

A photograph of a person's hands holding a large, dark stingray in the water. The person is wearing a dark blue shirt. The background shows a body of water and a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

RESOURCE SCARCITY IN  
**Coastal East Africa**

New Challenges and Threats to  
U.S. Prosperity and Security



A CHAPTER SUMMARY FROM  
IN PURSUIT OF PROSPERITY

The countries of coastal East Africa—Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique—face some of the highest rates of poverty in the world, as well as chronic food and water insecurity. The region’s rich natural resource base, if used sustainably, could make a significant contribution to greater economic growth and development. However, overfishing, deforestation and illicit wildlife trafficking are slowing growth and impeding U.S. efforts to provide development assistance and forestall regional instability.



## Environment

Coastal East Africa is endowed with some of the most biodiverse ecosystems in the world, known not only for its remarkable wildlife, including much of Africa’s elephant population, but also for its rich marine resources. Together, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania contain Africa’s largest intact wilderness and account for 4,600 kilometers of coastline. Throughout the region, rapid population growth, development needs and aspirations, and growing international markets for natural resource products are putting pressure on these already scarce resources.

The fisheries of the coastal waters in the Indian Ocean are one of the region’s key natural resources. More than 70% of Indian Ocean tuna—worth \$2 billion to \$3 billion per year—is caught in the coastal East Africa region. During the past decade, demand for the region’s fish and the growing presence of foreign commercial fleets have resulted in trade that is not only unsustainable, but in many instances illegal.

Unsustainable and illegal harvesting practices result in significant revenue loss for the region. Tanzania alone loses an estimated \$200 million to illegal harvesting. Moreover, wasteful and destructive fishing techniques damage the ocean environment, including coral ecosystems that serve as breeding grounds for fish populations and support

international tourism. Unsustainable extraction by foreign and domestic fleets threatens the livelihoods of the region’s coastal communities and opens the door for larger marine security problems.

More than 20 million people live in and around the region’s coastal forests, relying heavily on those forests for their food and freshwater supply. However, poorly regulated and illegal timber extraction, driven by local demand for energy, expansion of commercial agriculture and rising demand from Asia, is driving high deforestation rates. Tanzanian

forests are being cleared at a rate of 400,000 hectares per year, reflecting the nearly 70% reliance rate on wood fuels for cooking. In Mozambique, fuelwood and charcoal account for over 80% of energy use.

Food and water insecurity are common, with 80% of the population dependent on subsistence agriculture in this largely semi-arid region. In Tanzania alone, more than 40% of the population is believed to live in chronic food-deficit areas. Those with small farms in East Africa are highly dependent on local



ecosystem products, such as wood for cooking and construction; fish and shellfish; and wild plant foods and medicines. They also depend upon ecosystem services, particularly water flow, that are provided by the region's forests. When forests are degraded, the risk of water scarcity is exacerbated, and other essential products are lost.

A recent upsurge in illicit trafficking and poaching of wildlife also impedes the region's development efforts and threatens stability. Demand for wildlife products, such as ivory, is strongly linked to the growing markets in East Asia and China. In 2009–2011, Tanzania was the world's leading trafficker of illegal ivory. Not only does the illegal killing of wildlife threaten many species with extinction, it also poses a severe threat to the communities whose economies are dependent on tourism. For Kenya, a country with a \$5 billion wildlife-based tourism industry, uncontrolled poaching has the potential to cause significant harm.

Beyond the economic implications, illegal trafficking poses a threat to government control. Wildlife crime networks employ sophisticated technology and organizational techniques. Heavily armed poachers can undermine or supplant legitimate government authority, often using revenue from illicit wildlife trafficking to finance rebel groups and other destabilizing operations. Recently, illicit wildlife trafficking has also been linked to international terrorist groups.

The countries of coastal East Africa recognize the need to protect their wildlife for the purposes of conservation, economic growth and maintaining governmental authority. Unfortunately, the limited capacity of customs and law enforcement agencies impedes efforts to halt poaching and trafficking. The governments of the region face similar capacity challenges in addressing overfishing and deforestation.

