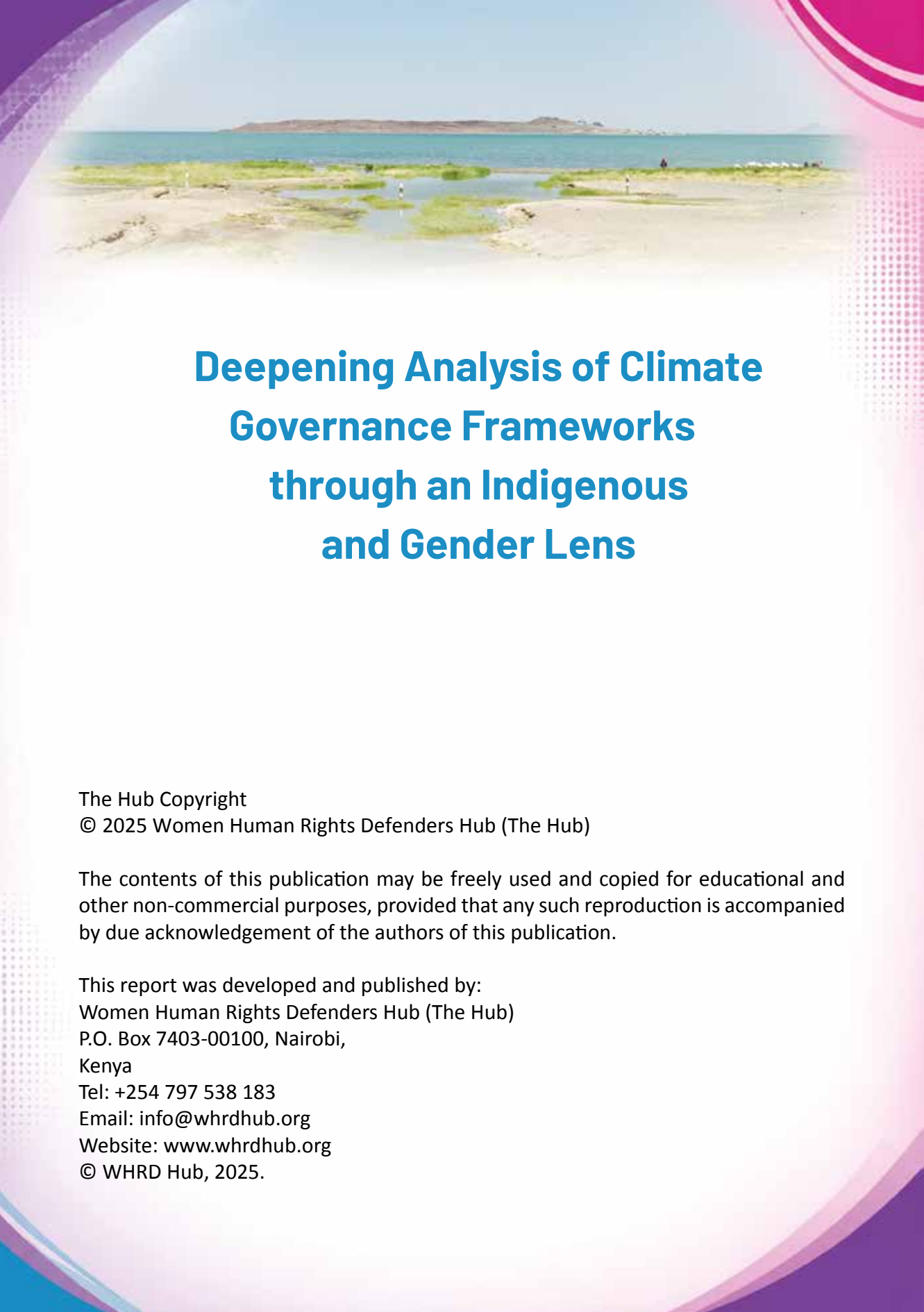




Deepening Analysis of Climate Governance

Frameworks through an Indigenous and Gender Lens





Deepening Analysis of Climate Governance Frameworks through an Indigenous and Gender Lens

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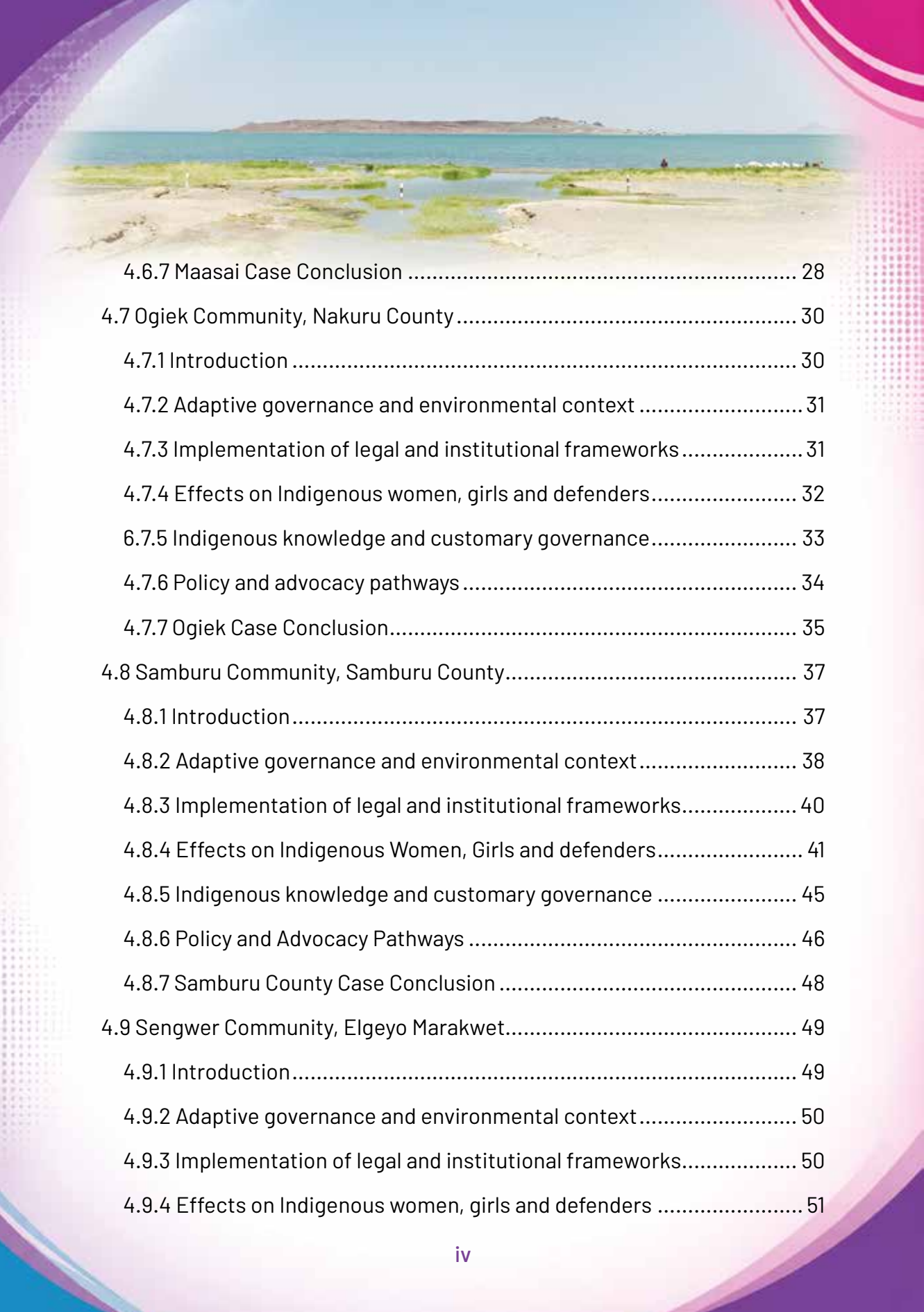
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BMUs	Beach Management Units
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
FGD	Focused Group Discussions
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IP	Indigenous People
IWEDs	Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders
KII	Key Informant Interviews
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
WHRD	Women Human Rights Defenders



Preamble

The Women Human Rights Defenders Hub (The Hub) commissioned this study, *Deepening Analysis of Climate Governance Frameworks through an Indigenous and Gender Lens*, to examine how Kenya's legal, policy, institutional, and climate governance frameworks shape the rights, participation, and lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples (IPs), with particular attention to Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders (IWEDs).

The study builds on the Hub's earlier research, *Assessment of the Legal, Policy, and Social Impact of Climate Change Laws on Women Environmental Defenders (WEDs) & Their Organizations (WEDOs)*, which identified legislative and policy gaps, gendered vulnerabilities, and the challenges confronting women environmental defenders. A key gap emerging from that research was the limited visibility and integration of Indigenous peoples' perspectives, customary governance systems, knowledge, and lived experiences within climate governance and environmental protection frameworks.

This study therefore seeks to deepen the analysis through an intersectional Indigenous and gender lens. It examines the extent to which climate governance frameworks recognize and engage with Indigenous governance systems, customary land tenure, Indigenous knowledge, community-led adaptation, and the realities of individuals and communities defending their lands, territories, livelihoods, and natural resources.

The study recognizes that Indigenous communities, and particularly Indigenous women, experience disproportionate impacts from climate change, environmental degradation, dispossession, and threats to their livelihoods and territories. At the same time, they remain important custodians of ecosystems, biodiversity, culture, and intergenerational knowledge, and are actively developing and implementing community-led responses to environmental and climate challenges. Their voices, knowledge, and leadership are therefore essential to building effective and equitable climate solutions.



By centering the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous communities and IWEDs, this study seeks to strengthen evidence-based advocacy and contribute to climate governance in Kenya that is inclusive, participatory, gender-responsive, rights-based, and accountable.

This report is not intended to remain a record of challenges and gaps. It is a call for meaningful action, accountability, and transformation. The evidence, lived experiences, and recommendations presented in this report require government institutions, Indigenous communities, civil society organizations, development partners, private sector actors, and other duty bearers to move beyond recognition and commitments towards concrete measures that uphold Indigenous peoples' rights and strengthen their participation in climate decision-making.

We call for climate governance frameworks and investments that recognize Indigenous peoples as rights holders, knowledge holders, custodians of their territories, and active decision-makers, rather than merely as beneficiaries of climate interventions. Particular attention must be given to Indigenous women and IWEDs, whose leadership and environmental defence work must be protected, resourced, and meaningfully integrated into climate action at community, county, national, and international levels.

We therefore urge stakeholders to use the findings and recommendations of this report to strengthen laws and policies, improve institutional accountability, protect land and environmental rights, recognize customary governance and Indigenous knowledge, support community-led adaptation, and create safe and meaningful spaces for Indigenous women to influence decisions affecting their lives, territories, and futures.

The call is clear: listen to Indigenous communities, recognize their rights and knowledge, resource their leadership, protect those defending their territories, and translate commitments into action. A just climate future for Kenya cannot be achieved without Indigenous peoples—and particularly Indigenous women—at the centre of climate governance.



Acknowledgements

The completion of this report, Deepening Analysis of Climate Governance Frameworks through an Indigenous and Gender Lens, would not have been possible without the dedication, expertise, and collaborative support of the individuals, communities, institutions, and partners who contributed to the research process.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the consultancy team, Dr. Eliud Okumu Ongowo (PhD), Lead Consultant; Cecilia Githaiga; and Catherine Jeptoo Lagat, Co-Lead Consultants, for their professionalism, diligence, and expertise throughout the assignment. Their leadership in conducting the qualitative research, facilitating community engagements, analysing the findings, and generating critical insights has been instrumental in shaping this report.

