COMMUNITIES, CONSERVANCIES AND CARBON CREDITS

Workshop Report

Avid Hotel, Voi, Taita Taveta, Friday 27th

February 2026. 9am-2pm

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Photo credit: Kennedy Mkutu

OPENING REMARKS

Ms Florence Muriuki, Senior Assistant County Commissioner, on behalf of the County Commissioner.

Ms Muriuki welcomed participants to Voi, expressed appreciation for their attendance, and noted the importance of the session in understanding ongoing work and its potential benefits to the community. She acknowledged the timely start and formally declared the meeting open, expressing confidence that the engagement would be productive.

This was followed by remarks from Mr. Donald Mcharo, Chairperson of the Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA), who described TTWCA as the umbrella body representing 35 community-owned conservancies covering approximately 1,022,000 acres between Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks. He highlighted that these conservancies manage wildlife, livestock, tourism and other natural resources, including minerals, and noted that their biodiversity is comparable to that found in national parks. While acknowledging that conservancies have participated in carbon credit projects since 2010, with fourteen ranches currently engaged with Wildlife Works and others in discussion with additional partners, he emphasised that many members still lack a clear understanding of how carbon credits are calculated, marketed and monetised. He pointed out that although carbon assets originate from community land, the processes governing pricing and sales remain unclear. He expressed hope that the workshop would strengthen community understanding, support more informed participation and mark the beginning of sustained collaboration, while also noting the broader challenge that limited scientific knowledge often constrains communities from fully benefiting from their natural resources.

Representatives from partner institutions then made brief contributions. Professor Jagjit Plahe from Monash University, Australia and Professor Kristen Lyons from University of Queensland, Australia introduced themselves and Prof. Plahe reflected on ongoing collaboration with Kenyan researchers on climate change and carbon projects, noting previous engagement in June 2025 and expressing hope for continued partnership. Dr Yumi Yamane from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), based at the Nairobi Research Station and affiliated with Kyoto University, outlined the organisation's

role in promoting joint research between Japanese and African scholars and supporting collaboration through competitive grants, and indicated that she would later present findings on wildlife coexistence.

Photo credit: Kennedy Mkutu

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP

Professor Kennedy Mkutu, United States International University – Africa.

Prof. Mkutu outlined the purpose of the workshop as improving understanding of carbon credits, sharing research findings from Taita Taveta County, and creating space for participants to validate, challenge and refine those findings. He emphasised that the session was intended as a feedback process rather than a one-way presentation, recognising communities as custodians of the land and key users of the knowledge being shared. Drawing on previous research in the county, including work on sand harvesting and environmental degradation affecting River Voi, he illustrated how research can support awareness and community action when findings are openly shared. He explained

that the current study combined archival review, field visits and stakeholder interviews, with historical data used to contextualise present developments, and introduced Professor Kristen Lyons as the next speaker, noting her expertise in carbon credits and Indigenous engagement in Australia and the Solomon Islands.

Prof. Lyons confirmed her affiliation with the University of Queensland and her collaboration with Kenyan researchers, and indicated that her presentation would draw on experiences from Australia and the Solomon Islands, particularly in relation to community-led carbon projects and Indigenous participation, to inform reflections in the local context.

Several questions emerged during this section of the workshop, including whether the engagement would be sustained beyond the current session, how carbon credits are calculated, marketed and monetised, and how pricing mechanisms operate given that carbon assets originate from community land. Participants also questioned what lessons could be drawn from Indigenous carbon projects in Australia, what a genuinely community-driven model would look like, and how communities could move from being passive beneficiaries to informed participants. Additional concerns focused on how communities might better understand and utilise other natural resources, including minerals.

PRESENTATION ON CARBON OFFSET, INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS: INSIGHTS FROM AUSTRALIA & SOLOMON ISLANDS

Professor Kristen Lyons, University of Queensland, Australia

Prof. Lyons provided an overview of global climate trends and carbon market developments. She noted that global carbon dioxide emissions have reached record highs in 2024/25 and that agriculture, forestry and other land-use changes contribute a substantial share of global greenhouse gas emissions. Within this landscape, carbon offset markets have expanded as mechanisms through which high-emitting actors compensate for residual emissions.

