



PHOTO: © USAID/PREG

KENYA

CLIMATE CHANGE COUNTRY PROFILE

Climate risks pose serious threats to Kenya’s sustainable development goals. While the country is East Africa’s financial, trade, and communications hub, its economy is largely dependent on rainfed agriculture and tourism—each of which is susceptible to climate variability and extreme weather events.

Climate risks pose serious threats to Kenya’s sustainable development goals and development gains. With the largest economy in East Africa and a population of 54 million, Kenya serves as the region’s financial, trade, and communications hub. The country’s economy is largely dependent on rainfed agriculture, tourism, and natural resources—sectors that are susceptible to climate variability and extreme weather events. Although Kenya contributes less than 0.1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions annually, the country submitted an updated, more ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) on December 24, 2020, with a commitment to reduce emissions by 32 percent by 2030 relative to the business-as-usual scenario.

Kenya has put in place measures to pursue a low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathway. The country plans to reduce emissions by prioritizing the following mitigation activities: 1) increasing the proportion of renewables in the electricity generation mix of the national grid to 100 percent by 2030; 2) improving energy and resource efficiency across all sectors; 3) promoting climate-smart agriculture;

and 4) making waste management systems more sustainable. Kenya's priority adaptation actions include enhancing adaptive capacity and climate resilience across all economic sectors and national and county governments, financing locally-led climate action for climate-resilient livelihoods, and enhancing the generation and use of climate information.

Government of Kenya Climate Priorities

Kenya is a leader in addressing climate change and was one of the first countries in Africa to enact a comprehensive law and policy to guide national and subnational climate action. The Climate Change Policy 2016, Climate Change Act 2016, Climate Change Amendment Act 2023, National Climate Change Action Plan III 2023-2027, Climate Change (Carbon Markets) Regulations 2024, and the long-term Low Emissions Development Strategy 2022-2050 collectively guide low-carbon and climate resilient development in Kenya. As articulated in its policies, Kenya's priorities include climate adaptation; reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation; afforestation and reforestation; landscape restoration; climate-smart agriculture; geothermal and clean energy development; energy efficiency; and drought and flood risk management.

USAID'S Climate Change Program: Objectives and Results

USAID supports the Government of Kenya's development and climate priorities through programs and partnerships that address climate adaptation, build resilience, advance renewable energy, and promote natural climate solutions. USAID supported the development of key national policy documents, including the Government of Kenya's Low Emissions Development Strategy 2022-2050, Climate Change Framework Policy, Climate Change Act, and Climate Change Finance Policy. In partnership with the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency, USAID also supported the development of Kenya's Carbon Markets Activation Plan 2023, which laid the foundation for developing the Climate Change (Carbon Markets) Regulations 2024 to ensure transparency, equity, and integrity for carbon projects in Kenya. USAID is further supporting the Government of Kenya in developing two additional regulations on carbon trading and non-market approaches. Finally, USAID has supported several transactions that advance climate finance targets in Kenya through investment in climate funds while building numerous partnerships with companies in sectors deeply affected by climate change, such as agriculture, water and sanitation, plastics recycling, and ecotourism.

Adaptation

USAID supports Kenya in building its capacity to assess vulnerability in key economic sectors, protect key watersheds, adapt dryland livestock and wildlife management, promote climate-smart agriculture and drought-tolerant crops, and improve early-warning and action systems. USAID works with the Government of Kenya's National Drought Management Authority, other ministries, county governments, and conservancy associations to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands. USAID also supports civil society in engaging with government institutions to develop inclusive policies and legislation that support climate resilience.

Key Results

USAID has helped:

- Leverage more than \$8 billion invested by the Government of Kenya to implement the Ending Drought Emergencies Framework (2012-2022) in a multi-sectoral and integrated approach; and
- Support community conservancies to protect wildlife and rangelands through the Northern Kenya Carbon Project—the world’s first large-scale grasslands soil carbon project— targets the removal and storage of 50 million tons of CO₂ over 30 years and uses the revenue generated to fund adaptation and conservation activities. To date, conservancies have earned \$14.6 million from the sale of these credits. In turn, the revenue was invested in community projects, including schools, community tourism facilities, education bursaries, and water points that benefit both wildlife and communities.

Renewable Energy

Through Power Africa, USAID supports the development of renewable power generation projects with technical assistance, transaction advisory services, and the creation of supportive frameworks to ensure a 100 percent clean energy grid in Kenya by 2030 in alignment with the Government of Kenya’s sustainable development objectives. Increased geothermal, wind, and solar power generation will reduce the country’s greenhouse gas emissions by gradually replacing fossil fuel-based power generation. USAID also supports decentralized power systems such as mini-grids and solar home systems that provide renewable electricity to populations living outside the grid.

Key Results

USAID has helped:

- Support—through Power Africa—the development and commissioning of 691 megawatts (MW) of clean power generation in Kenya, including the 310 MW Lake Turkana Wind Power project, the 158 MW Olkaria V Geothermal Power Plant, the 83 MW Olkaria I Unit 6 Geothermal Power Plant, the 100 MW Kipeto Wind Power Project, and the 40 MW Malindi Solar photovoltaic Power Project.

Natural Climate Solutions

USAID helps Kenya strengthen the protection of key forested watersheds and improve rangeland management in community conservancies. USAID works alongside the private sector, local governments, and local and indigenous communities that rely on these natural resources to help ensure sustained investment and viability beyond donor funding. USAID has supported several partnerships in climate finance—a growing area of interest for donors, the private sector, and the Government of Kenya—and will continue to explore future opportunities that address environment, climate, and economic growth objectives.

Key Results

USAID has helped:

- Facilitate private finance and investment for the working capital needs of smallholder farmers and micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises that are integrating climate-smart solutions into their business models;
- Provide catalytic funding for three funds supporting investments in ecotourism, reducing climate risks and biodiversity loss, and increasing climate resilience in East and Southern Africa;
- Develop an ecosystem services valuation of three key watersheds that was used to revise the national budgeting database and increase the Government of Kenya's budget to support watershed conservation;
- Create and implement ward development plans that not only foster community engagement in planning and budgeting but also facilitate sustainable rangeland management; and
- Craft forest management plans that enabled community forest associations to mobilize and leverage resources from both private and public sources for joint management of forests.