

Forum Focus Newsletter



Conservation in Action

Q1 Edition 2024

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LWF's commitment to sustainable ecosystems

BECOME OUR MEMBER TODAY

Join us in making a difference for wildlife conservation and the restoration of our natural resources in the greater Laikipia region. As a friend, philanthropist, and well-wisher, your support is vital to the success of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum.

With your generous donation, we can continue to work towards championing for wildlife conservation and sustainable natural resources management in the greater Laikipia landscape. Your contribution, no matter the size, will help us to ensure a future where the landscapes flora and fauna thrives and flourishes. Please consider making a donation today and together, we can create a better environment for all.

Also, you can access our membership brochure using the provided QR Code and feel free to subscribe to any of the membership categories highlighted.



PAYMENT DETAILS

Name: Laikipia Wildlife Forum
A/C Number: 0100004071926
Bank: Stanbic Bank
Branch: Nanyuki Branch

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MPESA
Paybill Number: 898370
A/C Name: Membership or Your Name

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Laikipia Wildlife Forum is excited to unveil our First Quarter Newsletter, a testament to our collaborative efforts and significant strides in conservation. As we pause to reflect on our journey and rejoice in our accomplishments, we are excited to share our latest milestones and partnerships that have propelled us forward in our mission to safeguard the Laikipia Landscape.

Foremost, our heartfelt gratitude extends to our esteemed development partners, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and Alliance Bioversity International-CIAT. Their steadfast support and collaboration have played a pivotal role in the successful implementation of our programs. Additionally, we warmly welcome our new partners, TerraFund for AFR100 and People Powered, whose contributions promise to enrich our joint efforts in conservation and sustainability.

Our success is indebted to the unwavering support and collaboration of a diverse array of entities, including the National Government represented by lead agencies and Departments, County Governments within our jurisdiction, Civil Society Organizations, and private sector collaborators. Together, we have laid the foundation for effective wildlife management, environmental conservation, and sustainable resource utilization. Your ongoing support serves as a beacon of inspiration as we strive for a brighter future.

At the core of every achievement lies the dedication and passion of our exceptional team and stakeholders. We commend your tireless efforts and expertise, which have been instrumental in driving positive change within our region. Through our collective endeavors, we have overcome challenges and turned aspirations into reality.

To our valued members, your steadfast support and invaluable contributions are the bedrock of our success. Your collaborative spirit and commitment to our shared vision propel us forward on our journey toward a sustainable future.

We hope this newsletter will not only document our journey but also ignite inspiration. May it exemplify the transformative power of teamwork and collective action in shaping a sustainable future for our environment and natural resources.

John Kiongo
Membership and Communications Officer

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



We, at the Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF), trust that you all began the year 2024 well, and it is our hope that you will continue supporting and journeying with us in our effort to conserve the Upper Ewaso Ng'iro Basin. This quarter of the year has been one of celebrations both internally and externally. Internally, we celebrated being one of the beneficiaries of the TERRAFUND for AFR100 by joining other champions in the inception meeting held in Naivasha to roll out the grant.

We also celebrated with one of our key partners when she launched Orkedi Art, Nature, and Education Foundation in Nanyuki. Externally, we joined other stakeholders in celebrating four International Days, namely World Wetlands Day, World Wildlife Day, the International Day of Forests, and World Water Day. Synergies were manifested in the seamless way in which both the build-up activities and the main day celebrations were done.

Synergies are a result of reaching out to other stakeholders for networks and partnerships. In this quarter, we formed partnerships with the Northern Kenya Conservation Clubs (NKCC) and MpalaLive. NKCC comprises sixteen (16) school conservation clubs, and we intend to work with them in executing our Conservation Education Programme and increasing the number of schools with conservation clubs.

MpalaLive will work with LWF to ensure enhanced publicity, visibility, and reach. Furthermore, in the spirit of partnership, we hosted FAO-funded partners to share experiences and brainstorm on sustainability with the expiry of donor funds.

For networking, we were glad to host, together with the Laikipia Tourism Association (LTA), representatives from the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) in their endeavor to boost tourism in the Laikipia landscape. We were also delighted to host Dr. Darcy Ogada of the Peregrine Fund when she visited LWF and made a presentation on raptors. This added a milestone to our networking efforts as we agreed to collaborate in conserving this endangered group of birds.

As we continue growing, we grow others too. LWF, through funding from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), continued its commitment to community empowerment by organizing a beekeeping training for members of the Dupoto Beekeepers and Marketing Cooperative Society. In addition, we collaborated with the Water Resources Authority (WRA) to host a transformative training session aimed at bolstering the sustainability and efficiency of community water projects (CWPs) in Laikipia North.

LWF is renowned for its vibrant Conservation Education programme with outreach to schools and society at large. Anchored on this, and with financial support from FAO, we facilitated an inaugural Conservation Education Forum Day and conducted two phases of debates in Laikipia North Sub-County. Such engagements, particularly with schools and the youth, have shaped the thinking of young minds, as shared by James Njihia, one of the youthful members of LWF.

I hope you will enjoy reading our stories, and as you do, think of a tree telling a story because that is what "MyGeoTree: Farm Restoration App" is all about. Let's grow trees.

Ms. Celline Achieng'
Executive Director
Laikipia Wildlife Forum

ABOUT LAIKIPIA WILDLIFE FORUM

Laikipia Wildlife Forum also referred to as LWF, is a dynamic membership led conservation organization supporting, coordinating and facilitating conservation and natural resource management initiatives within the greater Laikipia Landscape.

Laikipia Wildlife Forum also referred to as LWF, is a dynamic membership led conservation organization supporting, coordinating and facilitating conservation and natural resource management initiatives within the greater Laikipia Landscape. We provide a platform for dialogue for a cross section of land owners and land users including local community groups, private ranchers, pastoralists, small-scale farmers and tourism industry players.

Our mantra of “Forumness” calls on us to bring people together to work on matters relevant to natural resource management. LWF provides a platform for people to find solutions to common problems. This is what makes it unique and is the origin of Laikipia Wildlife Forum.

OUR VISION

To nurture, support, and partner with organizations championing wildlife conservation and sustainable natural resource management within the greater Laikipia region

OUR MISSION

To realize a productive and robust Upper Ewaso Ng’iro landscape that supports livelihoods and healthy populations of wildlife

Our mantra of “Forumness” calls on us to bring people together to work on matters relevant to natural resource management.



LWF provides a platform for people to find solutions to common problems



CELEBRATING TERRAFUND FOR AFR100'S RESTORATION CHAMPIONS: COHORT 2

In a jubilant gathering at Lake Naivasha Simba Lodge from January 23rd to January 25th, Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) joined hands with other stakeholders to commemorate the success of the restoration champions selected for funding through TerraFund for AFR100. This three-day event marked the beginning of a transformative journey towards reclaiming our environment, with 36 organizations poised to contribute to Kenya's commitment of restoring 5.1 million hectares of land by 2030.

