the development of conservancies in our nation. Umoja has fervently championed the mobilization and sensitization of landowners, setting the stage for a more harmonious relationship between people and wildlife.

I extend heartfelt thanks to the Africa Nature-Based Tourism Platform for their unwavering belief in our mission and for sowing the very first financial seed into Umoja. This critical support has not only propelled Umoja off the ground but has also supplemented Maliasili's timely support in the process to formulate our inaugural strategic plan. With more support like this and through partnership, Umoja will be able to serve as a pillar of guidance for conservancies across Uganda, ensuring their growth and self-sufficiency.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our esteemed Executive and Advisory board members. With a shared vision of fostering thriving conservancies in Uganda, they have offered unyielding support and strategic insights that continue to guide our path. I would also like to acknowledge the financial contributions made by Umoja members and well-wishers, which serves as a testament to their belief in Umoja's work and their commitment to making a positive impact. Such contributions, often from personal resources, are a powerful indication of the support and trust that the broader community has in Umoja's work.

With the unveiling of this strategic plan, I am filled with confidence that wildlife conservation beyond protected areas will flourish. As the concept of conservancies takes root in Uganda, landowners and the wider community will directly reap the benefits of coexisting with wildlife on their lands. This plan represents our collective commitment to forging a future where the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature thrives, creating a sustainable legacy for generations to come.

On behalf of the Umoja Board, we look forward to your collaborative partnerships as we embark on this transformative journey together.

LOKIRU DOMINIC CLINTON

Board Chairperson

Umoja Wildlife Conservancies Uganda



Letter from the CEO



This strategic plan serves as a compass, directing community groups and conservancies towards effective implementation of sustainable land use practices that harmonize with wildlife conservation. The strategic plan is a culmination of pooled resources, knowledge, and technical guidance from conservancy leaders, conservation experts, and partners committed to nurturing community-led conservation initiatives.



The Uganda Land Act of 1998 section 15 and 23 lays a pathway for the formation of communal land associations by groups of individuals, as well as the establishment of areas designated for shared land use, including wildlife-based industries such as sport hunting. Additionally, the Uganda Wildlife Act of 2019 extends provisions for acquiring permits that grant classes of wildlife use rights, such as ranching. These provisions, if well implemented, will ensure that benefits from wildlife will accrue to communities and landowners who opt for wildlife conservation as their land use choice.

Operationalizing our strategic plan hinges on three pivotal program areas. First, the establishment of sustainable and functional conservancies in Uganda that yield tangible benefits. Second, the recognition of conservancies as a viable wildlife land-use option for communities and private landowners. Third, institutionalizing management of wildlife outside protected areas through the establishment of a robust, cohesive, and empowered UMOJA to act as a platform to realize benefits from wildlife management.

As the prominence of conservancies grows within Uganda, Umoja remains steadfast in our belief that this approach to wildlife management will tangibly curtail poaching, alleviate human-wildlife conflicts, and amplify the benefits reaped from wildlife by local communities. This strategic plan fuels hope that Umoja will empower conservancies and those aspiring to adopt similar models, facilitating resource management that benefits both people and wildlife.

The endeavor to promote conservancies as a form of wildlife management in Uganda is a monumental one, which requires collaborative efforts. We extend a call to action to partners across government ministries, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), donor organizations, missions, civil society groups, corporate entities, and individuals to join us on this journey towards realizing functional conservancies throughout Uganda.

Developing a strategic plan is a laborious and painstaking process. It necessitates financial resources and skilled personnel. I extend profound gratitude for the financial and logistical support from the African Nature-Based Tourism Platform, the technical support and guidance from Maliasili, as well as the contributions of all those involved at different stages in the process.

Together, we embark on a journey that not only promotes community wildlife conservation in Uganda but also sets a transformative course for the coexistence of communities and wildlife.

For People and Wildlife

Walter Raleigh Odokorwot

Chief Executive Officer

Umoja Wildlife Conservancies of Uganda

Executive Summary

Umoja Wildlife Conservancies of Uganda (Umoja), established in 2021, is the overarching organization for conservancies in Uganda.

Its core mission is to strengthen the capacity of communities to conserve, manage and benefit from wildlife on their land. Additionally, it serves as the unifying voice for communities in policy and advocacy, promoting a vision of community conservation that is rooted in the principles of unity, livelihood improvement, wildlife conservation, coexistence, strong local institutions, and the preservation of traditional cultural practices.



Despite the increasing momentum behind the conservancy approach to wildlife management in Uganda, several challenges persist. Notably, there is a widespread lack of awareness regarding community participation in wildlife management and conservancies as a viable land use option, human-wildlife conflict and the absence of effective benefit-sharing mechanisms threatens the long-term sustainability of conservancies as a solution for land use and wildlife management.

Umoja engages these challenges and the evolving landscape of community conservation in Uganda by focusing on three pivotal shifts. These shifts encompass structural, relational, and mindset changes, all directed towards bolstering the conservancy network and benefiting both communities and wildlife.

To achieve these shifts and cultivate thriving wildlife conservancies in Uganda, Umoja will focus on 4 goals over the next three years:

- 1 Establish sustainable and functional conservancies that yield tangible benefits.
- 2 Secure recognition of conservancies as a viable land use model.
- 3 Foster increased institutional partnerships and collaborations to fortify the mission of conservancies.
- 4 Build a strong, well-established and coordinated organization.

Through these efforts, Umoja endeavors to overcome the historical limitations and drive conservancies' growth, development, and sustainability, ultimately providing significant benefits to communities and the environment.



About Umoja

Umoja is a not-for-profit organization that acts as an umbrella body for conservancies in Uganda.

Since 2021, UMOJA has been engaged in building the capacity of conservancies, raising conservation awareness, and providing support to communities and landowners who want to conserve wildlife on their land.

In Uganda, conservation policy and management has largely focused on government institutions to conserve wildlife in the country. It is silent about active community participation in wildlife management, yet important wildlife populations reside outside protected areas where their existence is threatened due to fast changing land use in favor of agriculture. Poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and lack of tangible benefits from wildlife are additional threats to wildlife outside protected areas.

Umoja believes that community conservation is about uniting communities in the name of conservation to have one voice in policy dialogue and advocacy, to improve livelihoods and promote coexistence, and to strengthen the capacity of local institutions while preserving traditional cultural practices. Umoja does this by promoting the conservancy model as a way for communities and landowners who share their land with wildlife to take a lead role in conservation. By building the capacity of private landowners and communities, and acting as a platform for knowledge development, sharing, and multi-stakeholder dialogue, Umoja focuses on strengthening conservancies in Uganda. As proof of the popularity of this approach and the role of Umoja, there has been remarkable growth in the number of conservancies from 3 in 2021 to 18 by the end of 2022.