However, the presentation emphasised that integrity challenges pose significant risks to the sector. In Australia, for example, serious concerns have been raised about the additionality and permanence of certain carbon projects, with some analyses suggesting that a significant proportion of projects may not deliver measurable and additional emission reductions. Such integrity failures undermine market credibility and threaten the viability of voluntary offset schemes.

At the same time, positive examples were highlighted. Indigenous-led savanna fire management projects in Australia demonstrate that carbon offset initiatives can deliver cultural, economic and environmental benefits when communities exercise leadership and retain control over land and knowledge systems. The Babatana Rainforest project in the Solomon Islands further illustrated how gender-sensitive design and Indigenous co-governance can strengthen both conservation outcomes and community livelihoods.

The central message from these global case studies was that carbon markets must move beyond the rhetoric of "co-benefits" and instead embed community rights, gender equity and land tenure clarity as foundational elements of project design.

PRESENTATION OF FIELD WORK REPORT: COMMUNITIES, CONSERVANCIES & CARBON CREDITS IN TAITA TAVETA COUNTY

Professor Kennedy Mkutu, United States International University-Africa

Prof. Mkutu began by emphasising that the purpose of the discussion was to validate and clarify the findings with participants. He encouraged participants to provide feedback, correct any inaccuracies and highlight any misunderstandings, stressing that this was not intended to be a one-way presentation but a report-back session. He also noted that the session would later move into group discussions focusing on a key question raised earlier: how to ensure that carbon projects are genuinely community-led.

Prof. Mkutu opened the discussion with a statement from one of the key informants: "We do not understand carbon credit. It is Greek to us." He used this to illustrate the widespread lack of understanding around carbon markets, noting that even researchers

find the system complex. He explained that the aim of his presentation was to unpack the concept in a way that is accessible and grounded in practical realities.

He then invited participants to consider the role of large multinational companies such as Shell, British Petroleum, British Airways and Netflix. These companies generate substantial revenues but are also major contributors to carbon emissions, which drive climate change. He pointed out that the impacts of climate change, including floods, droughts and extreme heat, are already being experienced, and that the burden often falls on poorer communities that contribute the least to global emissions. In response to increasing pressure, he explained that many companies do not significantly reduce their emissions but instead adopt a system of "offsetting." This is linked to the concept of "net zero," where companies claim to balance their emissions by paying others to reduce or absorb carbon on their behalf.

Prof. Mkutu explained that a carbon credit represents the reduction or removal of one tonne of carbon dioxide, and that these credits are traded internationally. He illustrated how a company in Europe or Australia can invest in a project in Kenya, with the carbon absorbed or avoided in that project being counted against emissions elsewhere. In this way, he highlighted that the local environment become integrated into a global marketplace.

He outlined three main ways in which carbon credits are generated: avoiding deforestation by protecting forests, reforestation or afforestation through tree planting, and improving forest management practices to increase carbon absorption. He noted that these processes rely on technical calculations conducted by experts, which are then translated into credits that can be bought and sold.

However, he raised a central concern regarding whether these projects prioritise carbon outcomes over community needs. He stressed that carbon should not replace community priorities and that communities must remain at the centre of such initiatives. He further explained that the system involves multiple actors, including local communities, conservancies, county and national governments, project developers, verification bodies, NGOs, intermediaries and corporate buyers. He described this as a complex global supply-

and-demand system, where investors provide capital and corporations seek credits, linking areas such as Taita Taveta to international markets.

Prof. Mkutu emphasised that carbon markets operate as large commercial systems governed by legally binding contracts. He noted that these contracts can extend over long periods, sometimes decades, and require careful understanding. He raised concerns about potential risks, including drought, market collapse, scandals or financial crises, and questioned what protections exist for communities. He highlighted the need to consider whether insurance mechanisms are in place and who bears responsibility if projects fail.

He explained that there are two types of carbon markets: compliance markets, which are government-regulated, and voluntary markets, which are less structured. He noted that Kenya is primarily engaged in the voluntary market, which is growing rapidly but lacks strong regulatory oversight, thereby increasing the importance of governance, awareness and accountability.

