

## **Kinondo Community Village Bank;**

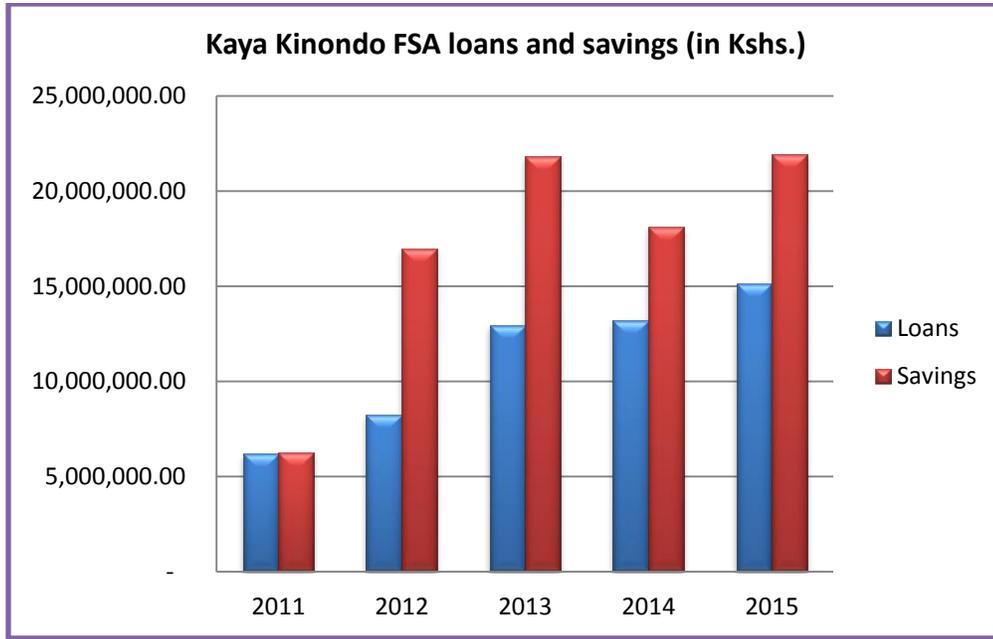
### **Growing strong year after year.**

In 2001, WWF embarked on a journey that has so far taken 15 years. I still remember vividly in June 2001, when it was decided that we need to pilot ecotourism in one of the sacred Mijikenda forests. The need to established community controlled ecotourism project was informed by realization that despite the fact that most critical Kaya forests had by then been gazetted as National Monuments under Kenya laws, the challenge of attaining sustainable management still persisted. Gazettement was therefore only one step in realizing full conservation of a protected areas. Other approaches that would bring community closer to the protected area, increase revenue streams directly to the community and empower community to be more involved in management decision making needed to be put in place. It was also realized that in most cases, communities leaving adjacent to conservation areas are often poor and heavily dependent on these resources for their wellbeing.

After two years of piloting the project from 2001 to 2003, a baselines survey indicated that over 95% of the women then had not access to commercial banks. Hence they could not save the little income they were getting from sale of handcrafts, dances and entry fees to the forest, which meant they could not borrow credits to finance other personal and community development projects. To address the challenges, Kaya Kinondo financial services association was established in 2003.

The association was formed with support from WWF with the objective of providing sustainable financing to community around Kaya Kinondo forests to enable them uplift their income levels. The initial membership was 125 members of Kaya Kinondo forests conservation group in two villages. Since initiation, the association has expanded to cover the whole of the Kinondo location in 25 villages adjacent to three forest blocks namely Kaya Kinondo sacred forest, Kaya Muhaka sacred forest and Gogoni Forest reserve. Currently, the association is serving over 4000 community members including 869 women, 779 men and 140 groups (who are members of the bank) –each group has an average of 20 members.

Since 2006 when the first loans amounting to Kshs 25,000.00 were given to 5 women, the association has shown tremendous growth in terms of credit disbursements, savings and membership. In the year ending December 2015, the bank issued credit work Kshs GBP 22,400,000.00. The graph below shows the growth in loans advanced and savings in the last three years in Kenya Shillings.



*Figure showing savings and amount of loans given to members from 2011-2015*

Most of the credits are for establishment micro enterprises at village level such as food kiosk, buying and selling of coconut, motor cycle for taxi services, tree growing, establishment of tree nursery and improved farming practices. Education and emergency loans are also provided.

Many people have had their lives changed completely as a result of this facility; Rama Ismail, a young man from a very poor background started saving KES 50 shillings every day. He used to be a village water vendor, supplying fresh water to households using an older bicycle donated to him by his father. Today, after five years after joining the village bank, Rama owns three motor cycles and a “tuktuk” (An auto rickshaw) which he use to provide transport services in the villages. He earns minimum of Kshs. 2,000 every day. He has also created employment to three other young men.

Were it not for continued support from WWF-UK and the Size of Wales, many people like Rama, would not have their live changed.

The continued support will enable WWF Kenya to reach many more rural communities living adjacent to key conservation areas to partner in conservation and poverty reduction projects.