A brief description of conservancies in Uganda

What does “conservancy” mean in Uganda?

A conservancy is a governance and management framework (or approach) to land stewardship. In a conservancy, identified members of a community, a group of landowners, or individual landowners, take on the responsibility of managing and caring for a defined area of land where the primary purpose is wildlife conservation and compatible land uses that improve livelihoods. In this context, conservancies entail a collective effort to protect the environment, promote wildlife conservation, and enhance the well-being of the land owners.

Conservancies are supported by two key legal frameworks. First, the Land Act of 1998 enables any group of individuals to establish a communal land association. This association is designed to facilitate communal ownership, management, and utilization of land for initiatives related to sustainable land use. This legal provision supports the formation of structures that enable collaborative conservation efforts, including wildlife conservation. Second, the Wildlife Act of 2019 outlines regulations for wildlife utilization across Uganda. It underscores the importance of sustainable wildlife utilization for the overall benefit of the people of Uganda.

The concept of a conservancy has also grown from historical roots in Uganda’s ethnic communities. Traditionally, some communities sustained what might be considered a traditional form of a conservancy as tribal hunting grounds under the management and supervision of cultural leaders and chiefs. Conservancies therefore build on a long-standing tradition of responsible land use and conservation management.

Overall, conservancies in Uganda encompass a combination of traditional practices and modern legal frameworks that emphasize collaborative wildlife management alongside livelihoods and well-being.

Before the colonial era, Ugandans practiced conservation through the leadership of clans and local chiefs. These historical conservation practices gradually diminished in prominence when the colonial government established protected areas and embraced a fortress conservation model, introducing a separation between wildlife and people. This approach stripped traditional leaders of their authority over wildlife management within their territories. Concurrently, the government bodies that took responsibility for conserving wildlife primarily focused on safeguarding protected areas, paying limited attention to wildlife residing outside these designated zones. This led to a surge in challenges such as poaching, illicit wildlife trade, and conflicts between people and wildlife.

The ineffectiveness of wildlife management outside protected areas led to critical gaps in both formal law enforcement and cultural sanctions, culminating in a significant decline in wildlife populations. Furthermore, the integrity of Uganda's protected areas has become increasingly compromised due to changing land use patterns in the neighboring communities and encroachments into wildlife corridors and dispersal areas. Since there was little benefit accruing to landowners from wildlife, it was largely viewed as a liability instead of an asset, leading to a lack of interest in wildlife conservation and management. With an increasing human population and need for more land to produce more food, wildlife had no place on private land. It had to be removed.

Umoja was established with the goal of addressing the lack of benefits from wildlife. This involves empowering communities as decision makers in the management and conservation of wildlife on their lands.

Umoja's hands-on experience has revealed that Ugandans inherently possess a conservationist ethos and are eager to engage in conservation efforts. More than 18 community groups, landowners, and individuals have registered their land as conservancies, aiming to rehabilitate wildlife populations and their habitats. A conservancy functions as a community-owned and community-operated institution, striving to enhance biodiversity conservation and land management to improve livelihoods.

With the vision of fostering community-led conservation in Uganda through conservancies, Umoja is enhancing communities' capacities to proficiently manage wildlife and other natural resources, address land degradation, and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. To realize these objectives, Umoja promotes the conservancy as a governance and management structure to facilitate effective wildlife

conservation. In its support to conservancies, Umoja also provides training and resources for community wildlife scouts to counteract illicit activities and implement community-based measures to mitigate human-wildlife conflict. Importantly, Umoja is fostering the development of tourism and conservation friendly enterprises based on wildlife and culture to ensure benefits accrue to landowners to help sustain their livelihoods.

Legal Framework for Conservancies in Uganda

Land Act 1998

- Section 15 (i) of Land Act: provides for the formation of a communal land association by any group of persons for any purpose connected with communal ownership and management of land, whether under customary law or otherwise.
- Section 23: provides for the establishment of areas of common land use where (1) an association may set aside areas of land for common use by members of the group with clearly recognized boundaries.
- Section 23 (3) (b): provides for communities setting aside land for the purpose of hunting.
- Umoja is using provisions in this Act to mobilize communities to form Wildlife Associations that are registered as conservancies along wildlife corridors and dispersal areas.