While acknowledging that carbon markets are often presented as a "win-win" solution—benefiting the environment, businesses and communities—he also pointed to significant criticisms. These include the possibility that companies continue polluting while relying on offsets, that some projects may not deliver genuine emission reductions, and that there have been instances of failure and fraud globally. He also raised concerns about whether communities are fully informed when entering into such agreements.

He further questioned whether these projects truly reduce emissions or whether the outcomes would have occurred regardless. He highlighted issues of fairness in benefit distribution and the extent to which communities understand contractual obligations. He also pointed to the imbalance of power between corporations, which have access to legal and technical expertise, and communities, which often do not. He warned that entering into agreements without full understanding can have serious long-term consequences.

Turning to the Kenyan context, Prof. Mkutu noted that as of 2025 there are approximately 417 voluntary carbon market projects in the country, involving 129 project developers and numerous international buyers, including major multinational corporations. He referenced recent legislative developments, including the Climate Change (Amendment) Act of 2023, carbon market regulations and the establishment of a national carbon registry, describing

these as positive steps. However, he emphasised that challenges remain in implementation, local awareness, county-level policy development, revenue-sharing arrangements and the effectiveness of regulatory protections for communities.

He explained that the research in Taita Taveta aimed to understand how carbon offsetting operates locally, assess whether there is evidence of a just transition, examine both benefits and harms, and evaluate the extent of meaningful community participation in decision-making. He noted that a participatory action approach was used, involving interviews, archival research and stakeholder engagement, and that the site was selected due to its active involvement in carbon projects and existing research relationships.

Finally, Prof. Mkutu highlighted the importance of considering the role of women within carbon markets, noting that women often bear the burden of economic shocks. He stressed that their inclusion and protection are essential. He concluded by emphasising that knowledge is critical, and that communities must understand how carbon markets function, including how credits are generated, how contracts operate, and what risks are involved. Without this understanding, he warned, vulnerability increases. He closed by returning to the central question of how carbon markets can be structured in a way that is just, transparent and genuinely community-centred.

The following questions were raised explicitly or implied during the session:

1. How do we ensure carbon projects are genuinely community-led?
2. How exactly do carbon credits work?
3. How are carbon credits calculated and monetised?
4. Are communities truly at the centre of these projects?
5. What protections exist if a project fails or markets collapse?
6. Is there insurance for communities against market shocks?

7. What are the contract terms and durations?
8. Do communities fully understand what they are signing?
9. What is the role of women in carbon markets?
10. Which carbon market is Kenya participating in—voluntary or compliance?
11. Does the county government have its own carbon policy?
12. How is revenue shared between national and county governments?
13. Are national regulations sufficient to protect communities?
14. Do carbon projects genuinely reduce emissions?
15. Are corporations continuing to pollute while offsetting elsewhere?
16. Are communities making informed choices?
17. How can power imbalances between corporations and communities be addressed?
18. What would a just and community-centred carbon market look like?

Participants discussed the integration of indigenous knowledge systems within carbon and biodiversity initiatives. Some participants emphasised that traditional African land management practices, including grazing systems and ecological stewardship, already reflect a sophisticated understanding of environmental sustainability. Indigenous knowledge, particularly that held by elders, was identified as a critical resource for understanding environmental change and strengthening resilience. The discussion underscored the importance of preserving cultural practices and ensuring that carbon market interventions do not displace existing livelihoods, but instead build upon indigenous systems, including the use of local crops, land-use practices and community-based environmental management approaches.

In relation to nature-based solutions, participants highlighted that conservation and protection of existing ecosystems should take precedence over restoration efforts. This led to a discussion on biodiversity projects, with particular attention to the potential for generating biodiversity credits through land restoration. It was noted that degraded lands, such as former plantation areas, present opportunities for ecological recovery; however, restoration efforts must prioritise indigenous species and avoid the introduction of invasive or commercially driven monocultures. The relationship between biodiversity and carbon sequestration was clearly articulated, with recognition that increased biodiversity enhances carbon capture across ecosystems, including within soil systems. At the same time, concerns were raised regarding current carbon measurement systems, which are largely controlled by external actors. Participants suggested the need for accessible

technologies that would enable communities to independently monitor carbon capture, thereby reducing reliance on third-party verification systems.

