

ANNUAL STAKEHOLDER'S FORUM (ICI-ASF) REPORT

2024



A MANIFESTO FOR
INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION

UHIFADHI WA KIASILI | **RAMAT ANG'** | **AYUOKOR** | Horsa Bulcha



In 2023, IMPACT began implementation of the Inclusive Conservation Initiative in Kenya. Funded by GEF-7, the Initiative is supporting the self-strengthening of Indigenous Communities across Kenya's Mid-Ewaso Ng'iro River Basin to do conservation according to their own knowledge, values, and aspirations.

The local name for the Initiative, Uhifadhi wa Kiasili | Ramat Ang' | Ayuokor | Horsa Bulcha (ICI-Kenya), translates roughly as "Inclusive Conservation" in the main languages spoken across the project area: Swahili, Maa, Turkana, and Borana.

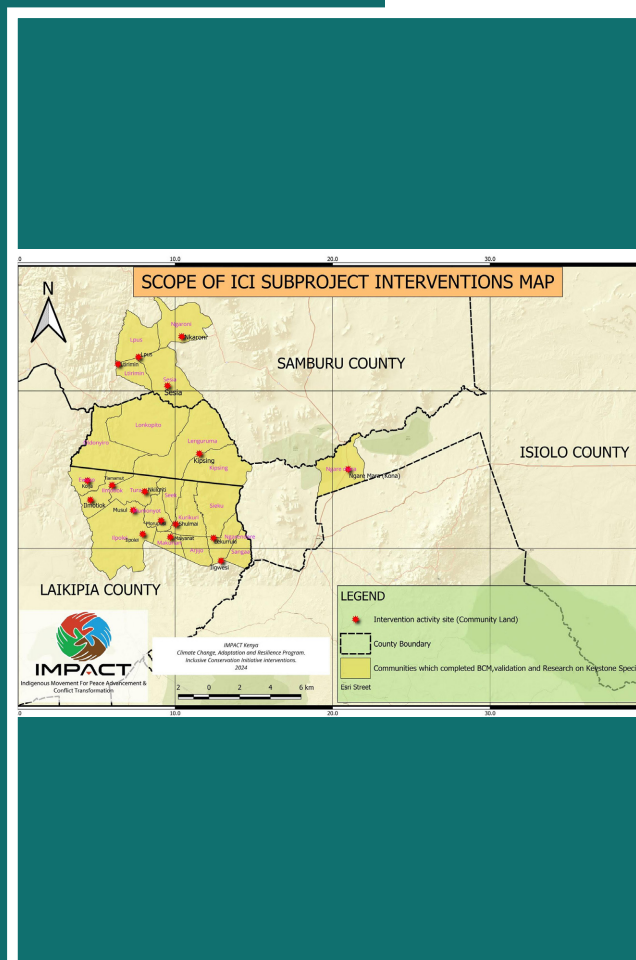
At the end Year 1, IMPACT held an inaugural Annual Forum from 24-26 July at Beisa Hotel and Conference Centre, Nanyuki. This report details the purpose and activities of the Forum and presents its main output: A manifesto for inclusive conservation in the Mid-Ewaso contributed to by the collective present at the Annual Forum.

1. ABOUT THE FORUM

The Annual Forum brought together 84 representatives from communities, civil society, county governments, and other stakeholders across the Mid-Ewaso. This included representatives of 24 Indigenous Communities in the region. The Forum was one of the first major events in the region to assemble a critical mass of stakeholders in the name of inclusive conservation.

The objectives of the Forum were to: update stakeholders on ICI-Kenya activities over the past year; share highlights and lessons learned from Year 1; and spearhead dialogue about key principles and practices of inclusive conservation in the Mid-Ewaso.

The rest of this document provides a snapshot of Year 1 activities, before presenting the first iteration of a public declaration on inclusive conservation in the Mid-Ewaso. Further information activities, outputs and outcomes, and lessons learned from Year 1 of the Inclusive Conservation Initiative can be found in the Annual Report.