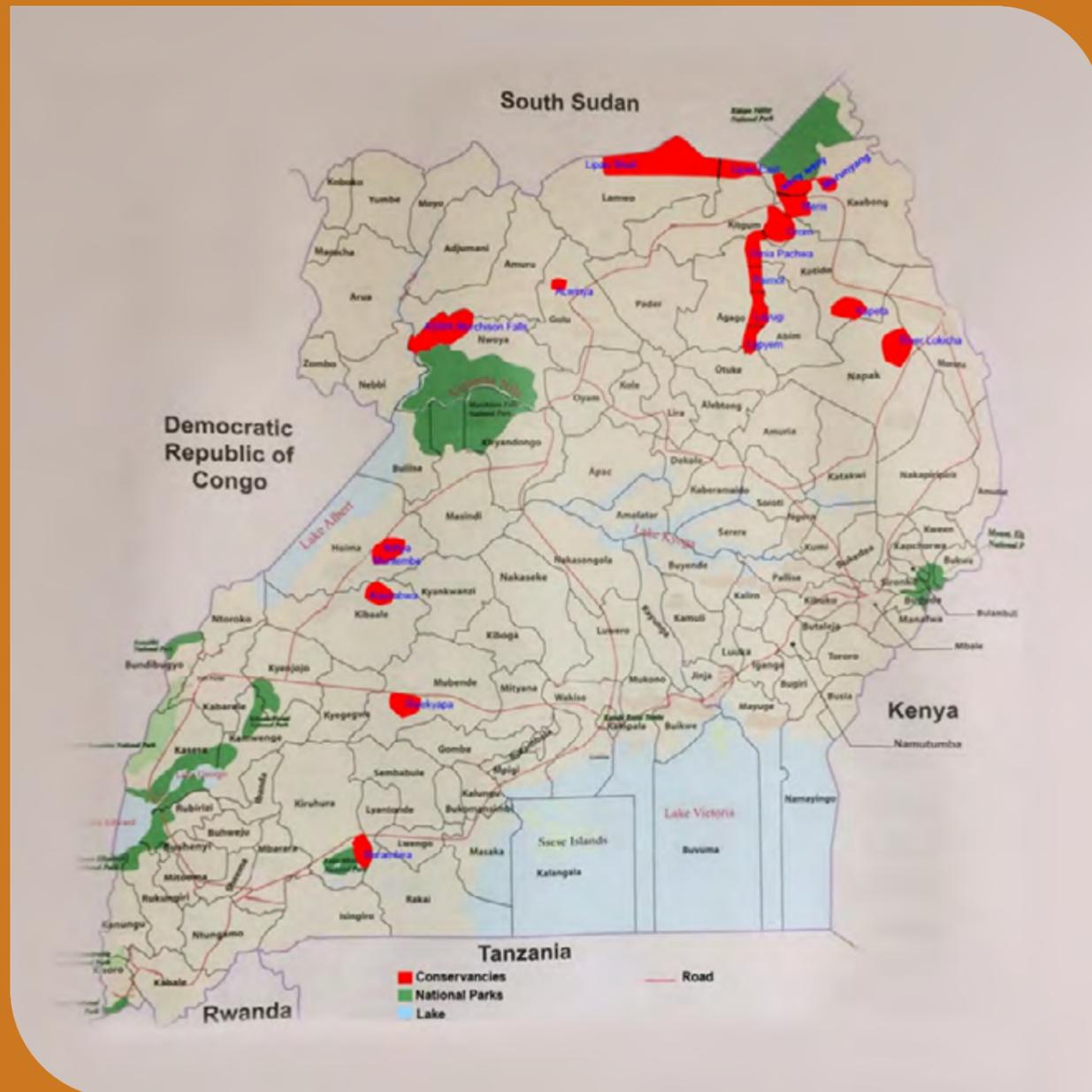
Wildlife Act 2019

- The purpose of the Wildlife Act 2019 is to provide for the conservation of wildlife throughout Uganda so that the abundance and diversity of species are maintained at optimum levels commensurate with other forms of land use to support sustainable utilization of wildlife for the benefit of the people of Uganda.
- Section 35 provides for classes of wildlife use rights. Upon successful management, a conservancy can obtain wildlife use right permits: class A for hunting, class B for farming, class C for ranching, and class H for wildlife tourism and recreation.

The National Environment Act 2019

- The National Environment Act, 2019 section 59: provides for the conservation of biological diversity. The Act provides for sustainable management of forests, hilly and mountainous areas, wetlands, riverbanks, lakeshores and natural beaches, all of which are habitats for wildlife.
- Section 59 (b): advocates for the integration of conservation and sustainable utilization of biological resources in activities by government and private persons.
- Section 60: emphasizes the in situ conservation of biological resources, and the compatibility of land use with the protection of species, ecosystems and habitats under threat.
- Section 60 further calls for the integration of traditional knowledge with mainstream scientific knowledge for conservation, and for the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded ecosystems to promote the recovery of threatened species.

Where we work



Kidepo

COMMUNITY CONSERVANCIES

- » Lapyem Wildlife Conservation Association
- » Layugi Wildlife Association
- » Paimol Conservancy Association
- » Bed Ki Gen Community Wildlife Association
- » Lipan East Conservancy Association
- » Wenyweny Conservancy Association
- » Morunyang Wildlife Association
- » Meris Conservancy Association
- » Kanopa Community Conservancy
- » Omia Pachwa
- » Kapeta Community Wildlife Association

Southern Karamoja

PRIVATE CONSERVANCIES

- » River Lokichar Conservancy

Murchison Falls

GROUP CONSERVANCIES

- » Murchison Aswa Falls Conservancy
- » Acwinya Wildlife Ranch

Lake Mbuero

GROUP CONSERVANCIES

- » Rurambira Conservancy

Bunyoro

PRIVATE CONSERVANCIES

- » Rwekyapa Agro Tourism.

GROUP CONSERVANCIES

- » Kayirabwa Chimpanzee conservancy
- » Itohya-Muntema Chimpanzee Ecotourism site

Umoja operates at a national level, focusing on areas with significant wildlife populations outside protected areas. This includes the vicinities of Kidepo, Murchison Falls, or Lake Mbuero national parks, as well as wildlife corridors and dispersal areas.

Currently, Umoja has 18 member conservancies across the country, eleven (11) of which are managed by communities, five (5) by groups of landowners, and the other two are managed privately. The total acreage of conservancies registered with Umoja is approximately 600,000 hectares.



Understanding the context

Community wildlife conservation in Uganda has, in recent years, gained traction. This is reflected by the growth of registered conservancies and initial successes are being seen, such as better mitigating human-wildlife conflict and improving livelihoods among conservancy members where tourism is taking place.



There is significant potential to increase the number of conservancies, and a number of opportunities to strengthen existing ones. At the same time, there are also ongoing challenges, both to conservation broadly and the ability of landowners and communities to engage in and benefit from conservation. To engage with these, Umoja will continue to grow into a strong and effective organization, and is uniquely positioned to ensure communities are supported to conserve wildlife and their habitats in ways that support sustainable livelihoods.

Opportunities for Umoja

- ▶ **Promote community wildlife conservation:** Uganda faces several challenges to wildlife conservation, including human-wildlife conflict, habitat destruction, and poaching, particularly in regions surrounding protected areas. Community conservation initiatives, which have worked in several African countries, are key approaches to address these challenges. Umoja has the opportunity to promote community-led conservation by mobilizing local communities for the conservation and management of wildlife on their land through conservancies. Umoja can actively engage with landowners, support them to establish conservancies, and then help to strengthen conservancies going forward. This will empower local communities and ensure that their knowledge, traditions, and needs are respected in conservation efforts. Similarly, by building support for locally-led conservation practices, Umoja can promote a sense of ownership and stewardship among local communities, address human wildlife conflict, thus fostering a connection between wildlife and economic benefits.
- ▶ **Increased support and funding for locally-led conservation:** There is global and regional momentum to support and increase funding for community-led conservation. This presents an opportunity for Umoja to expand conservancies in Uganda, strengthen local community capacity to manage wildlife, and support sustainable livelihoods through activities such as eco-tourism. The increase in support provides the opportunity for Umoja to scale up successful conservancies, turning them into flagship examples that other communities can learn from. This amplifies the positive impact across the region.
- ▶ **Strengthen the capacity of conservancies:** Community conservation has only started gaining traction in recent years, and many conservancies are nascent and lack the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively manage wildlife and natural resources. Similarly, many of these conservancies have weak governance structures, which could result in weak decision making and internal organizational conflict, along with ineffective wildlife management. Umoja has the opportunity to strengthen the newly established conservancies for sustainable conservation outcomes.
- ▶ **Foster alignment and collaboration among interest groups:** Umoja exists at the confluence of various interest groups, including local governments, the Uganda Wildlife Authority, and landowners and communities. Umoja has the opportunity to facilitate dialogue, catalyze the implementation of collaborative strategies and plans, and connect the different stakeholders and interest groups. This will ensure coordinated efforts, align priorities and interests, and support the equitable distribution of economic benefits.