The discussion then examined the conditions required to achieve a just carbon offsetting system. A central issue identified was land tenure, with participants emphasising that clear ownership and land rights are fundamental to determining who benefits from carbon projects. In cases where land tenure is unclear, formal agreements with government institutions may be necessary. The concept of justice within carbon markets was explored through three key dimensions. Procedural justice was understood as the need for transparent, inclusive and well-defined processes in project design and implementation. Distributive justice focused on the equitable allocation of financial benefits among community members, taking into account variations in land ownership and participation. Compensatory justice addressed the need for mechanisms to protect communities from risks, including environmental shocks, project failure or market volatility, with particular emphasis on the role of insurance and risk-sharing arrangements. Participants stressed that these elements must be explicitly defined within contractual agreements and supported by appropriate policy frameworks.

As the session progressed, participants were guided towards group-based discussions structured around the concept of community-led carbon projects. Key considerations included the extent to which communities are involved in project design, whether they retain the right to decline participation, and whether engagement occurs at an appropriate stage before decisions are finalised. Additional focus was placed on benefit-sharing mechanisms, gender inclusion and the need for safeguards to protect communities in cases where projects fail or deliver limited returns. Participants also raised broader concerns regarding the long-term implications of carbon offsetting, questioning the duration for which communities should continue to bear responsibility for offsetting emissions generated elsewhere, and whether mechanisms should exist to allow communities to withdraw from projects under unfavourable conditions.

Significant attention was given to governance and representation within community decision-making processes. Participants questioned how communities are defined in negotiation contexts, who is authorised to represent them, and what criteria should determine representation, particularly in large populations. It was suggested that

communities could be organised into smaller units or zones to facilitate more inclusive and effective participation. Concerns were also raised regarding the use of non-disclosure agreements in carbon contracts, which may limit transparency and restrict community engagement. In response, participants emphasised the importance of securing independent legal representation to ensure that community interests are adequately protected, noting that reliance on lawyers provided by project proponents or external organisations may result in conflicts of interest.

The discussion further addressed the complexities associated with mixed land tenure systems, where community, private and public lands coexist within a single project area. It was noted that each category of land must be negotiated separately, with agreements tailored to their respective ownership and governance structures, before being integrated into a unified project framework. The importance of clearly defined benefit-sharing arrangements was emphasised, particularly to prevent disputes and ensure equitable outcomes across different stakeholders. Participants also reflected on existing governance models, including special purpose vehicles, highlighting cases where such structures have led to elite capture and a shift away from community priorities. These experiences reinforced the need for strong governance systems, transparency and accountability mechanisms in the design and implementation of carbon projects.

Overall, the discussion highlighted that community cohesion is a critical factor in strengthening negotiating power within carbon markets. It was observed that fragmentation within communities can weaken their position, whereas collective organisation enhances their ability to secure favourable terms. The session concluded with a clear emphasis on the need for carbon and biodiversity projects to be grounded in indigenous knowledge, supported by robust legal and institutional frameworks, and designed to ensure meaningful participation, transparency and equitable benefit sharing.

WORKSHOP SESSION: WHAT WOULD A MORE JUST OFFSETTING INDUSTRY LOOK LIKE?

Building on the earlier discussions, participants turned their attention to a critical question: what would a more just carbon offsetting industry look like? This session was structured around two interconnected themes: first, the practical elements of a community-led project, and second, the safeguards required when things go wrong. The conversation that followed revealed deep concerns about process, power, and the foundational conditions necessary for genuine community participation.

The first group to report highlighted significant procedural shortcomings in current practice. They observed that most public participation processes are conducted by project proponents themselves, raising concerns about integrity and transparency. A significant knowledge gap persists within communities, compounded by unclear timelines and existing policy gaps. The group also emphasised the need to clearly define what is meant by "community," noting that without such clarity, participation risks becoming tokenistic.