ICI-Kenya Year 1 in review

The four-year Inclusive Conservation initiative in Kenya is organised around five components designed to support the self-strengthening and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples in conservation across the Mid-Ewaso. These components are:

COMPONENT 1:

Documenting the presence of Indigenous Peoples in the landscape, including contributions made to biocultural diversity over time

COMPONENT 2:

Promoting ongoing legal declaration and recognition of Indigenous Peoples' territories and biocultural resources

COMPONENT 3:

Ensuring management plans exist that include measures for conserving biocultural diversity and protecting biocultural resources from external threats

COMPONENT 4:

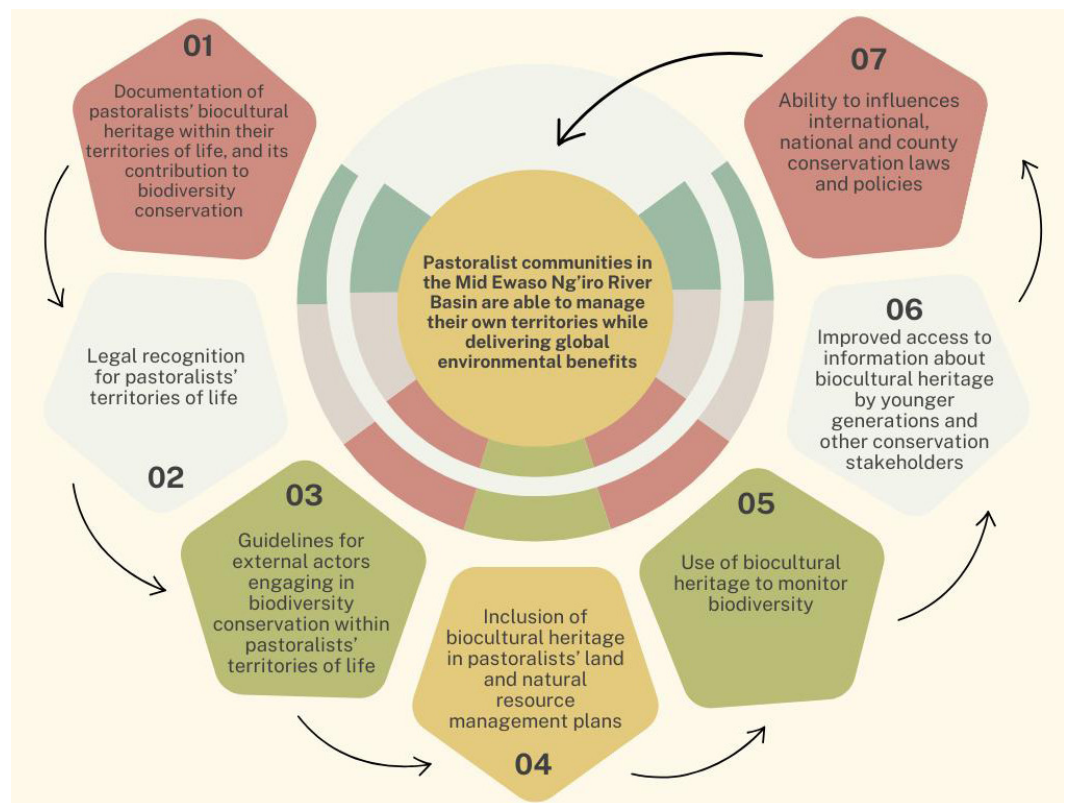
Monitoring and evaluating biocultural conservation according to culturally appropriate systems and indicators

Component 5: Continuing self-strengthening, communication, and advocacy for Indigenous self-determination in conservation

The first year of the project focused on Component 1. Key activities were carried out in consenting communities, and included:

- *Free, prior, and informed consent* among participating communities
- *Biocultural mapping* to document the presence of Indigenous Peoples in the landscape and their contributions to biodiversity conservation over time
- *Seasonal calendars* to understand how biocultural resources are accessed, used, and managed at different times of the year; why; and how this supports both biological and cultural diversity
- *Cultural keystone species* identification to understand which species of wild animals and plants are most integral to cultural diversity across the Mid-Ewaso

These activities will directly inform Year 2 activities, which include the development of biocultural protocols and management plans in line with Components 2 and 3 of the initiative.