- ▶ **Promote community-driven law enforcement:** When communities realize the benefits of community conservation, they will act in their interest to protect, conserve and manage wildlife effectively in order to reap the benefits. By strengthening conservancies, Umoja can support communities to adopt local law enforcement measures against poaching and natural resource destruction, thus contributing to government efforts.
- ▶ **Improve livelihoods:** The work of Umoja in promoting community management of wildlife and decision making at the local level has the potential to improve livelihoods where communities benefit from revenue sharing through community programs and conservancy-related enterprises. Conservancies can also support the delivery of important services such as health and education.

Challenges and threats to conservation in Uganda

- ▶ **Human-wildlife conflict:** This is a major challenge, exacerbated by habitat fragmentation, human population growth, and associated increased demand for agricultural and settlement land.
- ▶ **Changing land use:** Land ownership and use is shifting in many areas, and subsistence practices by communities are being replaced by large-scale mechanized agriculture. There is an increase in land acquisition and grabbing of communal land by affluent and politically connected members of society, specifically affecting wildlife dispersal areas in Karamoja, Acholi, Bunyoro, and Ankole. Communities themselves are also increasingly engaging in farming activities in important wildlife areas, due to the need to produce food for a fast-growing population. As farming continues, coupled with changes in weather resulting from climate change, wildlife habitat is converted, wildlife corridors are losing their viability, and human-wildlife conflict is increasing. Other threats to conservation include mining, oil and gas exploration, pipeline and infrastructure development.
- ▶ **Limited alternative livelihood options among communities with significant wildlife populations:** In many areas, communities are directly dependent on natural resources with activities such as hunting or charcoal burning being important supplements to local livelihoods. This impacts habitat and wildlife, and to lower this pressure they need access to alternative sources of income to reduce dependence on natural resources. Diverse economic opportunities and ways to benefit from wildlife are important, particularly for communities around protected areas
- ▶ **Population growth and change:** A rapidly growing and young population is looking for livelihoods, prioritizing immediate economic opportunities that may impact wildlife and where conservation is not a priority.
- ▶ **Negative attitudes towards wildlife:** Wildlife has always been considered property of the government with little or no incentive for communities to protect it. Where there are no direct benefits from wildlife, there is increasing conflict between communities and government on the management and benefits of wildlife on community land. Outside

protected areas, communities believe that if one does not take the wildlife, someone else will, and this leads to an increase in poaching. A rise in human-wildlife conflict also increases animosity between communities and the Uganda Wildlife Authority.

- ▶ **Insecure land tenure:** There are different land tenure systems around protected areas in different parts of Uganda. In the Kidepo and Murchison areas, people do not have secure rights to their land. Even on communal holdings, there needs to be consent from all stakeholders, which can often be challenging. Incentives need to be put in place for collectively establishing conservancies.
- ▶ **Fencing of protected areas:** The government is fencing protected areas using electric fences and trenches, restricting wildlife movement. This not only affects wildlife populations but also inhibits long-term coexistence. The conservancy model provides a way to conserve wildlife outside PAs.
- ▶ **Conflicts of interest in wildlife management:** Sport hunting concessions control some areas around protected areas, with communities hosting wildlife not directly receiving their share of benefits from sport hunting and hosting wildlife. As a result, communities may convert their land to more productive alternatives. As a result, conversion of land to more productive alternatives is inevitable.
- ▶ **Weak understanding of and implementation of policy:** Uganda's policies, including the Wildlife Act of 2019, provide opportunities for community engagement in conservation and for conservancies specifically. However, limited knowledge of and understanding of the policies and opportunities inhibits community participation in the conservation and management of wildlife on their land.
- ▶ **Climate change:** Climate change is a significant threat, changing the frequency and duration of rains which in turn affects the availability of water and pasture. This affects both people and wildlife, increasing pressure on certain areas and leading to more interaction and potential conflict.

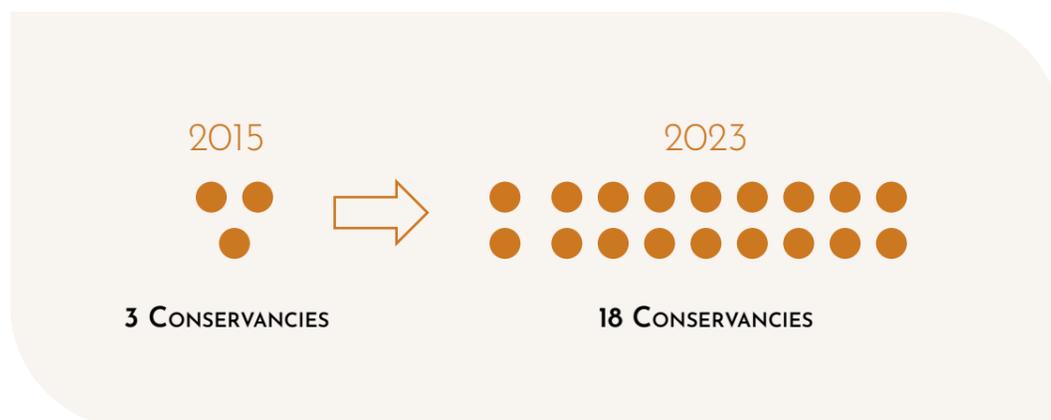


Organizational Strengths and Achievements

- ▶ **Stronger engagement and relationships with communities:** Umoja has successfully established and strengthened relationships with landowners and communities. By listening to their needs and aspirations, building trust and fostering a sense of unity and collaboration, Umoja has created a supportive network where landowners and community members can learn, share knowledge and resources, and collectively work together. Umoja has encouraged their active involvement in the conservation and management of wildlife and natural resources.

