



Watamu Association 2024 AGM Report

28 December 2024

The Watamu Association is a community organisation supporting the work and needs of the local community. We have had no paid staff over the last year but are proposing to employ someone in the new year to support the work of the treasurer, memberships and influencing work we do.

The more volunteers we have to assist to shape and deliver the work the better and we would encourage you to get involved.

Over the last year our focus has been on the following areas:

- Water
- Power
- Environment
- Rubbish collection and street clean-ups
- Crows
- Community organisations

There are obviously times of the year when these are more or less prevalent and the below gives a summary of the work carried out across 2024.

We were pleased to welcome the Town Manager, Abdullahi Omar, onto the Watamu association committee as a co-opted member in March 2024.

As Watamu continues to grow at a pace, the infrastructure needs to improve alongside it and we have been working with KPLC and Mawasco as well as other stakeholder groups. As a community organisation we need to adapt to meet the needs of the community and welcome new members and new areas of interest. We are also pleased where other community members deliver great projects, such as 'Crows no More' and look forward to working together to building a stronger community with prosperity, security and sufficient infrastructure for all.

Memberships

Watamu Association membership costs 5,000 KSH per household and 10,000 KSH for corporates. This pays for basic costs such as email and website hosting. It also allows us to contribute to regular road clean ups and community contributions.

The membership numbers are as follows:

- Individual memberships – 168 households
- Corporate memberships – 7
- Complementary community groups – 8

Total membership = 183

Power

Hannah Karanja Briggs and Wallace Garland have the lead responsibility for power and have done a fantastic job and we as an organisation and as a community are very grateful for them for their work.

The WA keeps reporting , logging all the reported issues and continuing the discussion with KPLC. The power whatsapp group underpins the data and the data is essential so please do keep posting on the whatsapp group. Please let us know if you would like to be added.

2024 has been the worst year for the number of reported outages that we have had since we started recording in 2020. There were 33% more reports this year than last. We have continued to have frequent contacts with various levels of KPLC management and sometimes get promises that we don't pass on in case things are not followed through which sadly is so often the case. We continue to have wonderful support from the local KPLC engineers but they are stretched in many directions and often take time to get to our problems which are often quick to resolve. It seems to me that the key person for us is the Regional Manager of KPLC in Kilifi as he is the one who allocates resources. There have been four regional managers in Kilifi in 2024 and two of them have not been at all good for us. There is a new regional manager who has just started and he is saying the right things.

We're very pleased to confirm that we now have confirmation of a dedicated team and vehicle for Watamu – this is an amazing result and we are already seeing the benefit of it. The new regional manager is looking for regional funding and will request national funding.

Coming up in 2025, there will also be a programme of sectionalised shutdowns to deliver systemised repairs which will commence in January when the full team will have returned from Christmas leave.

Solar Power

Watamu Association members actively promoted the installation of solar systems as an alternative to generators with combustion engines, leading by example on their own premises. The association also engaged with the WhatsApp group "Watamu Solar System" to promote awareness and adoption of renewable energy solutions.

Nuclear Power Plant

Although not taking a leading role, the Watamu Association supported a people's initiative concerned about the environmental and economic risks of constructing a nuclear power plant near Watamu.



Water

In March we met with Mawasco to discuss the damaging effects of freshwater shortage and frequent water supply cuts leaving some without water for months. We noted that there had been unclear and sometimes misleading communication from MAWASCO (e.g. on water rationing) and there is an overall dissatisfaction with the service supplied by MAWASCO. We noted that there was also a significant lack of transparency and information from MAWASCO to its clients and there are major concerns about MAWASCO's ability to respond to current and future water supply problems.

It is fully understood that the problem is of a complex nature and that there are many factors that contribute to the existing situation. The problems do continue, in particular in relation to supply and billing and we continue to work to support the work to resolve these issues.

Water Conservation

Watamu Association members encouraged the installation of rainwater harvesting systems and promoted water-saving measures. The Association also participated in discussions through the WhatsApp group "Watamu Water Reports" to share updates and solutions on water-related issues.