ICI-KENYA OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



The need for dialogue on inclusive conservation



The world is looking to Indigenous Peoples and their territories to help achieve the biodiversity targets in the new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). A plethora of funding and programming is emerging with this shift, which purports to be inclusive of Indigenous Peoples and position their territories, life worlds, and livelihoods at the centre of conservation.

Yet, to date, no standards are in place to hold these initiatives to account and ensure that the unique rights of Indigenous Peoples are respected and safeguarded in inclusive conservation. There is a risk, therefore, that the shift towards inclusive conservation could, inadvertently, reproduce historical harms and injustices and place additional burdens on Indigenous Peoples.

For this reason, the Annual Forum sought to facilitate dialogue between key stakeholders in the Mid-Ewaso about the meaning of inclusive conservation, as well as key principles; best practices and possible benefits; and barriers and challenges, including how different stakeholders can help break down barriers and help inclusive conservation take root in the Mid-Ewaso.

“Inclusive conservation must respect Indigenous rights, avoid repeating historical harms, and grow from genuine dialogue and shared responsibility.”



This dialogue unfolded through (i) initial small group and plenary discussions around the question of “How can conservation be inclusive?”, organised according to stakeholder group; (ii) structured, thematic dialogue in small groups of mixed stakeholders around key themes that emerged from previous discussions (see figure on p.4); (iii) and a survey, in the style of a Policy Delphi, targeting decision- and policy-makers in attendance.

The results of these exercises were compiled and analysed to develop an initial declaration of inclusive conservation in the Mid-Ewaso. This draft manifesto is a living document, that will continue to be revisited and further developed collaboratively by stakeholders throughout the remaining years of the Inclusive Conservation Initiative. It is not yet a set of guidelines or standards, but the building blocks for future engagement and collective action.

2. A MANIFESTO FOR INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION

Why inclusive conservation?

The world faces a deepening biodiversity crisis. Recognition of this crisis has led to massive, coordinated efforts to halt and reverse the decline of species and ecosystem health at a global scale. The new GBF is one of the most significant mobilising forces behind these efforts. This includes the 30X30 agenda, which seeks to conserve 30 per cent of the planet by 2030. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is now raising the US \$200 billion agreed upon at COP-15 in 2022 to help realise 30X30.

It is in this context that the imperative for inclusive conservation has become clear. For one, most of the planet's biodiversity occurs within Indigenous territories. This is no coincidence, as Indigenous ways of being with and through nature have proven more sustainable across time than those of other (i.e. extractivist, industrialised) societies. Thus, ensuring Indigenous Peoples have control over what is conserved, where, and how could make significant strides in slowing biodiversity loss.

Additionally, Indigenous Peoples have long been excluded from and harmed through conservation. Across time, mainstream conservation models tend to separate (Indigenous) people from nature to secure wildlife habitat and monopolise on exclusive rights to access, use, and profit off nature in the name of conservation. With this in mind, halting and reversing declines in biodiversity and ecosystem health also requires efforts to redress injustices and violences against Indigenous Peoples and restore their rights to self-determination.



Why inclusive conservation in Kenya's Mid-Ewaso region?

The Mid-Ewaso Ng'iro River Basin is a microcosm of these global realities. Prior to British colonisation, ecosystems and landscapes across the Basin were shaped by interactions between diverse species, including domesticated animals, and the sociocultural and livelihood practices of different pastoralist societies.

With colonisation and settler colonial occupation in the 19th and 20th

centuries, landscapes in the Mid-Ewaso were violently cleared of Indigenous Peoples, their domesticated animals, and wildlife; partitioned according to commercially productive and unproductive zones; and segregated according to race, species, and land use and tenure systems.

Later, in the 1980s/90s and 2000s, conservation models were imported that allowed for wildlife to be conserved on private and Community Land, rather than national parks and reserves. Once again, Indigenous Peoples in the Mid-Ewaso found themselves both excluded from their natural heritage and left to navigate

externally driven models that yielded few or unreliable tangible benefits.

In the Mid-Ewaso, community-based models have shown progress in addressing historical patterns of exclusion, inequality, and marginalisation faced by Indigenous Peoples. Yet, ultimately, this progress tends to come from bringing Indigenous Peoples into mainstream conservation models, rather than reorganising conservation around the knowledge, values, and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples.