“We did not know what to do with our land because we could not grow crops. Some clan members wanted to sell. But when Umoja brought the conservancy idea, we agreed that it would work in our situation.”

- ▶ **Creating a sense of wildlife ownership and responsibility:** Through effective mobilization, Umoja has instilled a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members. They have developed a genuine interest in the well-being of their land and wildlife, taking pride in their role as custodians of the environment. This shared responsibility enhances the sustainability of conservation efforts and ensures long-term benefits for both people and wildlife.
- ▶ **Conservancy expansion:** Over the past decade, there has been a remarkable increase in the establishment of wildlife conservancies, from 3 in 2021 to a commendable 18 by 2022. Umoja has been a pivotal catalyst in this growth. The organization has been instrumental in raising awareness regarding the advantages of conservancies and in galvanizing landowners to proactively create conservancies as a pragmatic and sustainable land use option.



- ▶ **Stronger community capacity in natural resource management:** Umoja has actively strengthened conservancies. In the Albertine Rift region, for example, Umoja helped grow the capacity of the Kayirabwa Chimpanzee Conservancy in Kakumiro and the Itohya Munteme Chimpanzee Ecotourism Site near Hoima. This involved the establishment of tree nurseries, followed by the distribution of saplings to neighboring communities, and members of the conservancy proactively engaged in on-farm tree planting. These activities helped expand forest areas. By planting along strategic river banks, crucial corridors are being created to link otherwise isolated chimpanzee habitats. The Itohya Munteme Chimpanzee Ecotourism Site, a privately owned forest, is developing ecotourism and research in an increasingly isolated habitat due to sugar cane agriculture.
- ▶ **Reducing tension between communities and government:** Umoja’s efforts in advancing community-based human-wildlife conflict mitigation has helped reduce tensions between the Uganda Wildlife Authority and local communities. This approach has empowered individuals, enabling them to actively participate in minimizing instances of human-wildlife conflict. Within the Albertine Rift region, Umoja trained 58 community wildlife scouts in the vicinity of the Toro-Semiliki Wildlife Reserve in 2022. This was in response to a request by UWA, and as a result the frequency of reported human-wildlife conflict cases has notably decreased as communities are now better equipped to manage and resolve certain conflicts at the local level.
- ▶ **Protecting wildlife habitat through effective advocacy:** Umoja has been at the forefront of advocating for the protection of wildlife habitat, helping to curb the expansion of agriculture into crucial areas and by assisting communities in the rehabilitation of degraded areas. Preventing mechanized agricultural development in the Murchison Aswa Falls Conservancy is a pertinent example. In 2022, conservancy members observed extensive land clearing in their area, an important wildlife corridor within the former Aswa Lolim Game Reserve. The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF) was responsible for the clearing, aimed at facilitating agricultural mechanization. Recognizing the potential impact on wildlife and habitat, concerned conservancy members promptly approached Umoja to voice their concerns and seek intervention. Umoja engaged with MAAIF and other stakeholders such as the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), and the National Planning Authority (NPA), and a comprehensive assessment revealed that the land earmarked for agricultural mechanization was situated within a critical wildlife corridor and conservancy area. Umoja then successfully advocated for the suspension of the agricultural mechanization project, halting the potential habitat destruction while also demonstrating the pivotal role that community advocacy and collaboration with governmental bodies can play in safeguarding wildlife and natural spaces.
- ▶ **Expanding economic opportunities:** Umoja’s efforts have opened up economic opportunities for communities and landowners. By promoting sustainable land use practices, such as eco-tourism or community-based enterprises, Umoja has helped conservancies generate income and improve livelihoods. These tangible benefits incentivize communities to actively engage in conservation.

Organizational Challenges

- ▶ **Limited operational capacity:** As a young organization, Umoja has limited operational capacity. This affects its ability to effectively carry out activities and achieve its goals. Insufficient human resources leads to heavy workloads and difficulty managing and coordinating activities with the conservancies. Additionally, the lack of specialized skills or expertise in certain areas such as project management, fundraising, etc., hinders Umoja's impact and ability to seize opportunities.
- ▶ **Financial Resources:** Limited financial resources constrain Umoja's operations and restrict its ability to implement its activities effectively. Insufficient funding hinders the quality and scope of work, investment in equipment, and creates challenges in hiring and retaining qualified staff. The lack of financial stability also constrains Umoja's capacity to respond to emerging conservancy needs or take advantage of new opportunities.
- ▶ **Power dynamics and relationships with other institutions:** It's not uncommon for different institutions to perceive community-based initiatives like Umoja as potential threats or as having ulterior motives. Moreover, there may be concerns about political agendas or perceptions of being anti-government. Navigating power dynamics and establishing relationships with other institutions are crucial for Umoja's success. By consistently demonstrating its dedication to community-based conservation, transparent communication, collaboration, and a non-political agenda, Umoja can navigate power dynamics, foster positive relationships, and effectively contribute to its mission while gaining support from various stakeholders.
- ▶ **Legitimacy:** The legitimacy of Umoja's mandate may come into question until it can deliver tangible results and demonstrate its impact. Achieving legitimacy involves establishing a track record of effectiveness and building trust within the communities and with other stakeholders. By focusing on delivering concrete results, maintaining transparency, collaborative engagement, and continuously improving its approach, Umoja can build its legitimacy over time and gain more widespread support.



Strategic Framework

Vision ➤ Prosperous wildlife conservancies in Uganda

Mission ➤ To strengthen and empower conservancies in Uganda to deliver benefits to people and wildlife

Values

- ▶ **Integrity:** Umoja adheres to high ethical standards, honesty and transparency in its actions, and is committed to the responsible stewardship of wildlife and natural resources.
- ▶ **Making a difference:** Umoja is committed to conservation efforts that create a positive impact on natural resources and local communities.
- ▶ **Accountability:** Umoja ensures transparent governance and responsible management, and is accountable to local communities, stakeholders and relevant regulatory agencies.
- ▶ **Diversity and inclusion:** Umoja recognizes, embraces, and respects diversity of people, culture and voice.
- ▶ **Teamwork:** Umoja fosters a culture of collaboration, cooperation, mutual respect and shared responsibility. It recognizes the importance of leveraging diverse knowledge, skills and expertise to achieve its goals effectively.