We express our profound gratitude to the Indigenous communities, Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders (IWEDs), key informants, and focus group discussion participants who generously shared their knowledge, lived experiences, customary practices, and perspectives on climate change, climate governance, land rights, and justice. Their contributions are at the heart of this research. We recognize that this knowledge is deeply rooted in community histories, cultures, territories, and ongoing struggles for justice, dignity, participation, and self-determination.

We also acknowledge the Women Human Rights Defenders Hub (The Hub) staff for their commitment, coordination, and steadfast support throughout the research process. Their sustained engagement with Indigenous grassroots movements and women environmental defenders provided valuable insights that strengthened both the research process and its outcomes.

Our appreciation further goes to our partners, including local human rights networks, community-based organizations, Indigenous-led actors, and county and



national government duty bearers, whose participation enriched the research and validation processes. In particular, we acknowledge the valuable contributions of representatives from the Katiba Institute, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), and the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action. Their perspectives, technical expertise, data, and policy insights contributed significantly to strengthening the analysis and recommendations contained in this report.

Finally, we extend our deepest appreciation to the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) for its generous financial support, which made this research possible and enabled meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities, women environmental defenders, government institutions, and other key stakeholders.



Executive Summary

The Women Human Rights Defenders Hub (The Hub) commissioned this assessment to examine how Kenya's legal, policy, institutional, and governance frameworks shape the experiences of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders (IWEDs). Building on the Hub's earlier research, *Assessment of the Legal, Policy and Social Impact of Climate Change Laws on Women Environmental Defenders (WEDs) & Their Organizations (WEDOs)*, which highlighted legislative gaps and gendered vulnerabilities, this study applies a deeper intersectional lens to Indigenous governance systems, customary land tenure, Indigenous knowledge, and community-led climate adaptation. The study recognizes that Indigenous communities and particularly women are disproportionately affected by climate change and environmental degradation despite being custodians of critical ecosystems, biodiversity, and Indigenous knowledge systems.

Guided by the Adaptive Governance Framework, and Feminist Political Ecology the study adopted a qualitative multi-site case study approach combining desktop review, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Key Informant Interviews (KIs). The assessment covered the Borana, Endorois, Ilchamus, Maasai, Ogiek, Samburu, Sengwer, Bajuni, and Waata communities across Isiolo, Baringo, Kajiado, Nakuru, Samburu, Elgeyo Marakwet, and Lamu Counties. Data were analyzed using framework and thematic analysis to generate comparative yet context-specific insights into governance, climate adaptation, Indigenous knowledge, and gender inclusion.

The findings show that climate change has become the principal driver of environmental, social, and economic vulnerability across Indigenous communities. Prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, shrinking grazing lands, forest



degradation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, and increasing human–wildlife conflict are undermining traditional livelihoods, food security, cultural heritage, and community resilience. This is compounded by weak implementation of the existing legal and policy frameworks.

The assessment further demonstrates that customary governance institutions and Indigenous ecological knowledge remain fundamental to sustainable environmental management and climate adaptation. However, these systems receive limited formal recognition and are increasingly threatened by changing livelihoods and declining intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Across all communities, Indigenous women emerged as indispensable environmental stewards who play critical roles in natural resource management, household resilience, food security, and the transmission of Indigenous knowledge. Despite these contributions, women continue to face structural barriers to land ownership, leadership, economic opportunities, and meaningful participation in decision-making. Climate change further compounds these inequalities by increasing unpaid care responsibilities, livelihood insecurity, food shortages, and exposure to gender-based violence. Women with disabilities experience even greater exclusion due to inaccessible services, limited representation, mobility constraints, and persistent social stigma, despite making valuable contributions to environmental conservation and community resilience.

The study concludes that strengthening Indigenous environmental governance requires greater recognition of customary governance institutions, stronger implementation of existing legal frameworks, protection of community land rights, and meaningful participation of Indigenous women, youth, and persons with disabilities in climate and natural resource governance. It further calls for integrating Indigenous knowledge into climate adaptation and biodiversity programmes, improving access to climate finance and livelihood opportunities,



strengthening leadership of Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders, and promoting transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance.

Key Take Away

- i. Indigenous Peoples are indispensable partners in climate resilience and biodiversity conservation.
- ii. The principal challenge is not the absence of laws, but the weak implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks.
- iii. Indigenous women are central to environmental stewardship but remain systematically excluded from decision-making.
- iv. Climate justice requires inclusive governance that leaves no one behind.
- v. Sustainable environmental governance depends on genuine partnerships between governments, Indigenous institutions, and civil society.



Part 1: Context

1.1 Brief on the Global Context of Indigenous People (IP)

Indigenous Peoples comprise an estimated 476.6 million people across more than 90 countries, representing over 5,000 distinct cultures, languages, and knowledge systems worldwide¹. Although they account for only about 6% of the global population, they safeguard a substantial share of the world's remaining biodiversity and steward many of the ecosystems that are most critical for climate resilience, including forests, rangelands, wetlands, and coastal environments. Their traditional knowledge and customary governance systems are increasingly recognized as indispensable for addressing the interconnected global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development.

Over the past two decades, the global policy landscape has evolved significantly in recognizing the rights and contributions of Indigenous Peoples. A landmark achievement was the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, which affirms their collective rights to self-determination, cultural identity, land and resource ownership, free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), and meaningful participation in decisions affecting their lives². Since then, Indigenous Peoples have assumed an increasingly prominent role within international policy frameworks, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Paris Agreement, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, reflecting growing consensus that global environmental and climate goals cannot be achieved without Indigenous leadership and stewardship.

-
- 1 International Labour Organization, *Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an Inclusive, Sustainable and Just Future* (Geneva, 2019).
 - 2 United Nations. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. New York: United Nations.



Within this global population, Indigenous women constitute more than half of all Indigenous Peoples, making their inclusion fundamental to achieving equitable and sustainable development. Yet they remain among the world's most marginalized populations. Across societies, women continue to experience systemic inequalities in access to education, economic opportunities, political representation, land tenure, and control over productive resources. For Indigenous women, these inequalities are compounded by intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, Indigenous identity, and socio-economic exclusion³. This "triple burden" significantly limits their participation in governance, access to justice, and ability to benefit from development and climate investments.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), a high level advisory structure to the Economy and Social Council whose mandate includes addressing social, economic, education, environmental and rights of indigenous peoples, notes that indigenous women face multiple forms of discrimination. These include but are not limited to access to economic empowerment, vocational training, and capacity-building programmes and processes. This particularly makes the women vulnerable to food insecurity, conflicts, gender-based domestic and other forms of violence, the denial of or limitation of access to property rights, and the violation of their right to inherit land⁴

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) has consistently highlighted that Indigenous women experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that undermine their rights and well-being. They face persistent barriers to economic empowerment, vocational training, leadership opportunities, and participation in policy and decision-making

3 Esther Effundem Njieassam, "Gender inequality and land rights: the situation of indigenous women in Cameroon", Potchefstroom ElectronIP Law Journal, vol. 22 (2019).

4 Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: report on the twelfth session (20-31 May 2013)" (E/2013/43-E/C.19/2013/25), para. 35.



processes. These structural inequalities heighten their vulnerability to poverty, food insecurity, climate-related displacement, resource-based conflicts, gender-based violence, insecure land tenure, and violations of inheritance and property rights. Despite these challenges, Indigenous women remain central actors in preserving traditional knowledge, safeguarding biodiversity, strengthening community resilience, and advancing sustainable natural resource governance. Increasingly, global evidence demonstrates that meaningful recognition of Indigenous women's rights, leadership, and agency is not only a matter of social justice but also a strategic imperative for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and inclusive development (CEDAW, 2022; UNPFII, 2021, 2023; CBD, 2022; IPCC, 2022).



1.2 Brief on the Country Context of Indigenous People (IP)

Kenya is home to more than 25 communities that identify as Indigenous Peoples, that includes the pastoralist groups such as the Borana, Maasai, Samburu, Turkana, Endorois, Gabra, and Rendille, as well as hunter-gatherer communities such as the Ogiek, Sengwer, Yaaku, Waata, and Awer (Boni)⁵. Although the Kenyan government does not officially use the term “Indigenous Peoples,” the Constitution of Kenya (2010) (CoK) recognizes many of these groups under the category of “marginalized communities” and provides for their protection and inclusion in national development⁶.

Article 260 of the Constitution in particular recognizes that there can be amongst other marginalized communities, an indigenous community that has retained and maintained its traditional lifestyle and livelihood based on a hunter gatherer economy, this being the only mention of the term indigenous otherwise all Indigenous People fall under minority and marginalised communities under article 56 of the CoK. Despite these safeguards guaranteed in the Kenyan Constitution, inequalities between Indigenous People and non-Indigenous People continue to be more pronounced with IP experiencing socio-economic and political marginalization, evidenced by insecure land tenure, inadequate access to education and healthcare, limited infrastructure, and under-representation in decision-making processes.

The marginalization of the IPs is more pronounced among the Indigenous women in Kenya. The Indigenous women are exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization that emanate from their gender, ethnicity, geographic location, and socio-economic status. Despite the fact that indigenous women play a

5 International Fund for Agricultural Development. (2024). *Kenya: Country technical note on Indigenous Peoples' issues*. Rome: IFAD. Retrieved from IFAD publications.

6 Republic of Kenya. (2010). *The Constitution of Kenya, 2010*. Nairobi: Government Printer. Supported by interpretation and implementation literature.



critical role in natural resource management, pastoral livelihoods, food security, cultural preservation, and community resilience, they often face significant barriers to ownership of land, access to education and healthcare, economic opportunities, and participation in governance and decision-making processes⁷. Indigenous women from communities such as the Borana, Maasai, Samburu, Endorois, Ogiek, and Sengwer remain underrepresented in local institutions governing land, climate action, and natural resource management despite being disproportionately affected by climate change, environmental degradation, and resource conflicts⁸.

7 International Fund for AgrIPultural Development (IFAD). (2024). *Kenya: Country TechnIPal Note on Indigenous Peoples' Issues*. Rome: IFAD.

8 UN Women. (2022). *Indigenous Women and Girls: Leadership and Rights in Climate Action and Sustainable Development*. New York: UN Women.



Part II: Legal and Policy Framework on IP

2.1 Selected Global Legal and Policy Framework on IP

The global legal and policy framework on Indigenous Peoples is anchored in international human rights instruments that recognize and protect their collective rights, cultural identity, self-determination, and relationship with ancestral lands and natural resources. The most significant instrument is the United Nations *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*, adopted in 2007, which affirms Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination, participation in decision-making, cultural preservation, land and resource ownership, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) before activities affecting their territories are undertaken⁹ among other rights. Complementing UNDRIP is the International Labour Organization *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)*, the only legally binding international treaty specifically addressing Indigenous Peoples' rights, which obligates states to protect Indigenous cultures, institutions, lands, and livelihoods¹⁰.

Indigenous rights are further reinforced through international frameworks such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)¹¹, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Paris Agreement, Kyoto Protocol, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), East African Community Climate change Policy and various regional human rights mechanisms particularly the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights all of which increasingly recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge, participation, and leadership in biodiversity conservation, climate action, and sustainable development¹².

9 United Nations. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. New York: United Nations.

10 International Labour Organization (ILO). (1989). *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)*. Geneva: ILO.

11 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). (2022). *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. Montreal: CBD Secretariat.

12 United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations.



2.2 National Legal and Policy Framework on IP

Kenya's legal and policy framework for Indigenous People is primarily grounded in the Constitution of Kenya (2010), which recognizes and protects the rights of marginalized and minority communities, including many Indigenous Peoples. The Constitution guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination, cultural rights, public participation, and equitable access to resources while providing for affirmative action measures to address historical injustices¹³.