When asked whether there had been disagreement during their deliberations, a representative acknowledged that while contrasting views emerged, consensus was

ultimately reached. However, they cautioned that outcomes remain heavily dependent on the nature of negotiations. Negotiation is inherently unequal when one party holds significantly more power than the other. Poverty, they noted, makes communities vulnerable; when opportunities arise, people may accept them without fully understanding the implications. This reinforced the view that national policies must be operationalised at local levels to provide meaningful protective frameworks.

Another participant added that communities are often on the receiving end of these arrangements, unable to effectively debate or challenge more powerful actors. This fundamental power imbalance underscores the necessity of proper information before consent can be given. The facilitator reflected on this point, noting that power is central to understanding carbon markets and inviting participants to consider how communities might navigate these dynamics.

Contributions from online participants deepened the analysis. Professor Kariuki Kirigia from the University of Toronto, drawing on his work in land governance and carbon credits, argued that strengthening communities requires local organisation and awareness creation facilitated by genuine local NGOs. Such organisations, he suggested, can help communities understand both benefits and risks in accessible language, rather than simply transmitting investor messaging.

Mr Philip Lenaiyasa, a conservation specialist, speaking from experience in northern Kenya, stressed that unity within communities is critical. Carbon is treated as a valuable enterprise, he noted, but communities often do not conceptualise it as such. Brokers exploit divisions, and if communities are not united, they can easily be divided and ruled. He called for NGOs with genuine goodwill that prioritise community benefit and warned that powerful actors exploit weaknesses in procedural processes. Communities must insist on transparency and hold proponents accountable, as powerful entities may manipulate processes and claim compliance where none existed.

Mr Lenaiyasa also highlighted the use of technical language as a barrier. In some northern communities, carbon has been dismissively described as “selling air,” without any real understanding of the global mechanisms behind it. Long-term contracts—sometimes extending thirty years—may be signed without communities fully grasping the

implications. Moreover, international agreements such as Article 6 of the Paris Agreement can alter how carbon markets function even after contracts are signed. He concluded by urging communities to familiarise themselves with both county and national laws before entering any carbon agreement.

The second group's presentation shifted the focus toward what genuine community leadership would entail. The group emphasised that communities must lead in defining and managing benefits, with equitable distribution as a core principle. A clear exit strategy was identified as essential to avoid donor dependency. Protection of biodiversity was framed as a fundamental community responsibility, building on long histories of coexisting with wildlife and safeguarding natural resources. The development and enforcement of bylaws were recommended to formalise this protection.

Indigenous knowledge was positioned as central to project design and implementation. The group argued that such knowledge must inform carbon projects and be transmitted to future generations. To build internal capacity, they recommended adopting a training-of-trainers model.

On procedural safeguards, the group stressed the importance of capacity building to ensure communities fully understand project components. Awareness creation and sensitisation were deemed essential. Resource inventory mapping and land mobilisation were discussed in depth, with attention to land tenure systems, land rights, land administration, land use, and succession challenges. Many parcels of land remain registered in the names of deceased ancestors, complicating inheritance and legal processes. The group underscored the importance of policies, laws, and regulations to protect communities.

Concerns about social disintegration were also raised. The erosion of traditional values and weakened intergenerational relationships can undermine collective decision-making. Education, including civic education, was identified as critical. The group noted that technological advancement can either empower or disadvantage communities depending on how knowledge is shared and accessed.

Summarising the group's contributions, the facilitator highlighted key themes: sustainable benefit utilisation, equitable distribution, exit strategies, protection through bylaws,

inclusion of indigenous knowledge, training mechanisms, capacity building, land governance, succession planning, policy frameworks, social cohesion, civic education, and the appropriate use of technology.

Prof. Kirigia returned to the theme of indigenous knowledge, drawing on examples from Canada and other regions where communities have developed their own engagement protocols. These protocols function as constitutions governing how external actors interact with them. Such frameworks ensure that communities retain ownership of knowledge and require researchers or investors to deposit collected information back with the community. Clear communication and documentation are essential. He emphasised the value of community-developed protocols as a bulwark against exploitation.