Problem Statement

The conservancy approach to wildlife management in Uganda is new and beginning to gain traction. As the umbrella organization for conservancies, the key challenges facing Umoja are a lack of awareness of conservancies and appropriate benefit-sharing mechanisms to make conservancies a desirable and sustainable land use and wildlife management option. There are minimal incentives for landowners and communities to invest in wildlife conservation through conservancies, and without tangible benefits, landowners and communities may prioritize alternative land uses that offer immediate financial gains. This further degrades habitats and threatens biodiversity.



Value Proposition:

Umoja is a community-led organization centered around the needs and priorities of the communities and landowners it serves, and recognizes their central role in wildlife conservation outside protected areas in Uganda. Umoja acts as the voice of the communities and landowners in the areas where it operates, expanding their influence in the decision-making processes that affect their land, wildlife, and way of life. By bringing these groups together under one organization, Umoja pools resources, knowledge, and experience to enhance conservation efforts and promote sustainable land use practices. Through a united and cohesive voice, Umoja promotes policies and initiatives that support sustainable land use practices and wildlife conservation. This includes engaging with government officials, NGOs, and other stakeholders to affect positive change.



Theory of Change

Umoja is responding to the evolving landscape of community conservation in Uganda by focusing on three key shifts necessary to foster the growth and transformation of conservancies. These structural, relational, and mindset shifts will all contribute to the development of a stronger conservancy network that benefits both people and wildlife.

Structural shifts in policy and practice

While existing policies may provide a conducive environment for conservancies, operationalizing these policies and making necessary changes will be instrumental in enabling conservancies to thrive. If policies shift towards devolving rights and responsibilities to local communities, granting them greater control and ownership over the management of wildlife resources, conservancies will thrive and generate more benefits for communities. This includes allocating wildlife-use rights, creating revenue-sharing mechanisms, and transferring management responsibilities to conservancies.

As recognition of conservancies grows, there will be more need for integrated land use planning that balances conservation objectives with the socio-economic needs of local communities. Umoja recognizes the importance of shifts in practices among communities and landowners to encourage formation and enhance investments in conservancies by communities, landowners, government and the private sector. These structural changes will help create an enabling system that facilitates positive impact and allows conservancies to flourish.

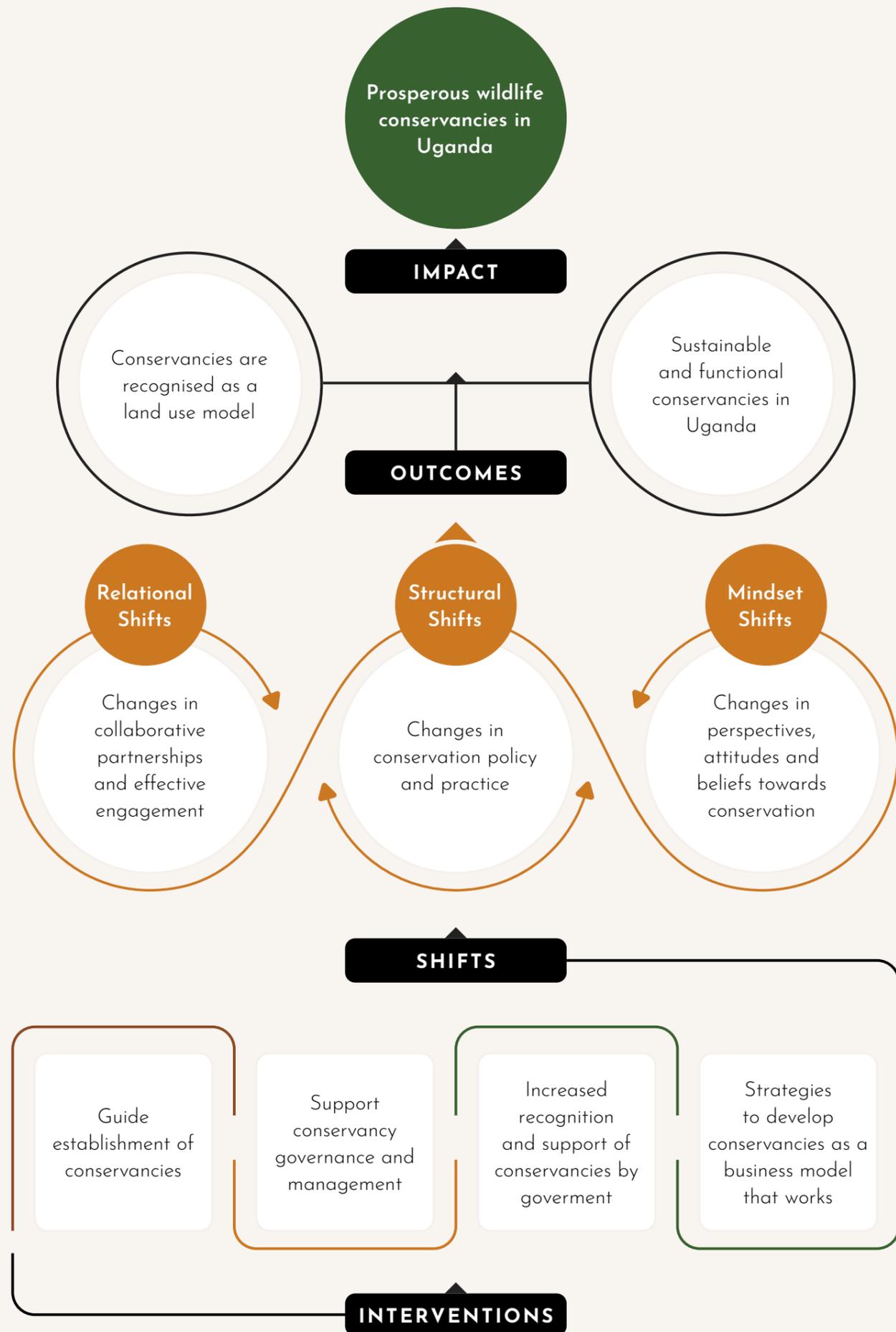
Relational shifts

Diverse stakeholders, including central and local government, the Uganda Wildlife Authority, communities and landowners, private sector, and NGOs, all have a role to play in the growth of conservancies in Uganda. To facilitate this growth, these stakeholders need to work collaboratively to form partnerships. Umoja will actively work to break relational barriers, foster stronger networks and collaborations within conservancies, and promote effective partnerships between conservancies and other stakeholders. By fostering these relationships, Umoja will strengthen the conservancy movement in Uganda.