Key legislation supporting Indigenous rights includes the Community Land Act¹⁴, which recognizes and protects community land tenure systems and provides for the registration and governance of communal lands, predominantly occupied by Indigenous pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities.

Other relevant frameworks include the National Land Policy, the Climate Change Act, and the Environmental Management and Coordination Act, which promote community participation in land, environmental, and climate governance. In addition, judicial decisions such as the landmark Endorois and Ogiek cases have strengthened the recognition of Indigenous land, cultural, and resource rights. Despite this progress in terms of legislation, implementation challenges persist, including slow registration of community lands, limited representation of Indigenous groups in governance structures, land-related conflicts, and inadequate incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and women's voices in policy processes¹⁵.

Indigenous women in Kenya disproportionately continue to face significant social, economic, and political marginalization despite their central role in sustaining livelihoods, preserving Indigenous knowledge, and managing natural resources. Borana, Maasai, Samburu, Endorois, Ogiek, and Sengwer Indigenous women

13 RepublIP of Kenya. (2010). *Constitution of Kenya, 2010*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

14 RepublIP of Kenya. (2016). *Community Land Act, No. 27 of 2016*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

15 AfrIPan Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. (2010). *Centre for Minority Rights Development (Kenya) and Minority Rights Group International on behalf of Endorois Welfare Council v. Kenya (CommunIPation 276/2003)*. Banjul: ACHPR.



often face barriers to land ownership, education, healthcare, and meaningful participation in decision-making processes due to patriarchal norms and historical exclusion. They are also disproportionately affected by climate change, resource conflicts, scarcity and environmental degradation, which increase their vulnerability and caregiving and livelihood burdens.

Part III: The Assignment

3.0 Study Purpose and Research Objectives

The study seeks to generate deeper, context-specific evidence on how laws, policies, institutions and financing arrangements shape the operating environment of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders. It is concerned with both formal frameworks and lived reality: what laws and policies say, how institutions interpret and implement them, and how communities experience those actions in practice.

- ii) Deepen existing analysis using the Adaptive Governance Framework, with attention to flexible, participatory and responsive governance under environmental uncertainty.
- iii) Contextualize legal frameworks by examining how national and county climate, land, environmental and natural-resource laws and policies are implemented and experienced.
- iii) Assess how legal, policy and institutional frameworks affect participation, leadership, protection, access to justice, land rights, climate adaptation and resilience among Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders.
- iv) Examine the recognition, protection, transmission and integration of Indigenous ecological knowledge and customary governance systems.
- iv) Develop evidence-based policy and advocacy pathways that strengthen inclusion, protection, recognition, participation, leadership, climate-finance access and justice.



Part III: Study Methodology and Design

3.1 Study Design

The adopted qualitative, multi-sited case study approach guided by feminist political ecology and legal pluralism to generate in-depth, context-specific insights on how legal, policy, and institutional frameworks shape the experiences of Indigenous women environmental defenders. The approach combines secondary and primary data collection, enabling analysis of both formal legal frameworks and how they are interpreted, implemented, and experienced at international, national, county, and community levels.

3.2 Target Indigenous People

The target communities will be clustered into the following groups;

Cluster	County	Indigenous community
Pastoralist Communities	Isiolo, Samburu Kajiado	Borana Samburu Maasai
Forest-Dependent / Hunter-Gatherer Communities	Nakuru Elgeyo Marakwet	Ogiek Sengwer
Fishing / Coastal and Lake-Based Communities	Lamu	Bajuni Waata
Agro-Pastoralist / Dryland Indigenous Communities	Baringo	Endorois Ilchamus

Clustering Indigenous People into thematic livelihood and ecological categories is important because it enables a more nuanced understanding of how different groups interact with their environments, experience climate and governance



challenges, and exercise their rights. The baseline will target women and girls, men and youth and PWD women. It also supports the design of context-specific research, policies, and interventions that reflect the unique realities, knowledge systems, and priorities of each community.

3.3 Data Collection Process

3.3.1 Secondary Data Collection (Desktop Research)

The consultants conducted a desktop review to establish the contextual, policy, legal, and institutional landscape relating to indigenous communities, climate governance, and the role of Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders (IWEDs) in Kenya. This provided a foundation for understanding existing knowledge, identifying evidence gaps, and informing the design of field-based data collection tools and stakeholder engagement processes. The review examined national, county, regional, and international frameworks that shape climate governance, environmental management, indigenous peoples' rights, gender equality, and community participation in natural resource governance.

3.3.2 Field Data Collection

The field data collection was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with key stakeholders such as Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders (IWEDs), Indigenous Peoples networks, civil society organizations, and policy-makers. The study did 27 FGDs across six counties namely; Baringo, Nakuru, Elgeyo Marakwet, Kajiado, Isiolo, Samburu and Lamu. The targeted communities were Borana, Bajuni, Endorois, Ilchamus, Maasai, Ogiek, Samburu, Sengwer and Waata. The FGDs were distributed as Women and Girls, Men and Youth, and Women and Girls with Disability.



The Key Informants included; Staff from WHRD, Ogiek Peoples Development Programme (OPDP), Samburu Women Trust, Wong'an Women Initiative, Call for Change-CFC, Great Plains foundation (GPF), EIWEN, Ogiek Sisters Empowerment Network, Save Mau Forest Initiative, National Gender and Equality Commission -Nakuru Regional Office, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights-KNCHR, Koimugul Indigenous Women Network, Parkishon Camel Self Help Group

3.4 Analysis of the Study Data

The Qualitative data (Desk Review, FGD, KII) was analyzed thematically with the aid QDA miner.

3.5 Gender-Transformative Analysis (GTA) Framework

The study applied a gender-transformative analytical lens to examine how climate governance frameworks, legal instruments, customary institutions, and climate adaptation interventions influence the rights, participation, leadership, and agency of Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders (IWEDs). The analysis was guided by the following dimensions; Decision making and leadership, Access to and control over resources, Recognition and protection, Gendered impacts and transformation of gender norms



Part IV: Findings and Discussions

4.0 Introduction

To answer the study objectives directly, every community chapter follows the same sequence: adaptive governance and environmental context; implementation of legal and institutional frameworks; effects on Indigenous women and girls; Indigenous knowledge and customary governance; and policy and advocacy priorities. This structure preserves community differences while making comparison possible.

4.1 Evidence and Analytical Approach

4.1.1 Evidence base

The current analysis is based on 21 focus group discussion records from six counties. In Kajiado, Nakuru, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo and Isiolo, three groups were held: women and girls; women and girls with disabilities; and adult men and male youth. In Marsabit, the current dataset contains one FGD with Samburu women and girls. The coded workbook contains 611 analytical segments.

Community	County recorded in dataset	Participant-group coverage
Borana	Isiolo	Women; men/youth; women with disabilities
Bajuni	Lamu	
Endorois	Baringo	Women; men/youth; women with disabilities
Ilchamus	Baringo	Women; men/youth; women with disabilities
Maasai	Kajiado	Women; men/youth; women with disabilities
Ogiek	Nakuru	Women; men/youth; women with disabilities
Samburu	Samburu	Women; men/youth; women with disabilities
Sengwer	Elgeyo Marakwet	Women; men/youth; women with disabilities
Waata	Lamu	Women; men/youth; women with disabilities



4.1.2 Qualitative analysis

The merged report uses Framework Analysis because the study is; applied, multi-site and organized around clear objectives. The coded material was read within each community before cross-community comparison. The analysis also used thematic analysis, negative-case analysis and constant comparison across women, men/youth and women with disabilities.

Three interpretive lenses guide the report. Adaptive governance directs attention to participation, flexibility, learning, coordination and response to environmental change. Feminist political ecology shows how access, labour, risk and benefits are distributed by gender and social position. Legal pluralism examines how statutory law, county institutions, customary authority, conservation bodies and project rules interact.



4.2 Borana Community, Isiolo County

4.2.1 Introduction

The population of the Borana community according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics are 161,399 and they predominantly inhabit Marsabit and Isiolo. The Borana, like many Indigenous peoples, are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change because their livelihoods, culture, and identity are deeply intertwined with the natural environment. Prolonged drought has had profound political, social, spiritual, and environmental consequences, undermining pastoral livelihoods, cultural practices, and traditional ways of life. (Oelz et al., 2017; ILO, 2017; Figueroa, 2011; Nyadzi et al., 2021; Norton-Smith et al., 2016; Massey, 2020).

The Borana region, characterized by bimodal rainfall seasons (Ganna and Hagayya), has experienced the failure of five consecutive rainy seasons between 2019 and 2024, resulting in severe drought, widespread pasture and water shortages, and the loss of approximately 3.5 million cattle about 90% of the region's livestock triggering a major humanitarian crisis (Lucien, 2025). Despite these challenges, the Borana continue to rely on their indigenous governance system, Gadaa, and the Buusaa-gonofaa social protection mechanism, which promote collective resource management, mutual assistance, and social cohesion. Recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016, the Gadaa system remains central to Borana governance, while livestock continue to represent the foundation of livelihoods, cultural identity, and social status (UNESCO, 2016; Tache & Oba, 2009).

This study examined thematically; Range land governance, pastoralist mobility corridors, drought preparedness and resilience, women participation in climate governance and county climate planning and community participation.



4.2.2 Adaptive governance and environmental context

The Borana evidence provides the clearest example of an Indigenous adaptive governance system. Elders, Jaarsa, Abbaa Deedha, clan leaders and experienced herders assess pasture, water, animal health and security before deciding when and where livestock should move. Indigenous forecasts based on wind, clouds, vegetation, flowering trees and animal behaviour guide these decisions. Men and youth described customary institutions as more responsive to local realities than many external interventions. They also noted pressures: political interference, changing lifestyles, declining respect for elders and weaker involvement of younger generations.

The Borana data give the clearest account of pastoral mobility as climate adaptation. Seasonal movement allows livestock to reach dry-season pasture and permanent water, reduces overgrazing and supports reciprocal access between neighbouring communities. Mobility is therefore not a sign of disorder. It is a planned production and risk-management system. The women's FGD recorded this adaptive function in direct terms:

As the coded record states, "Mobility corridors enable livestock to access pasture and water during drought" (Segment 436), Women's FGD, Isiolo County.

The system is being narrowed by land subdivision, fencing, settlement growth, infrastructure, insecurity and encroachment. Traditional reserves and routes have become inaccessible in some areas. When corridors close, livestock travel farther, conflict increases and households lose the flexibility needed to survive drought. Participants therefore called for corridor protection in county spatial plans, restoration of degraded routes and strategic water investment.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Traditional livestock migration routes were described as fundamental to the survival of the Borana pastoral system during drought. **(Borana men and male youth FGD summary)**

Elders and herders assess pasture, water, livestock health and security and communicate agreed movement plans through customary institutions. **(Borana men and male youth FGD summary)**

Women explained that protected corridors keep livestock alive and preserve milk for children, pregnant women and older persons. **(Borana women and girls FGD summary)**

4.2.3 Implementation of legal and institutional frameworks

The customary system remains locally legitimate, but its relationship with the county government is incomplete. Participants wanted Gadaa and Deedha institutions formally recognized in county planning rather than replaced. Men also identified political interference, weakening respect for elders and limited youth succession as threats to the system.