Security

The Watamu Association co-exists alongside our sister organisation, Watamu Against Crime, and we are pleased to be joined on the committee by many of the watamu against crime committee members also.

To share the statement of our outgoing vice-chair, Max Cheli on the importance of Community Security in Watamu

"I strongly believe that the greatest challenge facing both the Watamu community as a whole and individual residents is security. At many tourism fairs and international conferences, the first question I'm asked is: "Is Watamu safe?" I cannot overstate how crucial this issue is—not only for visitors, but also for our own well-being and enjoyment of life in Watamu.

To achieve the best results, despite any differences of opinion regarding WAC's relationship with the local police, we must find a way to collaborate and reach common ground. Security is not something that can be tackled alone; it starts from the periphery of the wards and works its way into the heart of our community.

The Watamu police force, which is significantly underfunded, lacks essential resources—most notably, they do not have a vehicle, especially since the Shakahola incident. This makes it impossible for them to respond quickly to emergencies without assistance. They rely heavily on WAC and community support to provide a police presence, identify potential threats, and address security concerns before they escalate.

Without the presence of WAC and the support they receive from a handful of hotels providing fuel, we would undoubtedly face the same security issues that have affected other towns, including burglaries, break-ins, and other crimes. Malindi and Ukunda have seen these challenges firsthand.

Personally, I've been involved in supporting the relationship between WAC, the police, and community policing efforts. Through both my time and financial contributions, I have worked to strengthen our community's safety network. Capt. Andy has generously donated a vehicle



to enhance WAC's ability to patrol Watamu South more frequently and address the security needs of our community."

Environment

For the Watamu Association (WA), contributing to a clean and healthy environment for all citizens is a key objective. This aligns with Article 42 of the Kenyan Constitution, which grants everyone in Kenya the right to a clean and healthy environment, free from all forms of pollution.

We believe that a healthy and clean environment is essential for maintaining and developing Watamu's appeal as a local, regional, and international tourist destination.

Currently, Watamu faces various environmental challenges, including waste management, noise pollution, and air pollution. The community is also experiencing the effects of climate change, such as changing weather patterns, rising sea levels, high temperatures, and water scarcity. Additionally, overfishing, overtourism, and pollution threaten Watamu's unique marine environment, including the Watamu Marine Park and this has to be balanced against the needs of the local community to earn a living,

Given the magnitude of these challenges, it is clear that the Watamu Association can only address some of them. The Association does so by working closely with affected communities, authorities, utilities, and, where possible, those responsible for various forms of pollution. As new challenges arise every day, this remains a moving target.

Preserving and protecting our environment is not only a task for the Watamu Association Committee but for every member. Many contribute by sharing experiences, offering advice and tips, or practicing environmentally friendly behaviour.

Waste Management

The Watamu Association has collaborated with the community and authorities to co-organize, participate in, and support beach cleaning initiatives, collect litter from streets, and raise awareness among citizens about proper waste management.

WA sponsors collection of marine litter year round, and 2 road cleanups per month in collaboration with EcoWorld Recycling. The total weight of marine litter collected from Watamu beaches in 2024 was 20,979 kgs (nearly 21 tonnes). Road waste collected came to 3,618kgs. From this combined trash more than 3 tonnes of plastic, and all metals, glass, and flipflops were recycled at EcoWorld.

The removal of this litter from the Marine Park has reduced pollution threats to ecosystems, corals, sea turtles, dolphins and whales, and hundreds of other species. Keeping our beaches and streets clean also enhances the aesthetics of our beautiful town for locals, tourists and visitors to enjoy.

WAMUSA

Watamu Association has supported our Watamu Municipality stakeholders Association (WAMUSA), an Umbrella of stakeholders from Environment, Social and Economic sectors



within Watamu municipality that comprises of WATAMU, DABASO and MATSANGONI wards).

The objective was conserving our pristine environment. The main activities are cleaning up towns, villages and beaches and planting trees including Mangroves.