He further discussed the importance of building knowledge repositories—community libraries that preserve written and audio materials in local languages. These repositories serve as accessible databases for future generations. The goal, he said, is not only to protect the present generation but to empower future generations through preserved knowledge and institutional memory.

The conversation concluded with reflections on land governance. Even where land is held communally, market pressures and privatisation trends create risks. The key protection mechanism remains informed engagement. Communities must understand land markets, contracts, and governance frameworks in order to avoid unintended land loss.

PRESENTATION: TRANSFORMATION & COEXISTENCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEOPARDS & PEOPLE IN "RURAL AREA", KENYA

Dr. Yumi Yamane, Kyoto University and Japan Society for Promotion of Sciences, Kenya.

The presentation began by highlighting the ecological and social challenges faced in areas where wildlife and pastoral communities share the same landscape. In some regions, livestock populations far exceed human populations, with goats and sheep forming a significant part of local livelihoods. At the same time, key predators such as lions have become locally extinct in certain areas. As a result, leopards and hyenas have become the dominant predators. These animals often prey on smaller herbivores, but because livestock are abundant and easier to capture, they frequently target goats and sheep. This creates significant conflict with local communities, who depend heavily on livestock for their survival. In areas such as Baringo, which are not major tourist destinations and where economic benefits from wildlife are minimal, communities often perceive wildlife as a liability rather than a resource. Without tourism revenue or other tangible benefits, people struggle to see the value of conservation, particularly when wildlife causes direct losses through livestock predation.

It was against this backdrop that Dr. Yamane introduced emerging environmental market mechanisms, specifically carbon credits and biodiversity credits, as potential pathways for generating economic value from conservation. While carbon credits are designed to compensate for greenhouse gas emissions by funding projects that reduce or remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, biodiversity credits function differently. They are tradable units that represent measurable gains in biodiversity, such as the restoration of habitat or the protection of threatened species. Unlike carbon credits, which focus on climate outcomes, biodiversity credits aim to directly reward improvements in ecological health.

The speaker explained that these circumstances often lead to retaliatory killing of predators. As leopard and hyena populations increase in response to the availability of livestock prey, communities may kill them to protect their animals. In doing so, they may unintentionally destroy valuable ecological resources. Efforts to manage the conflict

sometimes involve translocating problematic animals. Working closely with the Kenya Wildlife Service, the research team has been involved in monitoring such cases. Problematic leopards captured in areas such as Nairobi are sometimes relocated to national parks like Meru, Tsavo West, and Marsabit. However, GPS tracking has shown that many of these animals eventually leave the parks and move into nearby community areas. Once there, they often prey on livestock again, leading communities to kill them. In a study involving six translocated leopards fitted with GPS collars, four were eventually killed by communities after leaving protected areas. These outcomes demonstrate that translocation alone is not always an effective long-term solution to human–wildlife conflict.

The discussion then shifted toward the need to transform wildlife from a source of conflict into a source of economic benefit for communities. One emerging approach is the development of environmental markets, particularly carbon credits and biodiversity credits. Carbon credit systems already allow countries or organisations that emit large amounts of carbon dioxide to offset their emissions by supporting conservation or restoration projects elsewhere. More recently, a related concept known as biodiversity credit has begun to emerge globally. While carbon credits focus on reducing carbon emissions, biodiversity credits aim to measure and reward improvements in biodiversity and habitat conservation. Several countries are currently leading the development of these systems, including the United Kingdom, France, and Australia.

An example from the United Kingdom is the Biodiversity Net Gain policy, which requires developers to ensure that biodiversity increases by at least 10% after development compared with the baseline condition of the land. If developers cannot achieve this increase within their project site, they must purchase biodiversity credits from other areas where biodiversity is being protected or enhanced. This mechanism works in a similar way to carbon credit markets. Developed countries that have already exhausted much of their natural resources may rely on biodiversity and ecological assets from other regions, including Africa, to meet these requirements. As a result, ecosystems and wildlife in countries like Kenya could gain measurable economic value in global environmental markets.

