



**Fact Sheet:
PROMARA: USAID's Mau Forest Initiative**

April 2010

Why is the Mau Forest Complex Important?

The Mau Forest Complex (MFC) is the largest forest left in Kenya – as big as the forests of Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares combined. It is also the most important of Kenya's five major "water towers." Some 30 million people depend on water sources originating in the Mau – in Kenya and beyond. And it is the traditional home of the Ogiek people.

What does the Mau do?

As well as nurturing trees used by communities and the nation, the Mau feeds 12 major rivers, which provide the water for millions of Kenyans, in both rural and urban areas. The rivers sustain six major lakes: Nakuru, Naivasha, Baringo, Natron, Turkana, and Victoria. Forest destruction in the Mau means that the ground does not absorb and filter water well, imperiling these rivers, lakes, the Maasai Mara National Reserve and even the Serengeti.

Because of the cooling action of millions of trees – as well as the carbon dioxide they store-- the Mau forest also moderates the effect of climate change. It helps maintain the climate necessary for tea and other major crops in the region as well.

What is the Mau worth?

The Mau Forest Complex supports key economic sectors in Rift Valley, Western and Nyanza provinces, particularly agriculture and tourism. The market value of tea and tourism--in which the Mau plays a vital role – is more than Kshs 20 billion a year. The Mau sustains some of the country's most valuable tourism sites, including Maasai Mara and Lake Nakuru

In addition, the estimated potential hydropower generation in the MFC catchments is over 500 megawatts – more than 40 percent of the total electrical generating capacity of Kenya today.

The total value of the Mau would also count the timber, firewood, fodder and medicinal plants used by nearby communities. In addition are its benefits to climate stabilization, water supply and filtration, and wilderness including plants whose value may not even be known yet.

What role has the U.S. Government played in sustaining the Mau?

The U.S. Government is committed to helping the Government and people of Kenya find a viable balance between the needs of local stakeholders and the national interest. Local stakeholders, including those who live here, need better livelihoods, sustainable sources of income, and the hope that development provides. National interests include conserving the forest so that its valuable services to the climate and to water catchments can continue to serve all the people of Kenya.

Since 2005, USAID has provided the Government of Kenya funding and technical assistance as it works to stop forest destruction and start restoration. USAID performed the research that helped the Mau Forest Task Force determine its way forward.

The U.S. Government supports the use of best international practices in dealing with those who are evicted from the Mau in the best interests of Kenya. These include protection and assistance with alternative livelihoods.

What are we doing currently?

We are designing a \$6.5-million project, called **PROMARA** – “For the Mara,” to begin in mid-2010.

In addition to PROMARA, USG will provide \$350,000 in assistance to the Ministry of Lands for boundary surveys and registration of title deeds for the Southwestern Mau and Trans-Mara Forest Reserves – in support of the Government of Kenya’s plan to rehabilitate the Mau Forest Complex.

Focusing on the catchment area that is source of the Mara river, PROMARA will help restore the health of critical water catchments, restore the forest’s rich biology, support community groups to help manage natural resources, improve local livelihoods, and clarify and strengthen individuals’ and communities rights to land. It will:

- **Improve livelihoods for people who legally live in watershed areas.** PROMARA will work with Community Forest Associations, Water Resource Users Associations, the Government of Kenya and the private sector to expand business opportunities in ways that will nurture not only communities but the land. For instance, the project will link farmers to USAID programs so they learn how to greatly increase production while conserving the soil and water resources. PROMARA will also explore possibilities of payment to communities for their work in conserving water and trees.
- **Support an intensive public awareness campaign** about residents rights, relevant laws, and what restoring the Mau will mean for everyone. This may include establishing a Mara Outreach Center which will help mobilize youth around sustainable forestry and agriculture; offer legal services; organize peace-building and dialogue on conservation, land, and livelihoods.
- **PROMARA will also serve as a test-case for applying the National Land Policy.** In accordance with the Land Policy, the project will **clarify land rights** for residents in the Upper Mara who have titles to land outside the forest boundaries. **PROMARA will apply Land Policy principles of** fairness in land tenure and allotment to individuals and communities, and to women and men. They include making allocations and land-use decisions transparent, better land-use planning, and keeping better, clearer records on legal tenure. It will focus particularly on strengthening land rights of women in women-headed households, through informing them of their rights, and providing legal aid.

PROMARA is expected to provide valuable lessons in land tenure, collaborative management of natural resources, and livelihoods improvement that can also be applied in other parts of the country.

For more information

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