Women's involvement in water committees, conservancies, Community Land Management Committees and public forums is growing. However, influence is often indirect: women provide information to husbands or male relatives, who take it into formal deliberation. County climate plans, funds and programmes are also poorly understood, especially among women and women with disabilities.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women increasingly attend community meetings and committees, but their opinions are not given equal weight in final land and resource decisions. **(Borana women and girls FGD summary)**

Women often communicate household, water and livestock concerns through husbands or elders rather than participating directly in customary assemblies. **(Borana women and girls FGD summary)**

Very few women with disabilities had attended county climate planning meetings; many were not informed, invited or supported to attend. **(Borana women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

4.2.4 Effects on Indigenous women, girls and defenders

4.2.4.1 Gendered effects of mobility and drought

When men and older boys move with livestock, women remain at the homestead with children, older persons, small livestock and household responsibilities. Water and firewood journeys become longer, family separation creates stress and girls take on additional work that can affect schooling.

Women are not only absorbing the burden. They preserve milk and food, care for weak animals, conserve fodder, share drought information and diversify income through trade, beadwork and small enterprises. These activities should be recognized as part of the pastoral adaptation system.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women assumed increased responsibility for children, elderly relatives, water, firewood, household resources and livestock left near the home-stead during migration. **(Borana women and girls FGD summary)**

Girls' domestic and livestock responsibilities increased during migration and could reduce school attendance. **(Borana women and girls FGD summary)**

Women used petty trade, beadwork, milk sales, savings groups and fodder conservation to support households during drought. **(Borana women and girls FGD summary)**

4.2.4.2 Disability and exclusion from services and governance

Women and girls with disabilities face compounded difficulties. Seasonal movement may be impossible because of distance, rough terrain and lack of accessible transport. Those left behind can lose family support, health access, rehabilitation, medication and repair of assistive devices. Relief registration and distribution points may also be inaccessible.

The strongest social barrier is the view that persons with disabilities are dependents rather than contributors. Yet participants described knowledge of drought indicators, medicinal plants, water management and livestock welfare, as well as involvement in beekeeping, poultry, business and savings groups. The evidence points to capability constrained by institutions and attitudes.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women with disabilities reported inaccessible venues, difficult terrain, transport costs, caregiver dependence and lack of accessible communication. **(Borana women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

Participants said persons with disabilities were often treated as people needing care rather than as people able to contribute knowledge and leadership. **(Borana women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities described their contribution through environmental knowledge, household management, beekeeping, poultry, small businesses and savings groups. **(Borana women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

4.2.5 Indigenous knowledge and customary governance

Borana knowledge is built into governance rather than existing as a separate cultural subject. It informs the timing and direction of migration, protection of dry-season pasture, management of wells, conflict prevention and drought preparation. Women hold parallel knowledge about household resources, water, food security, livestock health and environmental signs.

Participants wanted Indigenous forecasting combined with scientific climate information. They also raised concern about declining youth involvement in customary leadership. Integration therefore requires both formal recognition and intergenerational transmission.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Elders use wind direction, cloud formation, vegetation change, flowering trees and livestock behaviour to forecast conditions and guide mobility.

(Borana men and male youth FGD summary)

Women described reading environmental signs, preparing households for drought and teaching younger women the knowledge they had received.

(Borana women and girls FGD summary)

Men recommended collaboration between customary institutions and county government rather than replacement of the Gadaa and Deedha systems. **(Borana men and male youth FGD summary)**

4.2.6 Policy and advocacy pathways

The Borana recommendations are especially institutional. Participants asked counties to protect corridors and grazing reserves in spatial plans, recognise Gadaa and Deedha structures, invest in strategic water, restoration, livestock insurance and veterinary services, and improve early warning through community radio and the Borana language.

Women requested fair representation in county climate structures, land committees and conservancies. Women with disabilities asked for reserved seats, accessible venues, transport, interpretation, disability-friendly materials and monitoring of whether participation affects decisions and benefits. Men also accepted responsibility for encouraging women's leadership and shared decision-making.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

County governments should legally protect mobility corridors and grazing reserves and include them in spatial and land-use plans. **(Borana men and male youth FGD recommendation)**

Women asked for representation in County Climate Change Committees, Community Land Management Committees, water committees and conservancies. **(Borana women and girls FGD recommendation)**

Women with disabilities requested reserved positions, accessible meetings, transport, communication support and monitoring of meaningful participation. **(Borana women and girls with disabilities FGD recommendation)**

4.2.7 Borana Case Conclusion

The Borana case is unusually constructive. The community has a sophisticated adaptive system that still works, but its ecological space is shrinking and its decision structures are not inclusive enough. The strongest reform is co-governance: protect mobility and customary institutions while applying enforceable gender, youth and disability inclusion in county and community decision-making.



4.3 Bajuni Community, Lamu County

4.3.1 Introduction

The Bajuni are an Indigenous coastal community mainly inhabiting the Lamu Archipelago and northern Kenyan coastline, particularly Lamu East and parts of Lamu West. With a population of 91,422 according to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, they live across islands including Lamu, Pate, Faza, Siyu, Kizingitini, Ndaui, and Kiunga. Their livelihoods and cultural identity are closely connected to the Indian Ocean, mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass beds, and other coastal ecosystems. They possess rich Indigenous knowledge of marine resources, tides, weather patterns, navigation, and sustainable resource management.

Artisanal fishing is the mainstay of the Bajuni economy, complemented by farming, mangrove-related activities, boat building, dhow sailing, trade, tourism, and handicrafts. However, climate change and coastal pressures including; sea-level rise, erosion, saltwater intrusion, changing fish patterns, coral degradation, and mangrove loss—threaten their livelihoods, resources, and cultural heritage. The Bajuni experience highlights the importance of inclusive climate governance that recognizes Indigenous knowledge, strengthens community resilience, and supports sustainable and equitable management of coastal resources.

The Bajuni analysis draws on three Lamu locations with different participant compositions: a women-and-girls FGD in Kizingitini, a mixed-community FGD in Pate and a men-and-youth FGD in Faza. The records contain substantial Kiswahili testimony; quotations below are translated into English and attributed at group level to preserve the reporting style used throughout this report.



4.3.2 Adaptive governance and environmental context

Bajuni livelihoods are organized around the sea, mangroves, fisheries, coastal forests, land and associated blue-economy activities. Participants described mangroves as fish-breeding grounds, sources of construction material, fuel, honey and ecological protection, while fishing remains central to household income and youth employment. This ecological dependence makes environmental governance inseparable from economic security: when fish stocks decline or mangroves degrade, the effect appears immediately in household income, food and the capacity to meet school and other expenses.

Across Pate, Faza and Kizingitini, participants reported increasingly unpredictable weather, hotter conditions, changing rain, lower fish catches, mangrove degradation and freshwater stress. Faza participants described changes in wind and fishing seasons; Kizingitini participants said fishers can spend days at sea without adequate catch; Pate participants linked environmental deterioration to longer searches for water and firewood. Salinisation of wells and scarcity of freshwater make climate change a household-care issue as much as a fisheries issue, because women absorb much of the additional water and income burden.

The Bajuni response is not passive. Women plant mangroves, clean beaches, teach children, process and market fish and participate in environmental education; fishers and elders retain knowledge of sustainable mangrove and marine use; BMUs provide an existing institutional platform. However, adaptive capacity is constrained by weak value addition, unequal access to equipment and finance, uncertain community land rights and public-participation systems that do not consistently reach fishers, youth, women or persons with disabilities. Adaptation therefore needs to connect ecological restoration with livelihoods, water security and more representative governance.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations (translated from Kiswahili)

"Mangroves and the sea are the backbone of our economy; without these resources community life would be very difficult." — **Bajuni Pate FGD**

"The sea has changed. In the past we knew the wind and fishing seasons, but now the weather is unpredictable." — **Bajuni Kizingitini women and girls FGD**

"Water has become scarce, and women carry the heavier burden; when water is far away, we walk longer distances while caring for the family." — **Bajuni Faza men and youth FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Pate participants reported rising temperatures, declining fish stocks, unpredictable rainfall and pressure on mangroves. **(Bajuni Pate FGD summary)**

Women in Kizingitini reported increasing responsibility for alternative household income as fishing returns fall. **(Bajuni Kizingitini women and girls FGD summary)**

4.3.3 Implementation of legal and institutional frameworks

Legal and institutional awareness varies across the three Bajuni sites. Kizingitini participants showed moderate knowledge of fisheries and mangrove rules because of Beach Management Units (BMUs), fisheries officers and conservation organizations provide regular contact, but awareness of climate law, community-land law and county climate-governance frameworks was limited. Faza participants similarly reported limited knowledge of specific legislation, although some were aware of the Community Land Act and recent wildlife-law changes. This pattern suggests that legal literacy follows the institutions people encounter in everyday livelihood activity; fisheries rules are more visible than broader climate and land frameworks.



Implementation is a bigger concern. Faza participants argued that good laws are often not experienced as working in rural communities. Pate participants said formal frameworks do not fully recognize customary systems and community-land rights and reported that Pate's community land remains unregistered. The Pate group also pointed out that climate-finance projects often favour politically influential locations and that information about funding sometimes arrives only after beneficiaries have been selected. These claims require institutional verification, but they show a clear perception of uneven access and weak transparency.

Public participation is present but frequently late, narrow or poorly timed. Fishers may be at sea when meetings are held; notices may arrive too late; women may attend but have little influence; youth are underrepresented; and inaccessible conservation sites or weak information exclude persons with disabilities. The repeated demand across sites is for participation before decisions are substantially made. From an adaptive-governance perspective, this is important because coastal management depends on local knowledge that cannot shape policy when engagement occurs only at the end.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations (translated from Kiswahili)

"The problem is not the absence of laws but their implementation; rural citizens do not see many good laws working in practice." — **Bajuni Faza men and youth FGD**

"We need to be involved from the beginning of planning, not called only at the end." — **Bajuni Kizingitini women and girls FGD**

"This land belonged to our ancestors, but to this day we do not have a community land title; we live with uncertainty about its future." — **Bajuni Pate FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Pate participants said they often hear about climate-finance opportunities after beneficiaries or participants have already been selected. **(Bajuni Pate FGD summary)**

Kizingitini participants reported that women attend meetings but major decisions remain concentrated among a small number of leaders. **(Bajuni Kizingitini women and girls FGD summary)**

4.3.4 Effects on Indigenous women, girls and defenders

4.3.4.1 Blue-economy value chains and unequal benefits

Bajuni women are active in the blue economy but are concentrated in lower-capital parts of the value chain. Kizingitini women described cleaning, drying and selling fish while lacking the capital to own boats or fishing equipment. Pate participants similarly reported that fishing vessels and equipment often go to men, while women and ordinary youth remain in smaller enterprises. This is a distributional problem: participation is real, but control of productive assets and larger returns remains unequal.

Participants proposed value addition as a route out of this pattern. Faza and Pate groups asked for fish-processing capacity so that fish are not sold cheaply



in raw form, alongside credit, training, equipment and market access for women and youth. The policy implication is that blue-economy inclusion should not be measured only by the number of women participating. It should track ownership of boats and equipment, access to finance and markets, position within the value chain and the share of value retained locally.

4.3.4.2 Participation, disability and recognition of environmental defenders

Women's environmental work is highly visible in practice but weakly reflected in decision power. Across the three sites, women were described as mangrove planters, beach cleaners, and household environmental educators and fish processors. Yet participants said their contribution is often invisible when major decisions are made. Kizingitini participants highlighted the exclusion of persons with disabilities from mangrove activities because sites are difficult to reach and information is not reliably shared.

The Bajuni records do not establish systematic violent retaliation against Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders; instead, they document a structural form of marginalization: women contribute labour and knowledge to conservation while lacking equivalent leadership, productive assets and access to project finance. This distinction matters for protection policy. Strengthening IWEDs in this context requires recognition, information, leadership opportunities, legal literacy, finance and accessible participation, alongside protection from any direct threats that may arise.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations (translated from Kiswahili)

"Women do much of the cleaning, drying and selling of fish, but we do not have the ability to own boats or fishing equipment; the larger benefits remain with others."