However, Dr Yamane cautioned that these emerging systems also carry risks. If carbon and biodiversity markets are introduced without proper understanding and participation from local communities, there is a danger that external actors could benefit while local people remain marginalised. Communities living alongside wildlife bear the costs of conservation through crop damage, livestock loss, and safety risks, yet they are often excluded from decision-making processes. Therefore, it is essential that communities become active participants in shaping conservation policies and environmental market systems. Local people possess extensive indigenous knowledge and long histories of coexistence with wildlife, making them key stakeholders and experts in sustainable management.

In Kenya, wildlife remains relatively abundant in many pastoral landscapes, including regions such as Taita Taveta County. Yet in non-tourism areas, human–wildlife conflict remains highly visible, and many communities struggle to see the practical benefits of conservation. With the rise of carbon and biodiversity credit markets, wildlife and ecosystems may increasingly be recognised as economic assets. If communities are properly involved, these systems could provide new opportunities for income generation and sustainable development. Strong local leadership, transparent governance, and collaboration between communities, government institutions, and researchers will be essential in ensuring that conservation initiatives benefit local people while protecting biodiversity.

Following the presentation, participants were invited to ask questions and offer comments. One participant emphasised that conservation must ultimately benefit local communities. While protecting species such as leopards is important, increasing wildlife populations without addressing community concerns could intensify conflict. The participant stressed that conservation strategies should ensure that communities gain tangible benefits and remain central to decision-making processes. Another participant called on county government representatives to accelerate the development and implementation of spatial planning initiatives that could help balance conservation goals with sustainable land use.

CLOSING REMARKS

Mr Donald Mcharo, Chairperson Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancy Association

Mr Mcharo praised the workshop as a rare and valuable opportunity for collaboration. He noted that research and scientific guidance are essential for transforming natural resources into sustainable livelihoods. Reflecting on past experiences, he shared a story illustrating how communities sometimes fail to recognise the wealth contained within their own natural resources, while outsiders often see and profit from it. He emphasised the importance of changing this mindset so that local people can recognise and harness their own environmental wealth. The chairperson expressed optimism that younger generations are beginning to adopt a more proactive approach to conservation and resource management. He also encouraged participants to consider how the knowledge shared during the workshop could be translated into practical actions that improve livelihoods and strengthen conservation efforts. Finally, he thanked all participants, researchers, government representatives, and community members for their contributions and commitment to the shared goal of sustainable development.

The workshop concluded with remarks emphasising collaboration and continued engagement among all stakeholders. The speaker noted that while progress had been made, the discussions should not be seen as an end but rather the beginning of further work together. There was a strong interest in partnering with the county government to help develop a policy framework, while also engaging with various branches to explore how community governance could be strengthened. The importance of unity was highlighted through a reference to the words of Christ in John 17, emphasising that collective action enables greater progress than individual efforts. Participants were encouraged to work together so that the county could successfully develop and implement meaningful initiatives.

The speaker also acknowledged the international collaboration that had supported the workshop. Colleagues joining online from different countries were thanked for their participation, including contributors from Australia and Canada. It was noted that Toronto hosts one of the world's leading conservation schools, and that bringing together experts from such institutions provided valuable learning opportunities. The organisers expressed hope that the connections formed during the workshop would continue beyond the event, encouraging ongoing dialogue between partners in different regions such as Taita and Samburu. The aim was to maintain communication, share knowledge, and build stronger networks that would support conservation and community development efforts.

Gratitude was also extended to individuals and institutions that had supported the initiative. Special appreciation was given to those who assisted when help was needed, demonstrating generosity and willingness to collaborate. Organisations such as GSBS, Yota University, TTWCA, and the ranchers who attended were thanked for their contributions and participation. The organisers recognised the efforts of team members who coordinated the event, acknowledging that the workshop would not have been possible without their work in planning and bringing people together. Participants were encouraged to take away useful insights from the discussions and to reach out if further collaboration or assistance was needed.

Photo credit: Kennedy Mkutu

All presentations are available on the following link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_niSXO-d_oWdgstfIKVGgAEslcN-9b8x?usp=sharing

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