Mindset shifts

Although conservancies in Uganda are experiencing growth, there remains a lack of awareness regarding the transformative benefits they bring to communities. Mindset change, therefore, plays a crucial role in the success and effectiveness of conservancies in Uganda. It involves shifting perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs towards a more sustainable and community-centered approach to wildlife management and conservation. Umoja aims to address this by fostering a positive narrative around conservancies and community-based conservation. Through its work, Umoja will actively engage in building community and national support for conservancies in Uganda, promoting a shift in mindset—from exploitation to stewardship, from conflict to collaboration, from exclusion to inclusion, and from dependence to empowerment. By highlighting the positive impacts of conservancies on communities, Umoja seeks to further accelerate their growth and ensure their long-term sustainability.

Umoja's strategic approach to change involves implementing structural changes, addressing relational barriers, and fostering a positive mindset to advance the growth and impact of conservancies in Uganda. By focusing on these three key shifts, Umoja aims to strengthen the conservancy movement, promote collaboration among stakeholders, enhance operational practices, and build support for community-based conservation throughout Uganda.



Goals and Objectives



GOAL 1

Sustainable and functional conservancies in Uganda.

Strategic overview and what success looks like

Over the next 3 years, Umoja will work towards building sustainable and functional conservancies in Uganda. While conservancies have been around for 10 years, their growth and their ability to benefit communities has been slow, and Umoja will focus on a number of priorities. First, Umoja will expand the number and size of conservancies, to broaden their reach and impact. This will involve establishing new conservancies as well as expanding existing ones to ensure a wider coverage of conservation efforts. Second, we will improve governance and management capacity to ensure conservancies are effective. By strengthening conservancies' operational frameworks, they will be able to effectively deliver on their conservation goals. In addition, Umoja recognizes the need for long-term viability and ecological integrity. By promoting sustainable resource management, conservation planning, and enterprise, Umoja will help ensure the long-term success of conservancies.

Through these efforts, Umoja endeavors to overcome the historical limitations and drive conservancies' growth, development, and sustainability, ultimately providing significant benefits to communities and the environment.

Objectives and Interventions

Objective 1: Develop and implement guidelines for Conservancy development and management.

Umoja will develop user-friendly guidelines to assist in the establishment and management of different categories of conservancies. These guidelines will serve as a guiding framework and a roadmap for conservancies' strategic development and effective management, spelling out specific steps and key deliverables.

Objective 2: Support the establishment and growth of effective governance and management structures of conservancies.

Umoja will provide support and guidance in establishing and strengthening governance and management structures within conservancies. This includes institutional, technical, and operational support to enhance conservancy effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. This will promote better community engagement, ensuring their long-term sustainability and impact.

Objective 3: Facilitate growth and advancement of 2-3 flagship conservancies, establishing them as exemplary or model conservancies for others to learn from.

Umoja will actively focus on the growth and development of 2-3 selected flagship conservancies, with the goal of establishing them as exemplary or model conservancies. These conservancies will serve as practical examples for other conservancies, communities, and landowners to learn from and gain valuable insights, ultimately enhancing the overall approach to community wildlife management.

Objective 4: Strengthen conservancies as viable business models that deliver benefits to communities.

As the lead support organization for conservancy development, Umoja will guide and support conservancies in developing sustainable business models that generate income while maintaining ecological integrity. Umoja will identify, partner, and establish linkages with tourism organizations, facilitating the development of ecotourism, sport hunting, and other market opportunities in conservancies. Umoja will seek out, support, and encourage the development of innovative revenue streams for conservancies.



GOAL 2

Recognition of conservancies as a land use Option.

Strategic overview and what success looks like

Umoja will promote the recognition and validation of conservancies as a sustainable and effective approach to land management and utilization. A conservancy typically involves managing and protecting natural resources, including wildlife, vegetation, and ecosystems, while also considering sustainable development and local community involvement. If conservancies are recognized as a viable and productive land use model in Uganda, it will promote their adoption and integration into national land management practices and policies. Over 1 - 3 years, Umoja will highlight the benefits and potential of conservancies for environmental conservation, biodiversity preservation, community engagement, and economic sustainability. It involves advocating for policy implementation, raising awareness, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, conservation organizations, and landowners.

Ultimately, Umoja will work towards shifting perceptions and attitudes towards conservancies, emphasizing their positive ecological and socioeconomic impacts. Recognition would involve acknowledging conservancies as a legitimate and effective approach to land use, leading to increased support, funding, and institutional backing for establishing and maintaining conservancies worldwide.



Objectives and Interventions

Objective 1: Increase public awareness of conservancies as a beneficial land use option.

Umoja will increase public awareness and understanding of the benefits and importance of conservancies as a sustainable land use model. This will involve conducting outreach programs, workshops, and campaigns to educate stakeholders, local communities, policymakers, and the general public about the potential advantages of conservancies.

Objective 2: Support partnerships and linkages of conservancies with relevant stakeholders.

Umoja will establish strong partnerships and linkages to provide conservancies with the necessary support, resources, and expertise to grow, strengthen their operations, and contribute to sustainable land use practices in Uganda.



Objectives and Interventions

Objective 1: Build and nurture strong relationships and strengthen effective communication and coordination with strategic partners and stakeholders.

As a convener and connector, Umoja will establish collaborative partnerships with conservation organizations that have experience in managing and supporting conservancies. Umoja will leverage diverse expertise, networks, and resources to strengthen conservancies and facilitate their growth. Umoja will also explore the potential for joint initiatives, capacity building programs, and knowledge exchange opportunities, and will promote learning among conservancies and facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills.

Objective 2: Strengthen direct linkages with stakeholders to realize conservation benefits to local communities.

As part of the support to grow and strengthen conservancies, Umoja will identify potential investors and funders interested in supporting conservation initiatives and tourism development. Some of the support to conservancies will include developing compelling proposals and business models that highlight the social, economic, and environmental benefits of investing in conservancies. As the organization grows, Umoja will seek financial support, grants, and funding partnerships to secure resources for conservancy development.

GOAL 3

Increased institutional partnerships and collaborations for conservancies.

Strategic overview and what success looks like

Effective conservancy management requires collective effort. By bringing together relevant stakeholders to work collaboratively with conservancies, Umoja will enhance the development, management, and success of conservancies over the next 2 - 3 years. The synergy of different strengths and resources will lead to a more robust conservancy model that supports wildlife and benefits communities. When this goal is realized, there will be strong, effective, and mutually beneficial partnerships that amplify the impact of conservancies, foster community engagement, and make conservancies an attractive land use option where communities benefit.