— **Bajuni Kizingitini women and girls FGD**

"We participate in mangrove planting and beach cleaning, but our contribution is often invisible when major decisions are made." — **Bajuni Kizingitini women and girls FGD**

"Women should be part of all environmental committees, not as guests but as leaders contributing to decisions." — **Bajuni Faza men and youth FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Pate participants said ordinary women and youth are often left behind when blue-economy opportunities go to people who already have capital or equipment. **(Bajuni Pate FGD summary)**

Kizingitini participants reported that many mangrove-planting areas are difficult for persons with disabilities to access and that information on conservation activities often does not reach them. **(Bajuni Kizingitini women and girls FGD summary)**

4.3.5 Indigenous knowledge and customary governance

Indigenous knowledge in the Bajuni case is closely tied to long-term residence beside the sea and mangrove forests. Participants described inherited knowledge about when and how to harvest mangroves, use marine resources without exhausting them, recognize weather and fishing conditions, use medicinal plants and teach children to respect coastal ecosystems. Women are important knowledge holders because they connect environmental learning to household use, child socialization and conservation practice.



The knowledge system is under pressure from two directions. Climate change reduces the predictability of wind, rain and fish patterns on which customary calendars rely, while formal institutions can privilege technical science without giving equivalent weight to local knowledge. Faza participants explicitly rejected an either-or choice, arguing that conservation bodies should not use science alone. Kizingitini and Pate participants proposed documentation, involvement of elders and women in planning, and integration of Indigenous knowledge with scientific approaches.

This creates a practical pathway for legal pluralism. BMUs, county institutions and conservation organizations can create structured points where customary knowledge is recorded and used without removing it from community authority. Such integration should include consent on documentation and use, recognition of women as knowledge holders and intergenerational transmission through schools, youth groups and community programmes.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations (translated from Kiswahili)

"We Bajuni have lived with the sea and forests for generations. Our elders taught us how to harvest mangroves and marine products without destroying the environment." — **Bajuni Faza men and youth FGD**

"Conservation organisations should not rely on science alone. The knowledge of our elders has protected these environments for many years." — **Bajuni Faza men and youth FGD**

"Women teach children about medicinal plants, forest use and respect for the environment; we want this knowledge recognised and taught to future generations." — **Bajuni Kizingitini women and girls FGD**

4.3.6 Policy and Advocacy Pathways

The Bajuni recommendations form a connected coastal-resilience agenda rather than a set of isolated requests. The first priority is secure community land and resource rights, including completion of community-land registration where applicable. The second is meaningful public participation: earlier notice, meeting times compatible with fishing livelihoods, involvement from the beginning of project design and direct inclusion of women, youth, persons with disabilities and customary leaders.

The third priority is economic inclusion in the blue economy. Participants asked for fish value-addition facilities, credit, skills training, boats and equipment, market access and youth employment in mangrove restoration, eco-tourism and related green enterprises. Water security is also central, especially in eastern Lamu, where participants requested reliable freshwater solutions including treatment or desalination where technically appropriate. These investments should be paired with ecological safeguards so that higher income does not depend on unsustainable fishing or mangrove use.



The fourth priority is climate-finance reform. Pate participants asked for earlier information, direct community access, small grants for women and opportunities for communities to manage project resources rather than receiving benefits only through large external organizations. Finally, women environmental defenders need legal-awareness, leadership and proposal-writing support so they can move from unpaid conservation labour to recognized authority and access to finance. The combined pathway is therefore rights-based and productive: secure tenure, fair participation, recognized Indigenous knowledge, transparent finance and stronger local value chains.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Pate participants requested technical training, small grants for women and opportunities for communities to manage project funds directly. **(Bajuni Pate FGD summary)**

Participants identified secure community land rights, stronger climate-finance access, meaningful public participation, Indigenous-knowledge recognition and youth environmental employment as linked priorities. **(Bajuni Pate FGD summary)**

Participant recommendations

"Projects should begin by listening to the community and its needs instead of arriving after everything has already been decided." — **Bajuni Pate FGD**

"We need a fish-processing factory here in Faza and in Lamu County generally; today much fish is sold cheaply, but value addition would increase income." — **Bajuni Faza men and youth FGD**

"Government and conservation organisations should invest in training women on environmental law, leadership and proposal writing so that they can become more self-reliant." — **Bajuni Faza men and youth FGD**



4.3.7 Bajuni Case Conclusion

The Bajuni case shows a coastal governance system with strong ecological knowledge, active community conservation and functioning local institutions such as BMUs, but weak links between these capacities and formal climate, land and finance systems. The principal risks are declining marine livelihoods, water stress, unregistered or insecure community land, late participation, unequal control of blue-economy assets and the invisibility of women's conservation labour. A more adaptive system would treat Bajuni communities as co-governors of coastal resilience: securing tenure, integrating Indigenous knowledge, involving people before decisions are settled, directing finance closer to communities and ensuring women, youth and persons with disabilities participate in both environmental authority and economic benefit.



4.4 Endorois Community, Baringo County

4.4.1 Introduction

The Endorois are an Indigenous pastoralist community predominantly residing in Baringo County within Kenya's Rift Valley region. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, the Endorois have a population of 119,043 people in Kenya. Historically, the community occupied the areas surrounding Lake Bogoria, where they developed a strong cultural, spiritual, and economic connection to the landscape. Baringo County is characterized by diverse ecosystems comprising semi-arid rangelands, woodlands, wetlands, and freshwater lakes, including Lakes Bogoria and Baringo, which support pastoralism, wildlife conservation, and biodiversity. For generations, the Endorois have relied on Indigenous knowledge systems to sustainably manage grazing lands, water resources, medicinal plants, and sacred cultural sites. Their customary institutions have traditionally guided natural resource governance, seasonal livestock movement, and the conservation of ecosystems that sustain their livelihoods and cultural identity.

Livestock keeping remains the backbone of the Endorois economy, with cattle, goats, and sheep serving as the primary sources of food, income, and cultural wealth. The community also engages in beekeeping, small-scale agriculture, trade, and the harvesting of natural products to diversify household livelihoods. However, recurrent droughts, land degradation, climate variability, and increasing pressure on natural resources continue to threaten traditional pastoral systems. The historical displacement of the Endorois from their ancestral lands around Lake Bogoria for wildlife conservation significantly affected their access to grazing areas, water sources, and sacred cultural sites, undermining their livelihoods and cultural practices. Despite the landmark 2010 African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights decision affirming the Endorois' rights to their ancestral land, challenges relating to implementation, climate resilience, and sustainable natural



resource governance remain. The Endorois therefore provide an important case for understanding the intersection between climate governance, Indigenous land rights, biodiversity conservation, and community resilience within Kenya's arid and semi-arid landscapes.

4.4.2 Adaptive governance and environmental context

The Endorois case centres on community land, livestock, rangeland, springs and the Lake Bogoria ecosystem. Elders regulate grazing timing, access and disputes through customary knowledge. Participants also described drought, water scarcity, livestock loss, disease, and boundary conflict and human-wildlife pressure.

This is affirmed by Founder of EIWEN who indicated that, *"Climate change continues to disproportionately affect Indigenous communities. The rising water levels of Lake Bogoria have displaced communities, threatened sacred cultural and spiritual sites, and disrupted Indigenous livelihoods"*.

The customary system contains ecological knowledge and local legitimacy, but adaptive capacity is reduced when young people are not learning the system and women and persons with disabilities are excluded from decisions. Collaboration between elders, youth, women and formal institutions is therefore necessary for continuity and accountability.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Elders were described as directing grazing access, timing and the management of springs during drought. **(Endorois men and male youth FGD summary)**

Participants reported drought, livestock loss, water scarcity, disease, boundary disputes and human–wildlife conflict. **(Endorois FGDs)**

Men and youth recommended intergenerational dialogue and stronger communication between government, elders and youth. **(Endorois men and male youth FGD recommendation)**

4.4.3 Implementation of legal and institutional frameworks

Women and women with disabilities reported low awareness of land, gender, disability and climate frameworks. Men and youth had greater access to information through radio, television and social media. The deeper problem, however, is implementation: participants said legal protections exist but customary norms continue to determine land ownership, participation and dispute resolution.

The route to justice was described as a ladder from elders to chiefs, police, conservancy or forest authorities. Formal protection was not experienced as strong or accessible. Women with disabilities faced additional difficulty reaching institutions and understanding procedures.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women reported that laws promoting women's land rights exist but are rarely implemented, while customary norms remain stronger in practice. **(Endorois women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities reported little knowledge of land, disability and climate policy and limited invitation to information meetings. **(Endorois women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

Men and youth reported receiving more information through radio, television and social media than the women's groups. **(Endorois men and male youth FGD summary)**

4.4.4 Effects on Indigenous women, girls and defenders

4.4.4.1 Land, participation and generational exclusion

Women commonly access land through husbands or families. Single women, widows and women with disabilities face greater insecurity, and customary inheritance described as favouring men. Women are also underrepresented in barazas, grazing committees and Lake Bogoria governance.

Men and youth highlighted a parallel generational exclusion: elders dominate land and ecosystem decisions, while youth have limited influence and weaker customary knowledge. The case therefore shows gender and age operating together in the distribution of authority.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women described accessing land mainly through husbands and reported that single women and widows face greater difficulty owning or controlling community land. **(Endorois women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities reported exclusion from inheritance and assumptions that they could not manage property. **(Endorois women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

Young men reported minimal involvement in land and Lake Bogoria governance because elders dominate decision-making. **(Endorois men and male youth FGD summary)**

4.4.4.2 Protection, climate burdens and access to justice

Resource scarcity increases women's water and care work and was linked to conflict, stress and gender-based violence. Women with disabilities face additional mobility barriers in accessing water, relief food, healthcare and meetings. Participants also described defenders as having a weak voice and facing ridicule, intimidation or stigma.

Legal rights are difficult to realise when people do not know where to report, cannot reach the institution or do not expect a response. The evidence suggests that protection is still largely community based and that formal legal support and remedy are not sufficiently visible.



EIWEN founder notes “Indigenous women human rights defenders continue to face threats, intimidation, online harassment, and personal attacks because of their advocacy work. Women leaders are often negatively labelled and face resistance from political leaders and members of their own communities when advocating for Indigenous rights and gender equality.

Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

“how do you see & you don't have eye” — Endorois women and girls FGD; insulting phrase reported in coded Segment 302

Recorded FGD evidence

Women linked drought and resource scarcity to increased gender-based violence, intimidation and social exclusion. **(Endorois women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities described mobility barriers to water, relief food, health services and justice institutions. **(Endorois women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

The quoted phrase is reproduced as recorded and illustrates reported ridicule directed at a defender. It should not be read as the report's language.

4.4.5 Indigenous knowledge and customary governance

Customary institutions remain the practical government of land, rangeland, springs and dispute resolution. Elder knowledge helps determine grazing timing and drought response. Participants valued this role, but women and persons with disabilities were often outside the institutions through which the knowledge became authority.



The Endorois case therefore shows that recognizing customary governance is not enough. Recognition must be combined with internal inclusion, intergenerational transmission and dialogue between customary and statutory systems.

Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Elders use Indigenous knowledge to regulate grazing, springs and land disputes, especially during drought. **(Endorois men and male youth FGD summary)**

Women reported limited involvement in traditional land-dispute resolution and restrictions around some sacred water sites. **(Endorois women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities reported that traditional leaders rarely discussed disability or sought their views. **(Endorois women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

4.4.6 Policy and advocacy pathways

Participants prioritized rights awareness, leadership and advocacy training, inclusion in committees, safe and timely participation, legal reform on land and inheritance, disability representation, girls' education, economic empowerment and intergenerational dialogue. They also called for transparent conservation benefits and more accessible justice.

As Founder, Empowering Indigenous Women and Endangered Network (EIWEN) notes, "*The implementation of the Endorois land rights decision remains incomplete despite its significance in advancing Indigenous rights*".



The recommendations seek to turn formal recognition into lived recognition. This requires both changing law and changing the everyday institutions—families, elders, committees and county offices—through which rights are implemented.

Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women asked for land-rights and leadership training, inclusion in governance structures and sensitisation of men to support women's participation. **(Endorois women and girls FGD recommendation)**

Women with disabilities requested inclusive planning, financial literacy, advocacy training and legal guarantees of meaningful participation. **(Endorois women and girls with disabilities FGD recommendation)**

Men and youth asked for stronger youth participation and structured dialogue between elders, youth and government. **(Endorois men and male youth FGD recommendation)**

4.4.7 Endorois Case Conclusion

The Endorois case is best understood as an implementation problem. Formal rights and programmes are visible in principle, but customary norms and elder-controlled institutions still decide who owns land, speaks in meetings and reaches justice. Reform should strengthen customary–state dialogue while opening both systems to women, youth and persons with disabilities.



4.5. Ilchamus Community, Baringo County

4.5.1 Introduction

The Ilchamus are an Indigenous Maa-speaking community predominantly residing around Lake Baringo in Baringo County, Kenya. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, the Ilchamus have a population of 38,049 people in Kenya. The community has inhabited the Lake Baringo basin for generations, developing a unique culture and livelihood system shaped by the lake, surrounding wetlands, and semi-arid rangelands. Baringo County is characterized by diverse ecosystems comprising freshwater lakes, wetlands, acacia woodlands, riverine vegetation, and expansive grazing lands that support rich biodiversity and pastoral livelihoods. The Ilchamus have traditionally relied on Indigenous knowledge to sustainably manage fisheries, grazing areas, water resources, and seasonal wetlands. Their cultural identity and customary institutions are closely linked to Lake Baringo, which serves as an important source of food, income, and cultural heritage.

The Ilchamus economy is primarily based on fishing, livestock keeping, and small-scale irrigated agriculture. Households commonly rear cattle, goats, and sheep while cultivating crops such as maize, vegetables, and fruits along the lake shores where irrigation is possible. In recent years, the community has experienced increasing climate-related challenges, including prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, and the significant rise in Lake Baringo's water levels, which has submerged homes, schools, roads, grazing lands, farms, and fishing infrastructure. These changes have disrupted livelihoods, reduced access to productive land, and heightened competition over natural resources. As a community whose livelihoods are closely tied to both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, the Ilchamus provide valuable insights into how climate governance frameworks can strengthen Indigenous knowledge systems, promote sustainable natural resource management, and enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change.



4.5.2 Adaptive Governance and Environmental Context

The Ilchamus evidence connects community land, rangelands and the Lake Baringo–Bogoria ecosystem as one interdependent livelihood system. The lakes supply water, fish, irrigation opportunities, tourism income and cultural meaning, while communal grazing areas and livestock mobility sustain pastoral production. Participants described this system as increasingly compressed by rising lake waters, population growth, subdivision of ancestral land, siltation, shoreline cultivation and the spread of Mathenge or Prosopis. Common grazing areas referred to as Ilmanie have become harder to access, and movement in search of pasture and clean water has narrowed.

The environmental pressures are mutually reinforcing. Rising water displaces households and consumes arable and grazing land; displaced settlement contributes to boundary disputes and encroachment; intensified farming along the shoreline contributes to pollution and water weeds; and the decline of indigenous pasture increases dependence on smaller private plots. Participants also linked reduced aquatic food, pollution and changing lake conditions to greater human–wildlife conflict as crocodiles, hippos, zebras and other animals move into farms and water-access areas. Women and girls experience this ecological change through longer and riskier water journeys, while men and youth experience it through reduced herd sizes, restricted mobility and declining income.

Adaptation is already occurring, but mainly at household scale. Men and youth described keeping smaller herds, opening limited arable land and introducing apiculture. Women described protecting household pasture, growing fodder trees and participating in pasture farming and conservation groups. A stronger adaptive system would coordinate lake management, rangeland restoration, emergency grazing, invasive-species control, soil and water conservation and settlement planning rather than treating them as separate sectoral problems.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"The challenge has been increasing population and the rising waters of Lake Baringo and Bogoria which has displaced people."

- Ilchamus men and male youth FGD

"The distance to the lake. Extremely far." **- Ilchamus women and girls FGD**

"Not effective." **- Ilchamus men and male youth FGD; response on current rangeland governance**

Recorded FGD evidence

The lakes were described as sources of domestic water, irrigation, fishing, tourism income and cultural practices. **(Ilchamus FGDs)**

Participants linked rising lake waters, Prosopis invasion, land subdivision, siltation and shoreline pollution to shrinking grazing and livelihood space. **(Ilchamus FGDs)**

4.5.3 Implementation of legal and institutional frameworks

Land access remains governed primarily through families, clans and male authority. Women commonly obtain use rights through fathers or husbands and may cultivate land without controlling inheritance, sale or the size and location of settlement. The women's group reported some recent change, including greater discussion of equal treatment of children and the possibility of settlement land for unmarried women, but the governing rule remains male control. Women with disabilities face the same customary constraints together with poverty, dependence on caregivers, lack of documentation and beliefs that disability means inability to manage property.



Formal inclusion has nevertheless created openings. Women referred to the Constitution, the two-thirds gender principle, public barazas and the appointment of women as chiefs and assistant chiefs. Women's groups participate in apiculture, pasture production and conservation meetings, and some conservation benefits reach households through bursaries, dividends and relief support. These gains show that formal rules and programmes can change customary practice when leadership positions, organised groups and practical benefits reinforce one another.

The central implementation gap is that presence is still not the same as authority. Women estimated that their decisions receive only partial consideration. Young men may attend land meetings but adult men retain the final word. Persons with disabilities may be absent because information arrives late, communication is inaccessible or venues are distant and physically difficult to reach. Representation was repeatedly described as the condition that makes inclusion possible: where a PWD representative is present, concerns become visible; where representation is absent, the group is easily overlooked.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"The land is owned by men and clans' men." - **Ilchamus women and girls FGD**

"Women cannot sell land without the consent of the clan or the husband." - **Ilchamus women and girls FGD**

"...decisions are made solely by the adults." - **Ilchamus men and male youth FGD; recorded phrase on youth participation**

"The involvement of PWD is very minimal." - **Ilchamus women with disabilities FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Women reported new participation through barazas, conservation committees and leadership positions, including chiefs and assistant chiefs. **(Ilchamus women and girls FGD summary)**

PWD participation was constrained by late information, lack of sign-language support, inaccessible terrain and transport barriers. **(Ilchamus women with disabilities FGD summary)**

4.5.4 Effects on Indigenous women, girls and defenders

4.5.4.1 Land, livelihood and decision power

Gendered land access shapes livelihood security before drought or conservation decisions are made. Women may farm, manage households and maintain pasture while remaining unable to inherit or independently dispose of land. Widows, unmarried women and women with disabilities are especially vulnerable where access depends on a husband, relative or caregiver. The result is a gap between responsibility and authority: women carry much of the daily work associated



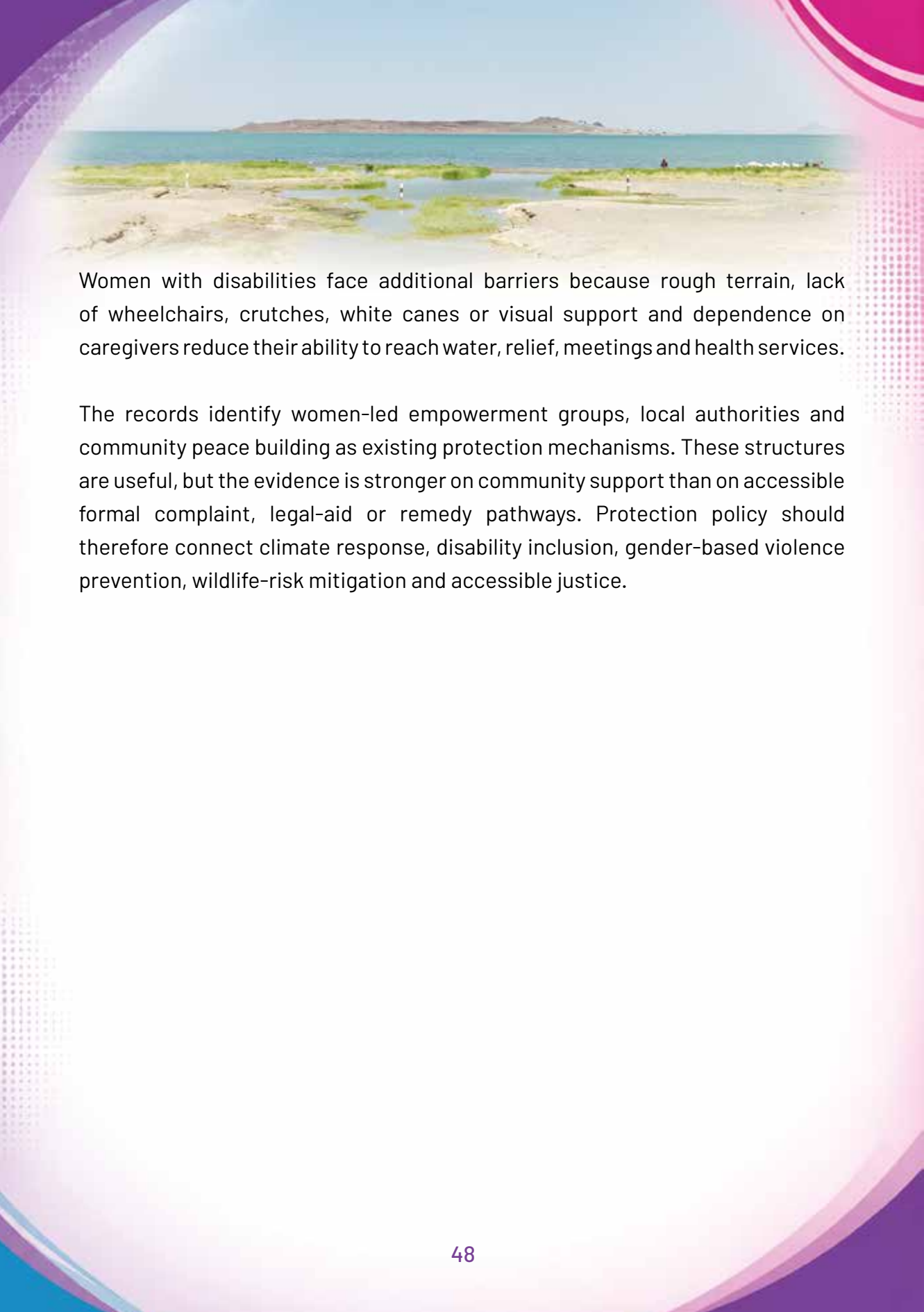
with water, calves, food and household pasture but have limited control over the assets on which those activities depend.

Men and youth experience a different form of insecurity. Displacement, subdivision and boundary disputes reduce the amount of common land available for herding, while age hierarchies limit the influence of younger men. Education and technology are beginning to create a role for youth in committees and climate information, but the evidence does not yet show that this role consistently translates into decision power. Land governance is therefore differentiated by gender, disability and age rather than simply divided between community and state institutions.