Back in 2015, Africa embarked on an ambitious mission to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land by 2030, with Kenya pledging to restore 5.1 million hectares. To accelerate progress towards this goal, TerraFund for AFR100 was established in 2021. This consortium, comprising the World Resources Institute (WRI), One Tree Planted, Realize Impact, and Barka Fund, aims to provide financial assistance and support to local communities engaged in land restoration efforts.

The event kicked off with a warm welcome, with notable guests including Peter Ndunda and Dr. Susan Chomba from WRI Africa, George Tarus representing the Principal Secretary (PS), State Department of Forestry, and Mr. Gitonga Mugambi, delivering speeches that underscored the potential impact of the restoration movement. Attendees were introduced to TerraFund's 36 Restoration Champions from Kenya, followed by insightful discussions from partners in Cohort 1 during panel sessions.



Peter Mathenge joins the chief guest, Dr. Susan Chomba, and other dignitaries for a photo during the celebrations

Day 2 marked the commencement of the onboarding process, featuring community-building exercises, in-depth discussions on TerraFund’s initiative and the Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) framework, and an introduction to geospatial data collection systems. Presentations emphasized the importance of trust and collaboration between restoration champions and the TerraFund team. Additionally, two champions from TerraFund’s “Top 100” cohort shared their progress and offered valuable advice on succeeding in conservation efforts. Caroline Kariuki of Green Pot Enterprises, a recipient of two investments from TerraFund, shared insights on balancing restoration and financial returns, while Grace Wacu Nding’uri of Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO) provided inspiration and guidance for new partners based on KENVO’s experiences throughout the TerraFund process.

On the final day, the onboarding process concluded with further guidance on reporting and support mechanisms from TerraFund. Each partner had the opportunity to engage in personal support sessions with TerraFund staff, allowing champions to delve deeper into their projects.

The event culminated with a speech from Will Anderson, expressing gratitude to his Kenyan colleagues for their dedication and emphasizing the available support system for champions both locally and globally.



Restoration champions engage in a networking session.

The celebration at Lake Naivasha Simba Lodge marked a significant milestone in the journey towards restoring our environment, underscoring the collective commitment to creating a sustainable future for generations to come.

This three-day event marked the beginning of a transformative journey towards reclaiming our environment, with 36 organizations poised to contribute to Kenya’s commitment of restoring 5.1 million hectares of land by 2030

LWF SECURES FUNDING FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE PROJECT FROM PEOPLE POWERED

We are delighted to announce that Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) has successfully secured funding from People Powered to initiate an impactful climate resilience project in Laikipia County. This project represents a significant stride in our ongoing mission to empower local communities and foster sustainable environmental practices.

In line with our commitment to community engagement and capacity building, LWF staff have undergone rigorous training in various participatory methods, including citizen's assemblies, participatory policy making, legislative theatres, and participatory budgeting. These methodologies will enable us to effectively involve community members in decision-making processes and ensure their voices are central to the project's activities.



LWF's Project Officer Susan Gathoni engages with a community member during a recent field activity. Community engagement and participation are integral to our work

The project is scheduled to run for one year, from April 2024 to April 2025, encompassing a range of activities aimed at enhancing the capacity of target groups in Laikipia County. Drawing from our detailed work plans, we are excited to highlight some key activities that will be undertaken:

Awareness Workshops: We will conduct workshops to raise awareness among Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and community members about climate change and its impacts on the local environment, livelihoods, and public health. These workshops will emphasize the importance of local climate action and the role of WDCs in shaping climate policies.

Comprehensive Training: Representatives from all 15 wards in Laikipia County will receive comprehensive training on climate policy development. This will include identifying climate challenges, conducting vulnerability assessments, and formulating adaptation and mitigation strategies. Additionally, training will cover project management, monitoring and evaluation, and fundraising techniques to support the implementation of climate initiatives.

Participatory Planning Sessions: LWF will facilitate participatory planning sessions in three wards, Ngobit, Nanyuki and Mukogodo East, encouraging inclusive discussions on climate challenges and identifying priority areas for action. WDCs from these wards, alongside community leaders and representatives from local organizations, will collaboratively develop Ward Development Plans, crucial for leveraging funds from the County Government through the Financing Locally-Led Climate Action (FLLoCa) program.

Advocacy for Policy Adoption: We will work with WDCs to advocate for the adoption and implementation of climate-resilient policies at the county level, particularly the rainwater harvesting policy. This will involve organizing stakeholder meetings, policy dialogues, and public awareness campaigns to generate support for the proposed policy. Additionally, we will engage a consultant to support the WDCs in generating a Policy Brief with recommendations for presentation in the County Assembly.

The main outcome of this project will be if the County Government of Laikipia adopts the rainwater harvesting policy for Laikipia County. This policy will play a pivotal role in mitigating the effects of climate change and promoting sustainable water management practices, ultimately benefiting local communities and ecosystems.

By employing citizen's assemblies and partnering closely with duty bearers from the County Government of Laikipia, government agencies and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Laikipia, we aim to enhance climate awareness and lobby for the implementation of climate-resilient policies and practices. Together, we can build a more resilient future for Laikipia County, ensuring the well-being of both present and future generations.

We are excited to embark on this journey and extend our heartfelt gratitude to People Powered for their support in making this project a reality. Stay tuned for updates as we work towards a more sustainable and climate-resilient Laikipia County!

These methodologies will enable us to effectively involve community members in decision-making processes and ensure their voices are central to the project's activities

EMPOWERING TOMORROW'S CONSERVATION LEADERS: LWF'S CONSERVATION EDUCATION DEBATES

LWF has always received recognition for its impactful conservation education initiatives, extending its reach to schools and society within the greater Laikipia landscape. As we near the completion of the FAO GEF6-funded project, focusing on the management of the invasive species *Opuntia stricta*, it becomes evident that involving the next generation is paramount.

Recognizing this, LWF organized the inaugural Conservation Education Forum Day and conducted two phases of debates in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Laikipia North Sub County.

These educational endeavours aimed to harness the innovative potential of youth in addressing environmental challenges, particularly the management of *Opuntia stricta*, an invasive species affecting the Maiyanat community.

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On February 16th, 2024, LWF took a significant step by hosting a Conservation Education Forum Day at Dol Dol Boys' High School. This event brought together seven secondary schools from Laikipia North Sub County: Dol Dol Mixed Day Secondary School, St. Francis Girls' High School, Dol Dol Boys' High School, Kurum Secondary School, Ilpolei Secondary School, Chumvi Mixed Secondary School, and Lokusero Secondary School, along with other stakeholders, fostering discussions and empowering youth with knowledge to tackle environmental issues effectively. The objective was clear: to engage students in meaningful conservation efforts, ensuring a sustainable future for Laikipia's biodiversity.



LWF's Brian Otieno outlines the agenda for the debate sessions at the Conservation Education Forum

Subsequently, two phases of debates were held at St. Francis Girls' High School on March 11th, 2024, and Dol Dol Boys' High School on March 16th, 2024. These debates were primarily learning platforms where students could delve into the ecological implications of the *Opuntia stricta* invasion and propose viable solutions. Guided by a structured outline, participants explored management strategies, analyzed their effectiveness, and emphasized community engagement and education.