Objectives and Interventions

Objective 1: Build and strengthen Umoja’s secretariat, organizational structure, culture, and function, and recruit a skilled team to implement its mandate.

As a new organization, Umoja needs to build a strong and capable secretariat team, establish an effective organizational structure, and foster a positive organizational culture. This will enable Umoja to effectively implement its mandate, coordinate the efforts of member conservancies, and contribute to the growth and success of conservancies in Uganda. The key recruitment priorities for Umoja to grow the organization during this start-up phase include project implementation/program management, fundraising, and communications.

Objective 2: Develop and implement Umoja’s internal processes, systems, and procedures to manage resources and operations.

Establishing effective internal processes, systems, and procedures will enable efficient utilization of resources, enhance operational effectiveness, and contribute to Umoja’s overall success and sustainability as a conservancy umbrella organization. These systems, standardized procedures, and guidelines for key operational areas will include financial management, project implementation, human resource management, communication, reporting, and administration.

Objective 3: Establish Umoja’s internal and external communications strategies and mechanisms, as well as advocacy platforms.

Umoja will develop a robust internal and external communications strategy to catalyze effective information sharing, stakeholder engagement, and advocacy to promote the importance of conservancies and advance Umoja’s mission and objectives.

Objective 4: Secure sustainable and diversified funding to ensure the long-term financial stability and growth of Umoja.

Under this critical objective, Umoja will focus on securing the necessary financial resources to support the organization’s mission. Umoja aims to raise at least US\$100,000 in 2024, and increase that by 20% and 35% in 2025 and 2026 respectively.

Umoja will work towards financial sustainability by developing multi-year funding strategies that will grow and increase its financial resources. Umoja will diversify funding streams by actively seeking financial support from a variety of sources, including government grants, private donations, corporate partnerships, and philanthropic foundations. This diversification will help mitigate the risks associated with relying heavily on a single funding source. Furthermore, Umoja will build strategic partnerships that can open new funding opportunities, enhance visibility, and increase our access to resources. To help achieve this, Umoja will invest in the capacity of its team to effectively secure and manage funds.

GOAL 4

A strong, well-established and coordinated Umoja.

Strategic overview and what success looks like

As an umbrella organization, Umoja has a critical role to play in effectively coordinating and supporting the various conservancies within Uganda. Umoja serves as a unifying platform that provides guidance, leadership, and resources to conservancies, enabling them to operate efficiently, collaborate effectively, and achieve their conservation and sustainability objectives. Similarly, Umoja plays a crucial role in advocacy, capacity building, and networking opportunities for conservancies across Uganda. Over the next 1 - 2 years, Umoja will focus on the following objectives to grow and serve the conservancies it exists to support.

Organizational Team

Umoja is committed to developing an effective team that aligns with its purpose and enables it to achieve its mission. This involves identifying and establishing the appropriate roles and functions to best serve the organization. Over the next 3 years, Umoja will build human resource capacity to set the organization on a trajectory to success. This will focus on building Umoja's fundraising and basic communication capacity, which in turn will catalyze Umoja's growth.

Partnerships

Umoja values partnerships and recognizes the importance of collaboration for expanding community-led conservation through the conservancy model in Uganda. Through strategic partnerships and networks, Umoja will leverage the expertise, resources, and relationships of other organizations to enhance its impact. Some of these will be structured and formal, while others will be ad hoc and fluid. These include:

- 1. Government partnerships:** As a major stakeholder in wildlife conservation and management, Umoja collaborates with government ministries, departments, and agencies at various levels. These include the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, the Uganda Wildlife Authority, National Environmental Management Authority, National Forestry Association, Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda Land Board along with district and local governments. By working closely with the government, Umoja can align with national efforts, engage with policies and initiatives, and influence the interpretation and operationalisation of conservancy-related policies. This will help secure support for community-led initiatives, and foster a favorable environment for equitable benefit distribution.
- 2. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Umoja will partner with NGOs that share its mission and vision. Through these partnerships, Umoja will tap into the expertise and experience of NGOs working in areas such as conservation, community development, capacity building, organizational development, and advocacy. Collaborating with NGOs provides access to additional resources, technical support, and innovative approaches to help achieve its mission.

- 3. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs):** Even though Umoja is a grassroots organization, it actively seeks partnerships with local community-based organizations that have a deep understanding of the communities and landscapes where conservancy efforts are implemented. Collaborating with CBOs helps Umoja ensure that its initiatives are community-centered, culturally sensitive, and aligned with the needs and aspirations of local communities.
- 4. Academic institutions:** Umoja has established partnerships with academic institutions to promote evidence-based conservation. This can better inform policies, practice on the ground, and contribute to knowledge development and knowledge sharing.
- 5. Funding partners:** Umoja seeks partnerships with foundations, donors, and funding agencies that support its mission and objectives. These partnerships provide financial resources to support operations and implement activities, build capacity, and support community development programs. Collaborating with funding partners helps Umoja secure sustainable funding and expand its reach and impact.
- 6. International organizations and networks:** Umoja engages with international organizations and networks focused on conservation and community-led conservation. These partnerships enable Umoja to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and contribute to global conservation efforts. Collaborating with international organizations helps Umoja amplify its voice, access global platforms, and advocate for community-centered conservation approaches and conservancy development in Uganda.

Monitoring Evaluation and Learning

For Umoja, knowledge development, knowledge sharing, and evidence-based multi-stakeholder dialogue are integral to achieving impact. A well-functioning monitoring, evaluation and learning system (MEL) that includes robust data collection tools, clearly defined measurement approaches, and a comprehensive framework, serves as the foundation for continuous learning and growth. Through its MEL framework, Umoja will:

- ▶ Ensure effective tracking and measure progress:** Umoja's MEL system will facilitate accurate and reliable monitoring of the growth and development of conservancies in Uganda. By employing clearly defined tools and metrics, Umoja can evaluate the effectiveness of conservancies in Uganda as an approach to community wildlife management and its viability as a land use option.
- ▶ Promote knowledge development:** Umoja's MEL system will facilitate the creation and refinement of knowledge by systematically documenting and analyzing data related to community conservation and conservancies. This knowledge will inform decision-making, strategy formulation, and adaptive management.

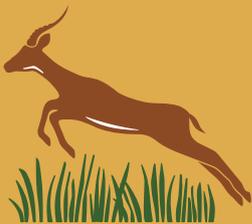
Acknowledgments

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