4.5.4.2 Climate Burden, Education and Safety

Drought and resource scarcity intensify unpaid work and reduce food security. Women and girls reported longer water journeys, greater responsibility for children and young livestock, fatigue, poor diets and malnutrition. Girls may leave school to fetch water or help with household work; lack of school fees and menstrual products was also linked to dropout and early marriage. These are not secondary social effects. They are part of the way climate shocks are distributed through household roles and unequal access to services.

Protection risks arise along the same pathways. Long travel to water exposes women and girls to unsafe roads, while rising lake waters and wildlife increase the danger of crocodile and hippo encounters. Pollution can make nearby water unsafe and force households to seek alternative sources farther away. This situation is further complicated by the fact that one would have to travel long distance to access justice in the event of an abuse (Executive Director-The Hub).



Women with disabilities face additional barriers because rough terrain, lack of wheelchairs, crutches, white canes or visual support and dependence on caregivers reduce their ability to reach water, relief, meetings and health services.

The records identify women-led empowerment groups, local authorities and community peace building as existing protection mechanisms. These structures are useful, but the evidence is stronger on community support than on accessible formal complaint, legal-aid or remedy pathways. Protection policy should therefore connect climate response, disability inclusion, gender-based violence prevention, wildlife-risk mitigation and accessible justice.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"Women are not allowed to inherit land from their ancestral lands but instead depend their husbands." - **Ilchamus women and girls FGD**

"Cultural beliefs that perceive disability as inability to manage property." - **Ilchamus women with disabilities FGD**

"It hits them badly. Lack of a balanced diets, tiredness due to long distances to fetch water, unsafe roads and the responsibility of taking care of the kids becomes hard." - **Ilchamus women and girls FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

irls' school dropout, reduced access to menstrual products, food insecurity and early marriage were linked to drought and increased household work. **(Ilchamus women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities described long distances, inaccessible terrain, lack of assistive devices and caregiver dependence during drought. **(Ilchamus women with disabilities FGD summary)**

Men and youth linked reduced income and rising displacement to growing household and boundary conflict. **(Ilchamus men and male youth FGD summary)**



4.5.5 Indigenous knowledge and customary governance

Ilchamus customary governance organizes land through clans, families, elders and barazas and historically guided grazing, mobility, water access and dispute resolution. Men described Indigenous forecasting through observation of stars and livestock indicators, while women also referred to star movements and signs of rain. The evidence therefore shows distributed knowledge, even though authority over that knowledge is not equally distributed.

Participants also recalled practical soil and rangeland conservation knowledge. The men's group referred to a locally remembered *mnyonyoko wa udongo* approach that guided terracing and gabion construction. Its decline was linked to erosion, siltation, and altered river courses and flooding. Women described training in pasture seed, pasture conservation and fodder trees such as *Calliandra*, *Ngoswe* and *Leucaena*. These practices connect Indigenous knowledge with restoration and household nutrition rather than treating knowledge as a purely cultural record.

Two transmission risks are visible. Girls and young women were said to receive Indigenous knowledge unequally, while young men are sometimes dismissed as immature despite their education and ability to use phones and research. A hybrid system should therefore bring elders, women knowledge holders, youth and persons with disabilities into joint monitoring and planning, combining local indicators with accessible weather forecasts and documented learning.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"They also know the stars' migrations and signs of rains." - **Ilchamus women and girls FGD**

"The men are highly involved as they are the ones who make use of the ITK like looking at intestines, observing stars' patterns to predict and monitor changes." - **Ilchamus men and male youth FGD**

"Unequal distribution of the ITK especially for the girls and young women." - **Ilchamus women and girls FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Participants recalled terracing and gabion practices and linked their decline to siltation and flooding. **(Ilchamus men and male youth FGD summary)**

Women reported training in pasture seed, fodder-tree establishment and conservation practices that improved household wellbeing. **(Ilchamus women and girls FGD summary)**

4.5.6 Policy and advocacy pathways

The Ilchamus recommendations combine institutional inclusion with practical ecosystem investment. Women, youth and persons with disabilities asked for reserved seats, leadership positions, accessible meeting locations, transport, early information, sign-language interpretation and leadership training. These measures should be written into the terms of reference and budgets of community-land, conservancy, drought and rangeland committees rather than left to individual goodwill.

Land and ecosystem reforms should proceed together. Priorities include land-rights awareness, fair documentation of community and household interests, restoration of common grazing areas, control of Prosopis, protection of water quality, shoreline management, soil conservation, wildlife-risk reduction and



community oversight of lake and conservancy decisions. Where conservation revenue, bursaries, dividends or future carbon benefits are involved, the community should receive clear information on eligibility, revenue, allocation and grievance procedures.

The adaptation package proposed by participants is concrete: drought-resistant crops, *Cenchrus ciliaris* pasture farms and hay baling, fodder and fruit trees, water storage and irrigation, beekeeping, beadwork, women- and PWD-led nurseries, climate grants and weather information by SMS. These actions are most likely to be effective when they strengthen community institutions, reduce women's and girls' daily burdens and create direct roles for groups that are currently consulted only intermittently.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"More inclusion on leadership roles." - **Ilchamus women and girls**

FGD recommendation

"Reserved seats for PWD in community conservation committees."

- Ilchamus women with disabilities FGD recommendation

"Sending of texts informing farmers weather expectations via sms." - **Ilchamus women and girls and men/youth FGD recommendations**

Recorded FGD evidence

Participants proposed drought-resistant crops, pasture farms, hay baling, water storage, beekeeping, beadwork and community tree nurseries. **(Ilchamus FGD recommendations)**

Women and persons with disabilities requested training, mentorship, accessible meetings, transport and representation in decision-making bodies. **(Ilchamus women and disability FGD recommendations)**

Community-led conservation and peer exchange with other conservancies were proposed to strengthen local ownership and learning. **(Ilchamus women and men/youth FGD recommendations)**

4.5.7 Ilchamus Case Conclusion

The Ilchamus case shows a combined ecological and governance squeeze. Lake expansion, pollution, land subdivision, Prosopis invasion and drought reduce the space available for mobility and livelihoods, while customary land rules and adult-male authority restrict who can influence the response. There are important signs of change—women leaders, organised groups, conservation benefits and



growing recognition of gender rules—but disability, age and land tenure still determine whose knowledge and needs become visible. The strongest pathway is integrated co-governance that links land security, lake and rangeland restoration, accessible representation, early warning and livelihood support.



4.6. Maasai Community, Kajiado County

4.6.1 Introduction

The Maasai are one of Kenya's largest and most recognized Indigenous pastoralist communities, with the majority residing in Kajiado County, where they constitute the dominant ethnic group. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, the Maasai population in Kenya is 1,189,522. Kajiado County lies within Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) and is characterized by expansive savannah grasslands, scattered acacia woodlands, volcanic hills, seasonal rivers, and wetlands that support both livestock production and globally significant wildlife populations. The county is also home to important conservation landscapes, including the Amboseli ecosystem, which provides critical wildlife corridors linking Kenya and Tanzania. For generations, the Maasai have maintained a semi-nomadic pastoral way of life, guided by customary institutions and Indigenous knowledge that regulate communal grazing, seasonal livestock mobility, water resource management, and environmental stewardship. Their close relationship with the natural environment has enabled them to adapt to changing climatic conditions while conserving rangeland ecosystems.

Livestock keeping remains the backbone of the Maasai economy, with cattle, sheep, and goats serving as the primary source of food, income, and cultural wealth. Increasingly, households have diversified their livelihoods through small-scale crop farming, tourism enterprises, wage employment, beadwork, and other small businesses. However, the community continues to face significant climate-related challenges, including recurrent droughts, erratic rainfall, declining pasture productivity, water scarcity, and land degradation. These challenges have been compounded by rapid urbanization, land subdivision, infrastructure development, and competing land uses that have reduced communal grazing areas and disrupted traditional pastoral mobility. Consequently, the Maasai



provide an important case for understanding how climate governance frameworks can strengthen Indigenous pastoral systems, promote sustainable rangeland management, support gender-responsive adaptation, and enhance the resilience of communities living in Kenya's dryland ecosystems.

4.6.2 Adaptive governance and environmental context

Community conservancies are a major institution in the Maasai case. Participants recognized their contribution to wildlife protection, tourism, roads, schools, water projects and some employment. These benefits explain why the evidence is mixed rather than a simple rejection of conservation.

The weakness appears when conservation rules do not adjust to drought. Pasture may remain inside a conservancy while livestock outside become weak. Traditional mobility is also narrowed by subdivision, fencing and land fragmentation. A more adaptive arrangement would protect wildlife while allowing clearly governed emergency access, responding to changing rainfall and pasture conditions rather than applying fixed rules regardless of crisis.

Participants described crop destruction, livestock losses and personal danger from elephants, lions, hyenas and other wildlife. Compensation was described as slow, uncertain or insufficient. Men and youth reported that communities increasingly adopt their own preventive measures because official responses arrive late; in the interval, families absorb the losses through reduced herds, destroyed crops and household resources diverted from other needs. The conservation burden is therefore carried locally, while the benefits are often delayed, indirect or unequally distributed.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"The conservancy has helped protect our land and wildlife, but sometimes we are not allowed to graze where our livestock need pasture most." — **Maasai women and girls FGD**

"During drought, our cattle become weak while we can clearly see grass inside the conservancy. That creates tension between herders and conservancy management." — **Maasai men and male youth FGD**

"Every year land is divided into smaller pieces. It becomes difficult to move livestock the way our fathers used to." — **Maasai men and male youth FGD**

4.6.3 Implementation of legal and institutional frameworks

The central implementation problem is participation without decision power. Meetings and committees exist, but participants repeatedly described decisions being prepared by elders or committee members before the wider community meets. Women and young people may be invited but remain unable to set the agenda or change the outcome.

Transparency and accountability are also weak. Participants could identify tourism and conservancy benefits but could not see how income was calculated or distributed. Compensation for wildlife loss was described as slow and uncertain. These experiences reduce trust because people are asked to protect wildlife without being able to follow the money, influence the rules or obtain timely remedy when they suffer loss.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"People attend meetings, but decisions are sometimes already agreed before everyone has spoken." — **Maasai women and girls FGD; coded Segment 4**

"We are listened to, but important decisions are usually made by men." — Maasai women and girls FGD; coded Segment 6

"The committee makes many decisions before meetings. Community meetings mostly approve what has already been discussed." — Maasai men and male youth FGD

4.6.4 Effects on Indigenous women, girls and defenders

4.6.4.1 Land, benefits and livelihood security

Land title acts as a gateway to authority and benefit. Women reported that land is mainly controlled or inherited by men, while conservancy leadership, lease payments and some benefits are linked to ownership. Widows, unmarried women, non-title holders and households outside benefit areas are therefore disadvantaged before any committee decision is made.

Employment is also gendered. Ranger, guide and security positions were said to go mainly to men, while women participate through beadwork and indirect household benefits. Women with disabilities often receive benefits through husbands or relatives rather than as recognized beneficiaries. The same community may therefore value the conservancy while experiencing its economic benefits as unequal. Opacity increases the sense of unfairness.

The above is confirmed by Great Plains Foundation (GPF) Community Liaison Officer who noted that, *"In the Maa traditional setup, there are specific women*



roles; - homecare takes, building of houses, cooking of food, fetching of firewood or water and for the elderly women, they are story tellers as well as becoming knowledgeable mid-wives to help giving birth women to deliver safely".