During the debates, students displayed a profound understanding of *Opuntia stricta*, highlighting its characteristics, spread mechanisms, impacts, and control measures. They proposed various approaches, including indigenous, biological, mechanical, physical removal, and chemical control methods, demonstrating their commitment to mitigating its spread. Moreover, students identified opportunities for utilizing the plant, such as fodder for livestock and raw materials for biogas, oil, jam, and juice production, thus emphasizing the potential for economic use alongside environmental conservation.



Judges Susan Gathoni from LWF and James Njihia, along with Jedidah Kamoiro from Borana Conservancy, attentively observe Phase 1 of the debates.

The exchange of ideas during the debates not only enriched students' understanding of environmental issues but also inspired them to engage their communities through workshops and awareness campaigns. It was evident that the debates served as both a learning and career development platform, igniting a passion for environmental stewardship among participants.

The culmination of these efforts was on the 15th of March 2024, at Dol Dol Boys' High School, where students demonstrated remarkable growth in their understanding of *Opuntia stricta* and its management.

St. Francis Girls' High School secured the overall Winner title, with Dol Dol Day Secondary School and Ilpolei Secondary School securing the 1st and 2nd runner-up positions, respectively. Their dedication and commitment to environmental education and youth leadership are truly commendable.



Zamzam from St. Francis Girls' High School delivers her presentation during the concluding phase of the debates

LWF remains steadfast in nurturing the next generation of environmental stewards. Through initiatives like the Conservation Education Debates, supported by partners, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Borana Conservancy, NKCC, and MpalaLive, among others, we continue to empower youth, foster environmental conservation, and create a sustainable future for generations to come.

We encourage like-minded organizations and individuals to join forces with us, amplifying our reach and impact in conservation education through the planning and execution of similar inspiring initiatives.

LWF has always received recognition for its impactful conservation education initiatives, extending its reach to schools and society within the greater Laikipia landscape

BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITY THROUGH COMMERCIALIZATION OF BEE KEEPING VENTURE

Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) continued its commitment to community empowerment by organizing a beekeeping training for members of the Dupoto Beekeepers and Marketing Cooperative Society.

Led by Piranto Ole Mosiany, the training aimed to equip participants with essential business management skills, enhance honey quality and compliance standards, and explore opportunities for value addition in bee products.



Participants take part in a hive inspection session

The training program was structured to achieve six key objectives. It began by focusing on the commercialization of beekeeping activities for the Dupoto Beekeepers Cooperative. Following this, emphasis was placed on developing sustainable business models tailored to the cooperative's specific needs.

Participants were then guided through the process of becoming familiar with beekeeping equipment and maintenance practices. Additionally, the training stressed the importance of adopting efficient honey extraction techniques using appropriate tools, while also educating participants on safety measures and quality control during honey harvesting and processing.

Lastly, the program explored various value addition opportunities and effective marketing strategies for bee products. Each objective was carefully integrated into the curriculum to provide comprehensive support and guidance to the cooperative members, empowering them to enhance their beekeeping endeavors and contribute to the resilience of their community.

The training sessions were designed to be engaging and interactive, with a focus on practical learning experiences. Participants embarked on physical site visits to apiaries, fostering hands-on learning opportunities. Conducted in the Maasai language to ensure effective communication, the sessions encouraged active participation and knowledge absorption among attendees.



Demonstrations of proper gear for harvesting and hive inspection

One of the highlights of the training was the exploration of value addition processes for bee products. Participants gained insights into various methods of enhancing the value of honey and beeswax. These methods included incorporating honey into food products such as yoghurt and porridge, infusing honey with herbs for medicinal and culinary purposes, and creating health-friendly candles and artisanal products from beeswax.

In addition to value addition processes, the training emphasized the importance of bee forage plants and the development of a floral calendar. Participants actively engaged in discussions and fieldwork to identify key bee plants in the Mukogodo East Ward region. By recognizing the significance of indigenous flora in sustaining bee populations, participants committed to conservation efforts, including the restoration of disappearing bee forage plants.



Participants pose for a group photo while holding bee themed photos

The training marked a significant step in the journey towards sustainable beekeeping practices and community development. By fostering entrepreneurship skills, promoting quality standards, and encouraging environmental stewardship, the training laid a solid foundation for the Dupoto Beekeepers Cooperative to thrive.

Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) continued its commitment to community empowerment by organizing a beekeeping training for members of the Dupoto Beekeepers and Marketing Cooperative Society.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY WATER PROJECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT IN LAIKIPIA NORTH

At the Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF), we believe in the power of collaboration to drive positive change in our communities. This is why we collaborated with the Water Resources Authority (WRA) to host a transformative training session aimed at bolstering the sustainability and efficiency of community water projects (CWPs) in Laikipia North.

Held on the 12th and 13th of March 2024 at the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) offices in Kiwanja Ndege, our training drew enthusiastic participation from members of various CWPs, including Kiwanja Ndege borehole, Ol-kinyei borehole, Arijiju borehole, and Bokish borehole.

Our training sessions kicked off with insightful discussions on governance and leadership within CWPs. Participants actively engaged in identifying governance and leadership gaps specific to their projects, setting the stage for targeted interventions. Additionally, representatives from the WRA provided invaluable insights into policies on groundwater management, enriching participants' understanding of regulatory frameworks.



Naseria, shares her experience on governance structure of their community water project

Recognizing the critical role of resource mobilization and financial management in project success, we delved into these aspects comprehensively. Led by our team member, Peter Mathenge, discussions focused on effective strategies for mobilizing resources and garnering community support for water projects. Furthermore, Solomon, alongside WRA representatives, guided participants through the development and review of operating budgets.

As the training drew to a close, participants collaborated to develop action plans that will guide their future endeavours. A key focus of these plans was the legalization of boreholes, ensuring the acquisition of necessary permits and certificates for compliance. Additionally, participants committed to developing operating budgets for each project and exploring joint resource mobilization efforts to ensure the continued success and sustainability of CWPs in the region.



Plenary discussions on key issues faced by the Arijju borehole project

Beyond equipping participants with essential skills and knowledge, our training fostered a sense of collaboration and shared responsibility among community members. With actionable plans in place, we are confident that the impact of this training will enhance water resource management and contribute to the sustainable development of our region.

As the training drew to a close, participants collaborated to develop action plans that will guide their future endeavours

RESTORATION EFFORTS BEYOND GEF-6 FUNDING: A JOURNEY TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

As we approach the conclusion of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-6) funded project, it is a moment for us at Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) to reflect, celebrate, and strategically plan for the future. The project, scheduled to end on December 31st, 2024, has been a journey filled with learning, challenges, and remarkable achievements, all seen through our lens.

Since 2019, LWF has diligently implemented three Letters of Agreement (LoAs) under this project, primarily focusing on restoring degraded areas and rehabilitating water projects in the greater Laikipia landscape.