Principles of inclusive conservation

Within this context, there is a need to foster a shared understanding of inclusive conservation among relevant stakeholders in the Mid-Ewaso. This understanding needs to centre and privilege that of Indigenous Peoples, while also being informed by and accessible to wider stakeholders in the conservation landscape.

At the 2024 Annual Forum, all stakeholders present, including representatives from 24 Indigenous Communities across the Mid-Ewaso, worked together to lay the foundations for ongoing dialogue about key principles and practices of inclusive conservation. The results of this exercise have been documented and translated as directly as possible below.

It is hoped that this initial manifesto will develop into a full set of guidelines and standards through regular dialogue in the years to come, to promote accountability and, ultimately, ensure Indigenous Peoples rights are being safeguarded and respected in inclusive conservation.





i. What is inclusive conservation?

According to stakeholders at the Forum, inclusive conservation means:

Conservation where the right holders community of the land have right to own, use and manage their land as they are key decision makers for sustainable life

Conservation where local right holders hold key active roles in governing and managing, land water natural resources and biodiversity


An approach to conservation that incorporates the needs and priorities of communities and rightsholders

Empowering Indigenous Communities to better conserve their environment and wildlife using their traditional knowledge

Involving indigenous people and local communities in conservation and protection of biodiversity and all forms of natural resources

From these different meaning comes a working definition of inclusive conservation in the Mid-Ewaso Ng'iro River Basin

Inclusive conservation places the needs, priorities, and rights of Indigenous communities at the heart of conservation, ensuring their ways of knowing, using, and managing nature are safeguarded and their customary systems and traditional knowledge are preserved and strengthened



ii. What are some best practices and potential benefits of inclusive conservation?

Best practices

Developing strong benefits sharing frameworks, inclusive of age, ethnicity, gender, etc.

Supporting nature-based practices, such as bee keeping and harvesting of gums, resins, and wild fruits

Guaranteeing adequate participation of all age, ethnic, gender, and livelihood groups, including all communal land members, in collective decision-making

Completing documentation and legal recognition for communal land

Enshrining principles of inclusive conservation and traditional ecological knowledge in community by laws and management plans, etc., including customary governance systems, local languages, totems, etc.

Strengthening Indigenous and alternative conflict resolution systems that are fair and transparent

Recognising Indigenous presence and ensuring communities are central to project designs and management

Respecting traditional knowledge that may be specific to some elders

Acknowledging that land and resources belong to communities, recognising the existing structures, and giving back power to all management and decision-making systems and structures within their territories, by enabling them to be central in all interventions

Acknowledging cultural gender norms and roles in addressing gender disparities, and pursuing gender inclusion without disrupting societal structures

Developing effective reporting mechanism for human rights violations through paralegals and community paralegals

Mapping to understand the community set up in the entry point to understand all set ups and dynamics to understand how better to engage the community

Promoting FPIC compliance in all interventions, inclusively engaging all rightsholders and stakeholders while capacity building them to bridge the information gap

Conservation is currently done in an exclusive manner with fencing to protect animals. This needs to change and co-existence needs to be taken into order

Potential benefits

Biological diversity and ecology

It helps to protect a wider range of species by incorporating local knowledge and practices, leading to more effective biodiversity conservation

Wise use of available resources

Coming back of bio-cultural resources that have deteriorated in space and time

Benefits access, distribution, and sharing

Ecosystem restoration, enhanced food security, and increased income

Equitable benefit sharing; improved resource value and bio-diversity in general

Better livelihoods and empowered communities
Biocultural diversity on display

Co-existence and conflict transformation

Key benefits ensures reduced conflicts among the local communities leading to a peaceful co-existence

Community capacity building,

self-strengthening, and rights

Community voices are enhanced and self-determination through people participating in decision making on use and control resources sustainably

It will help community to protect their endangered species and ecosystem

It enhances Indigenous Peoples and Local communities' (IPs and LCs) efforts to steward land, water and natural resources to deliver global environment

Knowledge transfer among different community groups
It gives the community a sense of ownership and control over their land"