The clean up exercise is conducted every third Saturday of a month.

The initiative started on 15th of July 2023 and up to date we have collected 4596 Kilograms of waste.

Noise Pollution

The Watamu Association prepared and published the leaflet "Know Your Rights! How to Deal with Noise Pollution" in both electronic and printed formats, available in Swahili, English, and Italian. This leaflet helps citizens understand their rights concerning noise pollution and provides guidance on taking appropriate action. It was widely distributed.

Members of the Watamu Association have also supported victims of noise pollution by mediating between them and the polluters, sharing experiences (such as advice on legal action), and offering other forms of assistance.

Additionally, the Association engaged with the WhatsApp group "Watamu Against NoisePollution," which unites concerned and affected citizens from Watamu's diverse community to discuss and implement solutions for the escalating noise pollution issue.

Unfortunately, the problem of noise pollution is far from resolved; in fact, it continues to worsen and we continue to work with the authorities to try to get them to better engage with the situation.

Crows

This invasive species poses a significant threat to biodiversity along the Kenyan coast, as it outcompetes indigenous wildlife for food and nesting sites, scavenges on garbage and human waste, and acts as a vector for disease.

For many years, the Watamu Association has worked with stakeholders to address the growing population of the Indian House Crow.

This project is now being run completely by Arocha and we confirm their information for ease of reference if you want to support the project directly.

The Crows No More project is one run by A Rocha Kenya, a conservation organisation based, since 1999, in Watamu (Plot 28) but which is ultimately a KWS-owned project and we operate under their authority and through them for all and any legalities and permissions. A Rocha is a registered NGO / non-profit and receives donations to be able to carry out its work. A Rocha has been recognised by KWS and the Pest Control Products Board (PCPB) as being the organisation cleared to use the Starlicide poison. We therefore work with those doing the pre-baiting to bring in as many House Crows as possible to a site which, once the number of crows has levelled off at usually a minimum of c. 100 birds, then we provide the poison and oversee the application of it.



Clearly the project needs funds to be able to function. KWS requested a budget be put together at the start of the project in June and we drew up a budget that was Ksh 16 million for a full year that would cover the cost of a team of staff working across the north coast doing both counts and mapping of the House Crow so that we could track their movement and change in numbers and where they are concentrated as well as the actual poisoning. The budget was for the use of 5kg of poison (1kg costs Ksh 650,000 at the manufacturer). The funds we are raising are therefore being used across the board for all the sites we are working at. We have full time teams working in all the sites mentioned in the report - BUT the reality of our funds at present is that they are both not sufficient to do ALL the work that NEEDS to be done to properly control the crows and in fact funds are running out to even maintain the current level of work we are doing.

In reality, the full cost per month for running costs should be Ksh 520,000. The balance of the full budget is for such things as purchase of a vehicle, motorbikes, bicycles, binoculars, poison etc etc - several of which we have not been able to obtain. We've not had the full monthly budget to operate on either and so have not run at full capacity but have, all the same, been doing what we can and, with the amazing help of many others, have managed to have the impact that a number of people have already been seeing in terms of reduction of crows. BUT the task is yet large and there are still many crows to get rid of - and we can only do it together as a committed community of 'crow eradicators'! NOTE, however, that this budget is really only while the large numbers of crows persist - which we hope will take c. one year. Once numbers are down, we shall reduce the size of the operation and simply focus on key sites and maintain the pressure on the crows to not let them expand again.

I have been hugely encouraged and impressed by how wide and large a network of people of wonderfully diverse backgrounds and lines of work have made an effort to get involved in one way or another and it is a true testament of how such an initiative really can work. We are excited about the project moving ahead and are confident that with this level of interest and support we shall indeed get the crow numbers down to a tiny number that will have negligible impact on people and biodiversity. Please do continue to support the initiative, please do encourage others you know to commit to a monthly donation of however small it may be and please continue to give your input to the WhatsApp group.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'W' followed by a series of loops and a final flourish.