To ensure sustainability beyond donor funding, we recently convened a partner consultative engagement meeting aimed at preparing for an exit strategy and conducting an end-of-project evaluation. Benjamin Deridder, our Chief Technical Advisor, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) National Project Coordinator Mr. Meshack Muga, and Patrick Mugi, the Monitoring and Evaluation expert from FAO, were among the attendees. They were joined by a team from FAO headquarters to assist us in crafting an exit/sustainability plan and preparing for the Final Evaluation scheduled for July 2024. The objective was clear: to extract lessons learned, identify best practices, and develop viable solutions while addressing knowledge management needs.



Participants during the consultative meeting

The meeting commenced with a warm welcome from our Executive Director, Celline Achieng', who provided an overview of LWF's role. Patrick Mugi from FAO then shared his remarks and outlined the meeting's expectations.

Our peer implementing partners had the opportunity to present their progress, key achievements, lessons learned, and sustainability plans in light of the imminent conclusion of GEF-6 funding. These partners included Leparua Conservancy, Ilmamusi CFA, Northern Rangelands Trust, and Narupa Conservancy. They highlighted their efforts and contributions to the project success.



Peter Mathenge presents on LWF's achievements, lessons learned and next steps.

Following the presentations, a plenary session was held to facilitate in-depth discussions on the project's dynamics, fostering collaboration, and promoting cross learning among the partners.

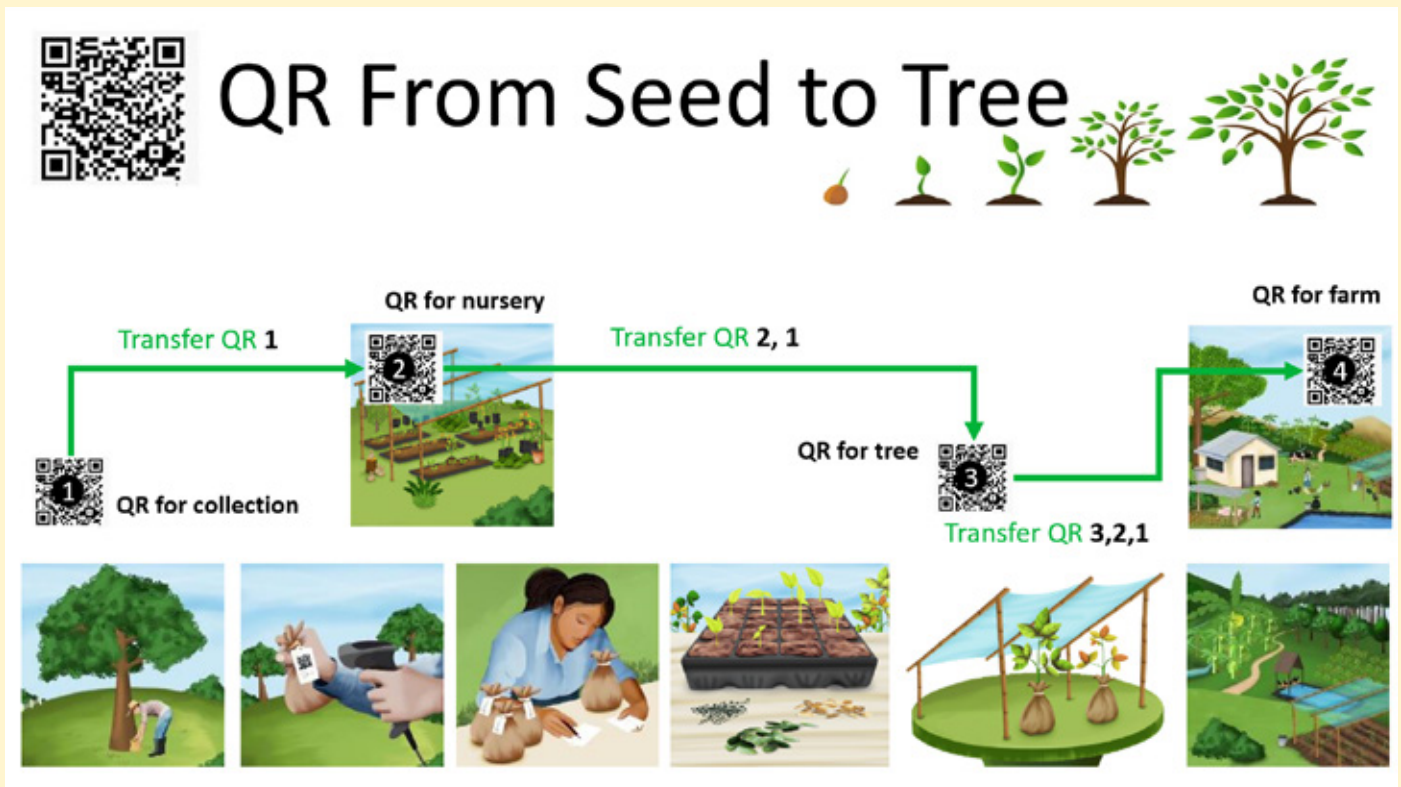
The event culminated in the partners planting trees within LWF's compound, symbolizing our collective commitment to sustainability and nurturing the environment that sustains us all.



Tree planting session at LWF's compound.

INTRODUCING “MYGEOTREE: FARM RESTORATION APP”

Imagine a world where every seed tells a story, where each sapling nurtured represents a step towards a greener, more sustainable future. MyGeoTree makes this vision a reality by seamlessly integrating technology with the tireless efforts of local communities. MyGeoTree is an innovative mobile application designed to track and monitor the process of tree restoration on smallholder farms. With its user-friendly interface and comprehensive features, MyGeoTree streamlines the entire tree restoration journey, from seed-collection to monitoring the growth and well-being of the trees.



The app begins by empowering seed collectors with a powerful tool to record data about their seed collections. Using the app, seed collectors can document essential information, such as the collected species, location coordinates, and capture images to provide visual evidence of the seed tree and collection site. Each seed collection is assigned a unique QR code, ensuring accurate and efficient tracking of the seeds throughout the process.

Once the seed collections arrive at the nursery, the QR codes associated with each bag are scanned, allowing for seamless check-ins. The nursery staff can access the app’s guided steps and instructions to ensure optimal germination and growth of the seeds, transforming them into healthy seedlings ready for planting.

Upon reaching the appropriate stage, the seedlings are assigned new QR codes and transferred to farms by dedicated facilitators. At this point, beneficiaries are registered within the app to take responsibility for nurturing and caring for the trees. The beneficiary, in collaboration with the facilitator, becomes the guardian of the tree, ensuring its ongoing care and protection.

To guarantee regular monitoring of the tree’s status, MyGeoTree prompts the facilitator and beneficiary to conduct assessments in recurring time sequences, for example, twice a year. Through the app, they record vital information such as tree height, health condition, and any necessary maintenance actions taken.

This data enables the continuous evaluation of the tree's progress and helps identify potential issues that may arise.