Revival of culture which upholds and forms the basis of all the rights of identity and ownership

Co-operation, collective action, and change

Collective action for the protection of natural resources can protect transboundary resources such as the Ewaso Ng'iro River

It challenges the policies that are already in place

Helps in fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards conservation efforts"



3. WHERE IS CHANGE NEEDED FOR INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION TO TAKE ROOT?

Age and gender

Recognition to ensure their cultural, age, gender interests are included

Communal land and resource tenure

Giving communities FPIC and also making sure it is community centred conservation. Ensure communities have their constitutional rights respected in the process of conservation

There is need to create awareness to communities and relevant stakeholders on the importance of Community Land registration while promoting goodwill among all stakeholders

Support the establishment of clear boundaries to promote shared resources and landscapes

Commercialisation of Community Lands, resources and conservation contributing to violation of rights

Governance, management, and decision-making

Conservation and management practices need to be inclusive of communities and other actors; community voices and needs need to be centered in decision-making and tenure rights ensuring conservation and management practices are inclusive

Forum participants discussing where change is needed for inclusive conservation to take root



Mechanisms to ensure accountability among stakeholders

Use of alternative dispute resolution such as traditional ways and dialogues on the same should be inclusive by capturing the views and needs of all people

Actors working in silos – partnership between all stakeholders within the conservation sector to streamline and align models and initiatives to maximise benefits to communities and reduce conflicts of interest

Monetising community engagements – actors to prioritise trust and relationship building with communities

Traditional knowledge and livelihoods

Recognition of the existing traditional systems and structures of the communities that we work in

Document, recognize and sharing of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge

Recognition of traditional knowledge, and should be embed in the laws

Break the language barrier: Parents and elderly to ensure their kids understand the language (loss of language = loss of culture)

Commercialisation of Community Lands, resources and conservation contributing to violation of rights

Rights and sovereignty

The government needs to respect and restore rights to community ancestral lands of IPs and LCs; actors need to support claims and litigations processes

Protection of human rights defenders

Public participation and public law by the government to ensure that human rights and FPIC are adhered to

Commercialisation of Community Lands, resources and conservation contributing to violation of rights

Respect to rights of the IPs by ensuring FPIC is observed and that interventions align with the cultures and beliefs of the communities

Forum participants discussing where change is needed for inclusive conservation to take root



4. WHAT BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES MIGHT PREVENT THIS CHANGE?

Communal land and resource tenure

Territories of life transcend political and administrative boundaries and, therefore conflict over administrative boundaries can affect inclusive conservation

Resource conflicts and land tenure issues

Lack of registration of Community Land

Governance, management, and decision-making

Unfavourable government policies on land

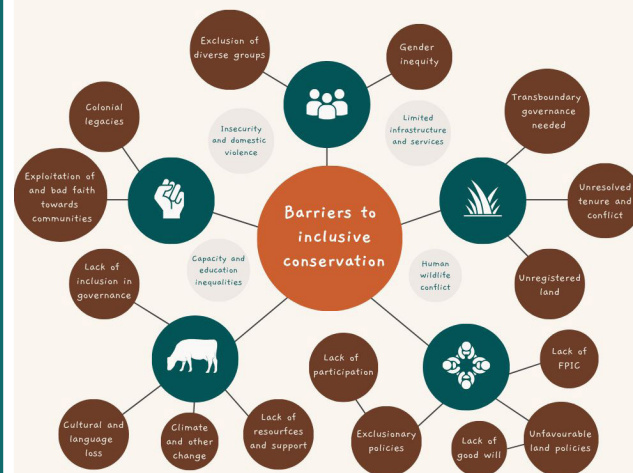
Insecurity, Illiteracy, politics, boundary disputes, etc.
Communities not given enough inclusion

Lack of political good will from the County Government for not putting legislation which support conservation

Changes in land use and management

Existing policy and legal frameworks leading to exclusion

Barriers to inclusive conservation



Traditional knowledge and livelihoods

Limited resources, inadequate knowledge dissemination to the local communities in the area of climate change, increased population and change of lifestyle away from tradition