### Implications for the U.S.

In recent years, coastal East Africa has played a key role in U.S. foreign policy because of its links to terrorism and



the potential for future conflicts and humanitarian disasters. Since the deadly terrorist bombings of 1998 in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the United States has joined democratic leaders in the region to take on the challenges of poverty, hunger and disease through a broad range of development programs and an expansion of trade and economic ties. Washington has also worked with the region's security leaders in building regional capacity to fight piracy and terrorism and to respond to humanitarian crises.

Allowing unsustainable extraction of resources to continue will limit the efficacy of U.S. development programs in the region. Deforestation and overfishing threaten to negate the strides that have been made in improving agricultural productivity and combating the region's chronic food and water insecurity issues. Illegal fishing and piracy threaten U.S. security and trade interests. And the illegal wildlife trade has environmental, economic and security ramifications.

### Recommendations

Economic well-being, social stability and national security in the region must be built on a foundation of environmental sustainability. Tackling overfishing, deforestation and illicit wildlife trafficking will require a collaborative effort on bilateral and multilateral levels. Over the past decade, increased U.S. involvement





in the region has created a strong basis for cooperation. Regional organizations and international agreements also offer potential for addressing region-wide natural resource degradation.

Combating illegal natural resource trade will require a whole-of-government approach that begins with strengthening on-the-ground enforcement, including existing national and regional monitoring and enforcement programs. Reducing the trade will require cooperative efforts to break up the sophisticated criminal organizations and rebel groups involved, as well as interrupting the flow of illegal products at major transit points. Also, demand for these illegal products will need to be reduced through education and law enforcement in the destination countries.

Improving conditions for economic growth and development in the coastal East Africa region will require a better capacity for governance, particularly in the natural resource sectors. Capacity building, design of appropriate regulations, and monitoring and enforcement programs can be supported by USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Global Environment Facility. Where feasible, regulatory and technical assistance should support



devolution of authority to the local level through community-based natural resource management organizations, which have proven to be effective in promoting sustainable development.

The U.S. government is already heavily invested in health and development initiatives in coastal East Africa. Mainstreaming natural resource management and climate-smart approaches into these initiatives could significantly increase their effectiveness and reduce threats to resources and stability. Support for regionally based efforts, such as the natural resource agendas of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), could boost effectiveness.

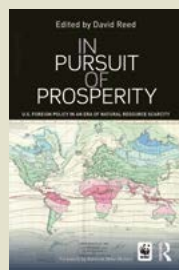
Trade and investment policies can also be employed to support sustainable resources. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and the U.S. Export-Import Bank, as well as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), could support U.S. investments in sustainable agriculture and fisheries production that would boost food security and limit environmental degradation.

---

*This summary is drawn from In Pursuit of Prosperity, Chapter 8, by The Honorable Mark Green, former U.S. ambassador to Tanzania.*

**PHOTOS | Front page:** Angoche fish market, Mozambique © WWF-US/James Morgan; **Inside:** Women and children, Mozambique © WWF-US/James Morgan; Fishing captain with crew, Mozambique © WWF-US/James Morgan; Shark net fishing, Tanzania © Brent Stirton/Getty Images/WWF-UK; Transport of wood on a bicycle, Lake Bogoria, Kenya © Brent Stirton/Getty Images; **Back page:** African ivory seizure, Thailand © WWF-Canon/James Morgan; Elephant ivory products for sale, Thailand © WWF-Canon/James Morgan

© 2014 WWF. All rights reserved by World Wildlife Fund, Inc.



*In Pursuit of Prosperity: U.S. Foreign Policy in an Era of Natural Resource Scarcity* explores the evolution of environmental sustainability in U.S. foreign policy. Through expert analysis of nine strategically important regions, WWF's David Reed and a team of experts in foreign policy and environmental affairs identify emerging threats to the prosperity and national security of the United States. They assert that the combined impacts of climate change and natural resource scarcity require a fundamental shift in U.S. foreign policy to ensure the prosperity of our country's trading and political partners around the globe.

For more about WWF's In Pursuit of Prosperity initiative, visit [www.worldwildlife.org/ipop](http://www.worldwildlife.org/ipop).

**For more information, contact**

David Reed, PhD, WWF Senior Policy Advisor  
 David.Reed@wwfus.org