In addition to fostering sustainable tree restoration efforts, MyGeoTree includes a mobile payment function. The app leverages mobile payment systems, allowing beneficiaries to receive payouts for their active participation in monitoring and maintaining the trees. This incentivizes the beneficiaries, creating a rewarding experience while encouraging their dedication to tree care.


Furthermore, MyGeoTree harnesses the power of blockchain technology to store and secure critical information about the monitoring process. By utilizing blockchain, the app ensures the transparent and immutable recording of every stage in the tree's journey, enabling anyone to access and validate the restoration process. From the initial seed collection site to the tree's current location, the blockchain serves as an unalterable record, bolstering trust and accountability in the tree restoration efforts. This revolutionary approach enhances transparency, fosters collaboration, and empowers stakeholders with indisputable evidence of the positive impact achieved through the restoration initiatives. MyGeoTree has the following features:

- Seed collection characterization: Captures seed collection details, including species, location, and images.
- QR code tracking: Assigns unique QR codes to seed bags and seedlings for efficient tracking and traceability.
- Nursery guidance: Provides step-by-step instructions for nursery staff to ensure successful seedling growth.
- Facilitator support: Enables facilitators to transfer seedlings and register beneficiaries for tree care.
- Monitoring and assessment: Prompts facilitators and beneficiaries to conduct bi-annual tree assessments, recording essential data on tree health and growth.
- Mobile payment integration: Enables beneficiaries to receive payouts for their active participation, incentivizing their commitment to tree restoration efforts.
- Blockchain integration: ensures transparent and immutable recording of every stage in the tree's journey from the seed collection site to the tree's current location with continuous evaluation of the tree's progress.

MyGeoTree revolutionizes tree restoration on smallholder farms in Kenya, promoting transparency, accountability, and financial incentives. By combining cutting-edge technology with the dedication of seed collectors, nurseries, facilitators, and beneficiaries, MyGeoTree paves the way for a greener, more sustainable future.

With these features, MyGeoTree not only facilitates sustainable tree restoration but also empowers communities to take ownership of their environmental stewardship. By combining cutting-edge technology with grassroots dedication, MyGeoTree is poised to pave the way for a greener, more sustainable future in Mukogodo West ward and beyond.

As Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) conducts community training sessions, excitement brews for the transformative potential of MyGeoTree. Together, let us embark on this journey towards a more vibrant, resilient ecosystem, where every tree planted is a testament to the power of community-driven change.



MyGeoTree revolutionizes tree restoration on smallholder farms in Kenya, promoting transparency, accountability, and financial incentives

LWF AND NKCC UNITE TO ELEVATE CONSERVATION EDUCATION



LWF's Susan Gathoni interacts with students during a recent session led by the NKCC team, which we joined

We are thrilled to announce an exciting development in the conservation education space here in Laikipia. LWF is teaming up with the Northern Kenya Conservation Clubs (NKCC) to enhance conservation education efforts and knowledge dissemination in schools across our region.

In a recent meeting held at our offices in February, both organizations made a steadfast commitment to working closely together in advancing our shared goals. Present at the meeting were key stakeholders from both NKCC and LWF, including our Executive Director, Celline Achieng', along with representatives from various conservation clubs and schools.



NKCC and LWF teams unite for a photo after a successful meeting at LWF offices

At LWF, we have long been dedicated to conservation education programs within schools, utilizing project-based approaches to instill environmental stewardship values in students. Meanwhile, NKCC has been actively involved in conservation activities, employing innovative methods such as games, field trips, and community engagement to educate students about wildlife and habitat conservation.

Through this partnership, both organizations aim to leverage our respective strengths and resources to create a more robust and comprehensive conservation education curriculum. This will involve integrating LWF's existing programs with NKCC's dynamic teaching methods, ensuring a holistic approach to environmental education.

While we acknowledge the challenges schools and conservation education programs are facing, we are determined to overcome these obstacles through collaborative efforts with local communities and stakeholders. Together, NKCC and LWF are committed to ensuring the sustainability of our programs and making a lasting impact on conservation education in Laikipia.

Looking ahead, we have exciting plans in store. We are currently developing a comprehensive schedule for school visits, restocking conservation education materials, and organizing workshops for teachers and conservation educators. Additionally, we aim to connect schools with conservancies and provide subsidized transportation for conservation trips and activities.

As the collaboration between NKCC and LWF takes shape, we are filled with optimism for the future of conservation education in our landscape. By joining forces and pooling our expertise, we are not only empowering the next generation of environmental leaders but also fostering a deeper connection between communities and their natural heritage.

We invite donors and supporters who are passionate about conservation to join us on this journey. Together, we can make a tangible difference in preserving our landscape's biodiversity for generations to come.

LWF AND MPALALIVE UNITE FOR CONSERVATION DOCUMENTATION AND OUTREACH



Our LWF team poses for a photo with Valerie May and Victor Kasii from MpalaLive during a meeting held at the LWF offices

In the dynamic world of conservation, partnerships are key to amplifying impact and reaching wider audiences. This was evident when representatives from the MpalaLive project, Valerie May and Victor Kasii, paid a visit to our offices during the first quarter of the year to explore potential collaborations between our two organizations.

For those unfamiliar, MpalaLive is a groundbreaking online platform that offers live streams of wildlife from the renowned Mpala Research Centre. This initiative provides an immersive experience, allowing viewers to witness the daily activities of African wildlife in real-time, from majestic elephants to graceful giraffes and powerful lions. Beyond entertainment, MpalaLive serves as an educational resource, offering curated video stories, teacher guides, and lesson plans to foster a deeper understanding of conservation and ecosystem dynamics.

During the meeting, MpalaLive representatives shared insights into their project's goals and capabilities, while we had the opportunity to showcase our ongoing and prospective conservation initiatives. It quickly became evident that there was significant potential for synergy between our organizations.

As a result, an action plan was developed to leverage MpalaLive's expertise in documenting conservation efforts. One exciting outcome is the collaboration on developing short documentaries highlighting our work in the field. Additionally, MpalaLive will assist in sharing our activities through collaborative posting, further enhancing our visibility and reach.

Victor Kasii, who joined our team during the Invasive Species school debates programs supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), will play a pivotal role in this collaboration. By documenting these debates and crafting a documentary, we will be able to showcase our work to members, donors, and supporters, thereby strengthening our relationships and impact.



Victor Kasii from MpalaLive capturing moments during the second phase of the Invasive Species Debates

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to MpalaLive for their support and look forward to exploring further opportunities for collaboration. Together, we are committed to advancing conservation efforts and inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards. Stay tuned for more updates on this exciting partnership!

By documenting these debates and crafting a documentary, we will be able to showcase our work to members, donors, and supporters, thereby strengthening our relationships and impact

FORGING PARTNERSHIPS: LWF AND LTA COLLABORATE WITH KTB TO BOOST TOURISM IN LAIKIPIA



Arriving at Ol Pejeta: The Kenya Tourism Board and Laikipia Tourism Association team, on day two of their trade outreach.