Changes of human lifestyle and climate change

Rangeland degradation and habitat fragmentation from human activities

Climate change, loss of indigenous knowledge

Deterioration of cultural practices among the younger generations; break-down of traditional resource management practices; and conflict resolution mechanisms

Management and use of resources in the community is not inclusive due to culture – involvement in resource and land planning. Grazing structuring systems and indigenous knowledge systems

Rights and sovereignty

Colonial legacy of conservation which diminishes the rights of people and don't recognise as key holders of the land

Lack of proper community entry and sensitisation

Other related

Human wildlife conflicts

Challenges associated with remote communities such housing, food

Insecurity and domestic violence

Literacy levels and language barrier

Inaccessibility

5. HOW CAN THESE BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES BE OVERCOME AND WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS?

How can barriers and challenges be overcome?

Age and gender

Framework needs to be in place for inclusive and diverse public participation

Communal land and resource tenure

Recognise community user rights to their cultural and genetic resources, especially in government restricted areas such as community forests

Registration of Community Land to strengthen rights and sovereignty to their lands, resources and livelihoods

Governance, management, and decision-making

Involvement of community in drafting of policies

Government policy – all policies should be citizen driven
Engage all local and traditional leaders

Promote and strengthen transparency and accountability systems – through e.g., Annual General Meetings and villages meetings

Diverse, inclusive participation that works with customary institutions needed



Participatory decision-making in process

Develop systems like FPIC and accountability and grievance mechanisms as avenues of feedback and conflict resolution

Strengthening use and recognition of community by-laws on resource uses, access and benefit sharing

Traditional knowledge and livelihoods

Recognition and strengthening of community unity and structures/models

Reconciliation between modern and traditional ways of knowing – recognition of traditional knowledge, integrating traditional knowledge with education systems in the curriculum

Dialogue needs to be facilitated between education practitioners (CBC) and traditional leaders

Rights and sovereignty

There should be community framework on how to engage with external actors

Other related

Extensive community engagement and civic education



What are the roles of different stakeholders?

Government

Promoting favourable policies and laws that recognise and protect communal land rights, integration and formalisation of customary systems – should be inclusive of Indigenous and human rights policies and legislation

Ensure security of communal land and resource tenure – promote goodwill

Ensure communal land rights are respected, addressing any violations to IPs and LCs and environmental defenders

Promote human rights and laws

KWS and KFS Rangers should work together with community scouts

Promote curriculum sensitive to principles of inclusive conservation

Policy development

Financing inclusive conservation and other natural resources management initiatives

Provide compensation to those affected by human wildlife conflict

Linking community-level actors with other stakeholders

CSOs and NGOs

Capacity building, advocacy and awareness

Promote inclusive conservation practices through policy advocacy

Support local institutions, systems, and structures strengthening

Civic education and capacity building

Strengthen governance structures and systems

Fundraise and secure financing for inclusive conservation
Build links between communities with donors

Develop accountability structures

Simplifying relevant policies for communities

Creating awareness and advocacy

Resource mobilisation

Communities

Manage and monitor land and resource use for biodiversity and sustainability

Enforce community bylaws, rules, and regulations
Promote peace and coexistence

Ensuring that the traditional systems are followed

Develop management plans

Document and promote traditional knowledge

Conservancies and the private sector

Promote inclusivity in conservation, access and benefit sharing

Pursue Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for any issues affecting communities

Shift away from unfriendly conservation practices, embracing community-centred conservation and Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge

Ensure rangers are trained in human rights issues and closely monitored

Community conservancies to ensure inclusivity

Engage communities for capacity building

Invest in livelihood projects

Establish and/or agree to be held accountable to a grievance mechanism

Adopt transparent and accountable systems open to communities

Create linkages between community members and researchers

Resource mobilisation

6. WAY FORWARD

The next ICI-Kenya Annual Stakeholder Forum is expected to take place around July 2025. During the Forum, there will be an opportunity to revisit and refine principles of inclusive conservation in the Ewaso Ng'iro River Basin.

Before then, if you have ideas or opportunities for further engagement around inclusive conservation – or suggestions for stakeholder collaboration – please be in touch with the ICI-Kenya team



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