LWF and the Laikipia Tourism Association (LTA) teamed up to welcome the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) to Nanyuki and Laikipia County as a whole. KTB visited Laikipia County to engage with key stakeholders in the tourism sector and explore opportunities for collaboration and growth.

The objectives of these visits were twofold: to establish connections and forge relationships with stakeholders, and to gather feedback and insights on various aspects of the tourism industry, including challenges faced by businesses. This valuable information would help KTB adapt its marketing strategies and identify opportunities for collaboration and support.

The Customer relations & Partnerships unit at KTB played a pivotal role in fostering enduring relationships with stakeholders, reflecting their dedication to nurturing mutually beneficial partnerships. Together with LTA, KTB met with stakeholders across Laikipia County, most of whom are members of LTA, from February 26th to March 1st, 2024.

The stakeholders met included Tropic Air Safaris (TAS), Rift Valley Adventures (RVA), Glacier Gardens, Kicheche Camp, Porini Rhino Camp, Beisa Conference Centre, Peaks Hotel, and many more. These meetings provided an opportunity for stakeholders to share their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement in the tourism sector. For instance, stakeholders highlighted challenges such as the complexity of licensing procedures, high operation costs, and the need for infrastructure improvement. They also emphasized the importance of collaboration between stakeholders and government agencies to address these challenges effectively.

The role played by LWF and LTA in coordinating these trade outreach activities was instrumental in facilitating constructive dialogue between KTB and stakeholders in Laikipia County. Moving forward, LWF and LTA look forward to collaborating with KTB and other tourism stakeholders to advance the tourism thematic area in Laikipia. By working together, we can overcome challenges, leverage opportunities, and promote sustainable tourism development in our region.

REFLECTING ON WORLD WETLANDS DAY CELEBRATIONS IN NYAHURURU



The local community and stakeholders actively engage in a clean-up initiative during the World Wetlands Day Celebration in Nyahururu

In the serene setting of Manguo Wetland in Nyahururu, we proudly united with the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), the Laikipia County Government, and esteemed stakeholders to commemorate this year's World Wetlands Day, with the theme 'Wetlands and Human Wellbeing.'

From town clean-ups in the Manguo area to engaging tree-planting initiatives and enlightening community sensitization campaigns, the day brimmed with activities designed to elevate awareness and deepen appreciation for the critical role wetlands play in our collective existence.

In a world where nearly 90% of wetlands have succumbed to degradation since the 1700s, the urgency to protect and restore these vital ecosystems cannot be overstated. This year's theme strikes a chord as we navigate the intricate interplay between wetlands and human wellbeing. From providing essential habitats for diverse biodiversity to serving as critical carbon sinks, wetlands serve as indispensable pillars for sustaining life and fortifying resilience against the ravages of climate change.

The event witnessed a distinguished gathering of stakeholders, including representatives from government agencies, conservation organizations, and local communities. Their collective presence underscored a shared commitment to amplifying awareness about the critical importance of conserving wetlands, encompassing swamps, marshes, and riparian lands, which are not only pivotal for human wellbeing but also indispensable for the thriving of wildlife and aquatic species.

Addressing the assembled audience, Mr. Samuel Abraham Lemanyishoe, Chief Officer of Water, Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change for Laikipia County, reaffirmed the unwavering dedication of the County Government to conserving and restoring Manguo Wetland and other wetlands across the County.

Emphasizing strategic measures such as the meticulous planting and nurturing of bamboo trees, he called for a collective responsibility in conservation efforts.



LWF's Brian Otieno joins a community member in tree-planting on World Wetlands Day

As the Assistant County Commissioner and esteemed Chief guest for the occasion, Mr. Joseph Wanyonyi underscored the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to safeguarding wetlands, addressing pressing issues such as pollution and encroachment, which pose formidable threats to effective conservation endeavours.

Let us wholeheartedly acknowledge that the health and vitality of our wetlands directly influence the quality of life for communities.

By synergizing our efforts and embarking upon decisive action, we can ensure the enduring preservation of these invaluable ecosystems for the benefit of present and future generations.

In a world where nearly 90% of wetlands have succumbed to degradation since the 1700s, the urgency to protect and restore these vital ecosystems cannot be overstated

LWF PARTICIPATES IN WORLD WILDLIFE DAY CELEBRATIONS



The World Wildlife Day procession from the Equator point to Kanu grounds Nanyuki



LWF's Program officer, Peter Mathenge, addresses stakeholders during the World Wildlife Day celebrations held at Kanu Grounds, Nanyuki.

The event spurred collaboration and action for natural heritage protection, featuring exhibitions, performances, and a call for collective efforts to conserve biodiversity.

Week-long activities, including tree planting and river clean-up campaigns, demonstrated the community's and other stakeholders' dedication to conservation, complemented by wildlife protection-sensitization on local radio stations and educational visits to National Parks and conservancies.

As participants echoed a commitment to wildlife and habitat protection, LWF encourages all to join in conservation efforts, particularly for threatened species, fostering collaboration and commitment for a brighter future.

LAIKIPIA WILDLIFE FORUM JOINS COUNTY WORLD WATER DAY CELEBRATIONS



LWF's Brian Otieno collects World Water Day Participation Certificate from Laikipia County Governor H.E. Governor Joshua Irungu

LWF made a significant impact during this year's World Water Day celebrations held at Naibor, Segera Ward.

The event, graced by H.E. Governor Joshua Irungu, EGH, focused on the theme 'leveraging water for peace,' emphasizing the crucial link between water, peace, and security, particularly in Laikipia County.

Governor Irungu highlighted the County Government's efforts in expanding access to water and enhancing water security. He emphasized the importance of sustainable water management for peace and stability, citing County initiatives such as drilling boreholes to improve access to clean and safe water for both domestic and livestock use.


Ms. Leah Njeri, the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Water, Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change, outlined the department's endeavors in water management, including the establishment of Laikipia Rural Water and Sanitation Company (LURWASCO) to ensure efficient water governance in rural areas.

The CEO of the Central Rift Valley Water Works Development Agency, the guest of honor of the day, Mr. Ndiritu Mathenge, underscored the significance of leveraging water for economic development, aligning with the bottom-up agenda for sustainable and harmonious development.

One of the highlights of the day was the launch of a report on citizens' access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services across Laikipia, presented by Dr. James Ciera, the Kenya Country lead for Twaweza East Africa. This report, facilitated by Twaweza East Africa, provides valuable insights for ongoing efforts to improve water and sanitation services in Laikipia.

LWF's participation in the event signifies its commitment to water conservation and sustainable management practices in the region. As a key stakeholder, LWF collaborates with government agencies, NGOs, and community members (mostly through Water Resource Users Associations (WRUAs) and Community Forest Associations (CFAs)) to address water challenges and promote peace and development in Laikipia.

Through collaborative efforts and initiatives like those showcased at the World Water Day celebrations, LWF continues to play a vital role in safeguarding water resources and fostering sustainable development in the landscape.



One of the highlights of the day was the launch of a report on citizens' access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services across Laikipia, presented by Dr. James Ciera, the Kenya Country lead for Twaweza East Africa

LWF JOINS OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN SHAPING AND ENRICHING THE DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE (CARBON MARKETS) REGULATIONS, 2023



LWF Executive Director, Celine Achieng' and other stakeholders gather for a photo after reviewing Climate Change Regulations

Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) joined members of the National Environment Civil Society Alliance of Kenya (NECSA-K) in reviewing the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) for the Draft Climate Change (Carbon Markets) Regulations, 2023 on 29th and 30th January 2024 in Athi River. The key stakeholders were those engaging in carbon projects and those involved in advocating for appropriate policies and laws and their implementation and enforcement, respectively.

The Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry had published the RIS for the Draft Climate Change (Carbon Markets) Regulations, 2023 and invited the public to review this statement and propose changes or improvements. NECSA-K was able to convene this successful workshop with financial support from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Kenya).

RIS is an analytical tool prepared pursuant to Sections 6 and 7 of the Statutory Instruments Act (No. 23 of 2013) and its purpose is to examine and measure the likely benefits, costs and effects of the proposed Regulations. In line with this definition, the team reviewed the statement from an economic, environmental and social perspective. This analysis brought out useful insights that will inform decision-making by the relevant authorities thus contributing to the overall regulatory framework on Carbon Markets in Kenya.

A Memorandum to the Ministry was the result of the two-day deliberations. The Memorandum summarized the key discussions by highlighting what is provided in the RIS, proposing recommendations, and giving a rationale for the suggested reviews.

LAIKIPIA'S JOURNEY WITH FOLAREP

The Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) recently joined a special workshop organised by Kenya Forest Service (KFS) with support from the Food Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). LWFs input was important in developing a plan called FOLAREP, short for Forest and Landscape Restoration Plan. This plan is all about making sure our forests and landscapes stay healthy. This event, attended by a diverse array of stakeholders from Laikipia County including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), marked a pivotal moment in the County's commitment to sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation.

But why is the domestication of FOLAREP such a crucial stride for Laikipia County? At its core, this document serves as a roadmap, guiding policymakers and stakeholders in nurturing the delicate balance between human activities and the preservation of natural resources. With Laikipia's ecosystems under constant threat from various pressures, a localized FOLAREP becomes an indispensable tool in safeguarding the region's ecological integrity.

For LWF, the adoption of FOLAREP opens a new chapter in our tireless efforts towards conservation.

Across our six thematic areas—water, rangelands, tourism, land use, wildlife, and conservation education—we are ready to integrate FOLAREP seamlessly into our restoration initiatives.

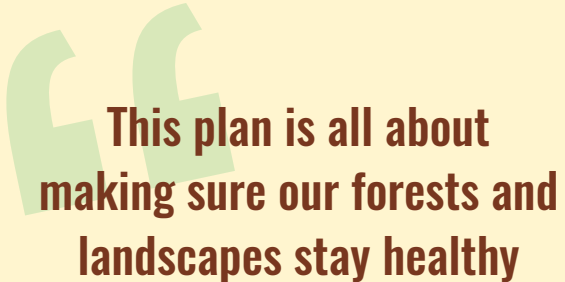
In the realm of water management, FOLAREP will inform strategies to protect critical water sources and enhance water quality, ensuring the sustenance of both wildlife and communities. Rangelands, often subjected to degradation, will benefit from FOLAREP's guidelines on sustainable grazing practices, fostering healthier ecosystems and resilient livelihoods.

The tourism sector, a vital economic pillar, stands to gain from FOLAREP's emphasis on responsible tourism practices, promoting both conservation and community development. Meanwhile, land use planning will be supported by FOLAREP's insights, fostering harmony between human settlements and wildlife habitats.

empower future generations with the knowledge and appreciation necessary to become stewards of their natural heritage.

But FOLAREP isn't just a plan on paper—it's also a tool for getting help. LWF can use FOLAREP to show others why protecting Laikipia's nature is so important. This might mean getting money from people who want to help or teaming up with other groups who care about nature.

As the workshop ended, everyone felt excited about what FOLAREP could do for Laikipia. With this plan as their guide, LWF is ready to work together to make sure Laikipia's forests, rivers, and animals stay happy and healthy for a long time to come.



**This plan is all about
making sure our forests and
landscapes stay healthy**

LWF'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEMS

The Mukogodo Landscape, and other adjacent ecosystems, are critical ecosystems that support diverse flora and fauna, including several endangered species. However, over the years, the landscape has experienced significant degradation due to deforestation, unsustainable land use practices, and climate change impacts. This degradation of our landscapes and forests poses significant challenges to both environmental sustainability and human well-being. In light of this, it has become increasingly imperative for stakeholders to come together and explore innovative approaches to address these issues effectively.

As a critical stakeholder within Mukogodo and adjacent landscapes and ecosystems, LWF was identified, and therefore invited, to participate in a training workshop aimed at promoting sustainable forest management practices and restoration efforts within the Landscapes. The workshop explored innovative tools and strategies for sustainable forest and landscape management, with a particular focus on the application of REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus conservation) strategies to support ecosystem restoration in arid areas, such as the Mukogodo Forest and its surroundings.

This training provided three key insights and learnings: REDD+ Strategies for Arid Ecosystems, Sustainable Forest and Landscape Management Tools, and Community Involvement.

Regarding REDD+ Strategies for Arid Ecosystems, the workshop delved into the unique challenges of arid areas, including the Mukogodo Forest, and emphasized the role of REDD+ strategies in mitigating deforestation and forest degradation. Discussions revolved around the potential of REDD+ to provide financial incentives for sustainable land use practices, which, in turn, supports the restoration of degraded ecosystems.

Under this learning, REDD+ Strategies and Objectives were explained. REDD+ strategies are multifaceted and aim to achieve several interconnected objectives, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conserving and enhancing forest carbon stocks, sustainably managing forests, enhancing the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities, and safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Additionally, National REDD+ Readiness was explained. Effective implementation of REDD+ necessitates countries undergoing a readiness preparation process. This involves developing national REDD+ strategies aligning with international guidelines and frameworks, establishing robust legal and institutional frameworks for forest governance and management, building technical capacity for monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of emissions reductions and forest carbon stocks, and engaging stakeholders—including government agencies, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, and local communities—in the REDD+ process.

Furthermore, REDD+ Activities were elaborated. REDD+ activities encompass a range of interventions aimed at addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. These include forest conservation and protection, sustainable forest management practices such as reduced impact logging and agroforestry, afforestation and reforestation efforts to restore degraded landscapes, strengthening land tenure and forest tenure rights, supporting alternative livelihoods for forest-dependent communities, and enhancing forest governance and law enforcement mechanisms.

With regard to the Sustainable Forest and Landscape Management Tools we engaged in hands-on sessions exploring various tools and modules designed for sustainable forest and landscape management. These included Geographic Information System (GIS) applications, remote sensing technologies, and data-driven decision-making processes tailored to arid environments. These tools were demonstrated to enhance monitoring, planning, and implementation of restoration efforts. Community Involvement was a key theme of the workshop and was explained as the integration of local communities into sustainable forest and landscape management. REDD+ strategies were explored as tools for fostering community participation and ensuring that the benefits of ecosystem restoration are shared equitably.

By incorporating REDD+ principles into our work at LWF, we have the opportunity to enhance our conservation efforts, mitigate climate change impacts, and improve the livelihoods of local communities in the Mukogodo Forest and surrounding areas.

THE PEREGRINE FUND PAYS A COURTESY CALL TO THE LAIKIPIA WILDLIFE FORUM



Dr. Darcy Ogada poses for a photo with the LWF team

Dr. Darcy Ogada, the Africa Program Director, visited LWF and delivered a presentation on raptors, which proved to be both informative and enlightening. Even after her departure, discussions about the presentation continued among the team.

During her presentation, Darcy shed light on the efforts aimed at preventing extinction, protecting habitats, engaging communities, and addressing threats to raptors. She elaborated on the pivotal roles played by raptors, including top predatory eagles and vultures, in maintaining healthy ecosystems and providing various benefits to the environment, human health, and economies.

Moreover, Darcy highlighted the significant threats faced by these birds, such as habitat loss, poisoning, electrocution on power lines, collisions at wind farms, and persecution. Clarifying the term “persecution,” she addressed the team’s inquiry and provided insights that many readers would find valuable. Persecution refers to deliberate acts of harm or killing directed towards raptors, particularly in response to perceived threats posed by these birds to human activities or interests.

This can include intentional poisoning, trapping, or other forms of direct harm inflicted upon raptors by humans, often due to misconceptions, fear, or conflicts over resources such as livestock. Persecution poses a significant threat to raptor populations and can have detrimental impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity.

Darcy expressed concern over the detrimental consequences of retaliatory mass-poisoning events by livestock owners. In such instances, vultures and eagles often fall victim instead of the predators attacking livestock. This phenomenon has led to a decline in vulture populations, posing a severe threat to savanna ecosystems. If not mitigated, it could ultimately result in species extinction, ecosystem collapse, and increased risks to human well-being.

Furthermore, Darcy shared insights into the various vulture species found in Kenya, which include White-backed, White-headed, Rüppell’s, Lappet-faced, Hooded, Egyptian, Bearded (Lammergeier), and Palm-nut vultures.

The visit concluded with discussions between both parties exploring areas of synergy, particularly concerning LWF’s thematic areas of wildlife, restoration, and land-use management.

ORKEDI FOUNDATION-NURTURING AFRICA'S ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, AND ARTISTIC HERITAGE THROUGH ART AND EDUCATION



Young participants immerse themselves in community artwork

The Orkedi Art, Nature, and Education Foundation, based in Nanyuki, Kenya, was founded with the aim of contributing to Africa's environmental, cultural, and artistic heritage, using art as a means of fostering love and awareness of nature, the environment, and conservation.

The Foundation has four primary objectives. These include raising awareness of nature through a creative community outreach program and collaborating with Africa's finest professional artists to introduce art to children and schools. Additionally, the Foundation aims to document the history of African artists and their practices, as well as engaging visitors in discussions about the natural world through a permanent Collection of Art, serving as an educational and research tool.

The Foundation collaborates with East Africa's finest professional artists to educate the next generation through weekly art classes during their month-long residency hosted by the Foundation and by utilizing the Art Collection. Founded by Camille Wekesa, the Foundation owns and continues to acquire art with themes of nature, wildlife heritage, and iconic African world heritage landscapes, thus shaping the direction of the Collection and instilling a passion for the natural world in all who visit it, encouraging them to see themselves as participants in safeguarding and nurturing the natural world.



Founder Camille Wekesa poses in front of the Aberdare's forest mural, depicting ancient forests, diverse flora and fauna including birds, primates, endangered bongo, and the elusive black leopard

The Foundation aims to raise awareness of the unexplored value of African artwork, the importance of capturing the natural world through the medium of art, and the development and exposure of young artistic talent. Its programs aim to foster a greater appreciation of Africa's diverse landscapes, forests, mountains, wildlife, and African culture for generations to come, and it strives to be a leader in bringing art and culture to rural communities while assisting African artists in becoming champions of the preservation and conservation of Africa's iconic and diverse landscapes and wildlife.

FROM PASSION TO ACTION: JAMES NJIHIA'S REFLECTIONS ON LWF MEMBERSHIP



LWF member James Njihia leads an engaging session on Conservation Education during Phase 2 of the Climate Resilience Training hosted at the Leo Project Resource Center.

My relationship with the Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) began in my teenage years during frequent visits to my dad, who worked at Tropic Air, Nanyuki Airstrip – the former location of LWF offices before their relocation to Nanyuki town.

My interest was piqued when I encountered students preparing for their field trip by the forum's conservation education bus, which prompted my exploration of LWF's mandate. After completing high school, I pursued a Diploma in Wildlife Management at Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute (KWSTI), now known as Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI), driven by my passion for nature. During this time, I gained a deeper understanding of conservation and recognized the vital role organizations like LWF play, particularly through their conservation education program.

My quest for membership began after completing an industrial attachment, where I sought opportunities to enhance my skills. LWF stood out as an organization where I could further develop my understanding, and I officially became a member after visiting their booth during the Nanyuki Agricultural Society of Kenya (ASK) show. Membership has brought tangible benefits, providing opportunities to learn from experts and deepen my understanding of collaborative approaches to natural resources management. Through LWF, I have engaged with stakeholders from various organizations and communities, participating in initiatives to redefine conservation efforts in the Laikipia ecosystem.

The staff at LWF have played a crucial role in my conservation journey, serving as mentors and guiding me towards environmental stewardship. Their expertise has broadened my knowledge on wildlife, water, tourism, land use, and rangeland management, emphasizing the importance of integrating the 4Cs – Community, Culture, Commerce, and Conservation – for sustainable resource management.

Engaging with communities, such as the Naatum Women Group, has allowed me to witness firsthand, the intersection of culture, conservation, and livelihoods, while initiatives like field excursions and conservation education programs have enabled me to contribute to building resilience among the youth.



James Njihia delivering his remarks as a judge during the concluding phase of our invasive species school debates.

Networking and partnership opportunities provided by LWF have been invaluable, allowing me to collaborate with other organizations on projects ranging from eradication of invasive species to climate resilience advocacy and environmental education. These collaborations have not only enhanced my skills but also enabled me to give back to my community, such as collecting soil samples for farmers to improve yields.

I believe that my contributions, alongside those of fellow members, contribute towards achieving LWF's goal of sustainable resource management. I encourage those interested in conservation to join LWF and be part of this journey towards securing our fragile ecosystems. Together, through the exchange of ideas and collaborative efforts, we can create a robust mechanism for the benefit of the Greater Laikipia Ecosystem.



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