Participants repeatedly requested information about tourism revenue, conservancy expenditure and benefit-allocation rules. The statement 'we do not know how it is shared' (Segment 3) captures a governance problem rather than only a distribution problem: communities cannot judge fairness when the revenue and allocation formula are unclear.

Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"People believe those who own land should make decisions, yet most land belongs to men." — **Maasai women and girls FGD**

"Our husbands and sons are more likely to get jobs in the conservancy than women." — **Maasai women and girls FGD; coded Segment 2**

"Some families receive lease payments while others receive nothing, yet we all carry the burden of wildlife." — **Maasai men and male youth FGD**

4.6.4.2 Climate stress, unpaid work and safety

Unpredictable rain, repeated drought, livestock loss and falling milk production increase women's unpaid work. Women walk farther for water, manage scarce food, care for children and maintain households while men and older boys move with livestock.



The journeys expose women and girls to insecurity and possible gender-based violence. Human-wildlife conflict adds another burden. Participants described livestock predation, crop destruction and fear at water points. Where compensation is slow or inadequate, households carry the cost of a conservation system that produces wider public and tourism benefits.

Evidence from the focus groups

"By the time we finish collecting water, cooking and caring for children, the meetings are already over." — **Maasai women and girls FGD**

"When a lion kills your cow, the compensation process is very slow. Sometimes people give up because they know they may never be compensated." — **Maasai men and male youth FGD**

"We are told to protect wildlife, but when wildlife destroys our livelihoods, very little support comes back to us." — **Maasai men and male youth FGD**

4.6.4.3 Disability and Compounded Exclusion

Women with disabilities face barriers at every stage: inaccessible paths and meeting places, costly transport, absent sign-language interpretation, late information and dependence on relatives. Women with disabilities described a dependence on relatives, neighbours and women's groups for water collection and daily needs that intensifies during drought, when transport funds are diverted to livestock feed and water and even clinic appointments are missed.

Beadwork income, family support networks and Indigenous knowledge of food preservation partially offset this dependence, but they do not remove it. Women respond through beadwork, small trade, food preservation, savings groups and careful household resource management.



They are also excluded from employment and committee positions because disability is treated as inability. Disability changes how women access water, meetings, employment, training and conservancy benefits. Participants described distant venues, lack of ramps, costly transport, absent sign-language interpretation and dependence on relatives. They also reported stigma, including the assumption that a person with a disability has nothing useful to contribute. The women-with-disabilities FGD recorded this stigma in direct terms: "because you have a disability, you have nothing useful to contribute" - Women-with-disabilities FGD, Kajiado County.

A strong counter-narrative also appeared: women with disabilities continue to teach conservation and Indigenous knowledge. Women with disabilities described teaching children, conserving water, holding environmental knowledge and contributing to household livelihoods. The policy problem is therefore not whether they can contribute; it is whether institutions remove the barriers that keep them outside.

Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"Some people assume because you have a disability, you have nothing useful to contribute." — **Maasai women and girls with disabilities FGD**

"I have never seen a woman with a disability serving on the conservancy committee." — **Maasai women and girls with disabilities FGD**

"If nobody with a disability is on the committee, our needs remain invisible." — **Maasai women and girls with disabilities FGD**



4.6.5 Indigenous knowledge and customary governance

The Maasai evidence documents knowledge of drought-resistant plants, feed preservation, rotational grazing, sacred sites, water management and weather indicators such as stars, wind, birds and livestock behaviour. Women teach conservation and water-use values to children, while men and elders hold knowledge about mobility and grazing patterns.

This knowledge is actively used, but women's knowledge of water, livestock and household adaptation is not given equal authority in conservancy decisions. Younger people also spend more time in school and towns, creating a risk that some knowledge will not be transmitted. Integration therefore requires both documentation and decision-making power for knowledge holders.

Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"Knowledge is not measured by how far you can walk." — **Maasai women and girls with disabilities FGD**

"Young educated women are giving us confidence to participate more." — **Maasai women and girls FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

- Men and youth described predicting weather through stars, wind, birds and livestock behaviour and managing pasture through rotational grazing. **(Maasai men and male youth FGD summary)**

4.6.6 Policy and Advocacy Pathways

The Maasai groups proposed reforms that directly address the governance problems they described. They asked for reserved and meaningful representation, accessible meetings, advance notice, transport and interpretation support, open reporting of conservancy income and expenditure, faster wildlife compensation,



drought-sensitive grazing arrangements, water infrastructure, women's livelihood support and awareness of land rights. Women reported that decisions were sometimes settled by committees, elders or leaders before the wider meeting.

As one coded segment stated, 'decisions are sometimes already agreed before everyone has spoken'. Women also explained that they may be listened to while final decisions remain with men. The men-and-youth FGD partly confirmed this pattern. Young people are sometimes invited but their ideas are dismissed because of age. Men also noted that committees may ask communities to approve matters already discussed. The problem is therefore broader than women's attendance. It concerns who can set the agenda, whose knowledge is treated as authoritative and whether participation can change a decision.

There are signs of change. Educated younger women were described as building confidence and encouraging participation. Some women attend committees and public forums, and there is support among male participants for increased representation of women and youth. These are important enabling conditions, but the evidence does not yet show that increased presence has consistently become decision authority.

These proposals should be converted into measurable institutional duties. Representation should specify seats, voting rights and reporting. Transparency should specify what financial information is disclosed and when. Accessibility should be budgeted, not left to goodwill. Emergency grazing should be governed by clear conditions and community oversight.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"Women should not only attend meetings; they should also hold leadership positions." — **Maasai women and girls FGD**

"People should know how much money comes from tourism and how it is being spent. That information should not remain with a few leaders." — **Maasai men and male youth FGD**

"Meetings should be held in places where everyone can reach without struggling." — **Maasai women and girls with disabilities FGD**

4.6.7 Maasai Case Conclusion

The Maasai participants did not ask for less conservation. They asked for a fairer form of conservation in which local people can see the money, influence the rules, protect livelihoods during drought and receive compensation when they carry wildlife costs. The strongest pattern is self-reinforcing exclusion: those with less control over land have less voice, and those with less voice receive fewer direct benefits.



Issues under investigation	Main finding from Maasai Community
1. Adaptive governance	Conservancies need flexible drought rules and protection of mobility, not fixed restrictions.
2. Implementation	Meetings exist, but decisions and financial information remain concentrated.
3. Impact on IWEDs	Women, widows, non-title holders and women with disabilities carry greater costs and receive fewer direct benefits.
4. Indigenous knowledge	Knowledge is rich and practised but women's knowledge has limited institutional authority.
5. Policy pathways	Transparent finance, accessible participation, land-rights awareness, fair compensation and representation with power.



4.7 Ogiek Community, Nakuru County

4.7.1 Introduction

The Ogiek are one of Kenya's recognized Indigenous Peoples and are among the country's few remaining forest-dependent communities. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, the Ogiek have a population of 52,596 people. They are predominantly found in the Mau Forest Complex, particularly in Mariashoni, Nessuit, Tinet, and surrounding areas of Nakuru County, with smaller populations in parts of Kericho, Bomet, and Narok counties. Nakuru County is characterized by diverse ecosystems, including the Mau Forest Complex, the largest closed-canopy montane forest in East Africa and one of Kenya's five major water towers. The forest is a critical source of rivers, biodiversity, and ecosystem services that support millions of people across the country.

For generations, the Ogiek have maintained a deep cultural, spiritual, and economic connection with the Mau Forest, relying on Indigenous ecological knowledge to sustainably manage forest resources while conserving biodiversity. Traditionally, they practiced hunting and gathering, but over time beekeeping became their principal livelihood and an important cultural practice, complemented by the sustainable harvesting of medicinal plants, wild fruits, mushrooms, and other non-timber forest products.

Today, the Ogiek economy is largely based on beekeeping, small-scale farming, livestock keeping, and the sustainable use of forest resources. However, the community faces increasing challenges arising from climate change, including changing rainfall patterns, forest degradation, biodiversity loss, and declining availability of forest resources that support their livelihoods. Conservation initiatives, restrictions on forest access, and longstanding land tenure disputes have also affected their traditional way of life and cultural practices. Despite



these challenges, the Ogiek continue to play an important role as custodians of the Mau Forest through their Indigenous knowledge of sustainable forest management and ecosystem conservation. Their experiences provide valuable insights into how climate governance frameworks can recognize Indigenous land rights, strengthen community-based conservation, and enhance the resilience of forest-dependent Indigenous communities.

4.7.2 Adaptive governance and environmental context

Participants described the Mau Forest as the source of water, honey, food, medicine, grazing, building materials, spirituality and ancestral identity. They reported reduced forest cover, drying rivers, lower honey production, fewer medicinal plants and declining wildlife. These changes affect both livelihoods and cultural continuity.

Ogiek women, men, youth and women with disabilities are already involved in nurseries, tree planting, seedling collection, water protection, monitoring and awareness. The most adaptive initiatives are those that use local species, customary knowledge and continuing community involvement. Externally planned planting was criticized where species and sites were unsuitable.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

- The forest was described as a source of water, medicine, food, honey, income and ancestral identity. **(Ogiek women and women with disabilities FGD summaries)**
- Participants reported reduced forest cover, drying rivers, declining wildlife and lower honey production. **(Ogiek FGDs)**
- Women and women with disabilities described tree nurseries, planting, seedling selection, awareness and monitoring as active community restoration work. **(Ogiek women and women with disabilities FGD summaries)**

4.7.3 Implementation of legal and institutional frameworks

Forest governance sits between customary clan and elder systems, Community Forest Associations, chiefs, Kenya Forest Service and other state or project actors. Participants valued customary stewardship but reported weak recognition within formal arrangements. Men and youth described political allocation of forest land, corruption concerns, and unclear leadership and restoration projects designed without adequate community input.

This is confirmed by the excerpt *“There is evidence of Indigenous-led conservation in the Mau Forest Complex and other areas inhabited by Indigenous communities, demonstrating the contribution of Indigenous knowledge to environmental conservation”* (CEO-KNHRC).

Carbon governance reveals the deepest implementation gap. Participants had heard about carbon credits, mainly through television or radio, but could not explain the project, responsible actor, community rights, benefit formula or grievance mechanism. All three groups reported little or no consultation in design and implementation.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"No. Women and girls have not benefited from carbon projects." — **Ogiek women and girls FGD; coded Segment 121**

Recorded FGD evidence

Women and women with disabilities reported hearing about carbon projects without understanding the project goals, rights, actors or expected benefits. **(Ogiek women and women with disabilities FGD summaries)**

Men and youth reported no clear benefit-sharing mechanism reaching Ogiek households and uncertainty about who buys, sells or controls carbon revenue. **(Ogiek men and male youth FGD summary)**

4.7.4 Effects on Indigenous women, girls and defenders

Forest decline and access restrictions increase the time women spend finding water, firewood, herbs and food. Reduced honey, medicinal plants and forest resources weaken household income and food security. Women with disabilities face rough terrain, transport barriers and dependence on family support to reach forest resources and meetings.

Participants also reported defender risks. Men and youth said community scouts may be arrested because formal officers do not recognize their customary role. Accounts of eviction, beating and arrest were also linked by participants to forest enforcement and carbon-related restrictions. These claims require documentary verification, but they clearly show how some community members experience conservation authority.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Community forest scouts were reported to face arrest by formal forest officers who did not recognize their customary conservation role. **(Ogiek men and male youth FGD summary)**

Women and girls travelled farther for water and forest products and lost access to some medicinal herbs and livelihood resources. **(Ogiek women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities described mobility barriers, stigma and risk of harassment or exploitation in accessing forest and conservation opportunities. **(Ogiek women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

4.7.5 Indigenous knowledge and customary governance

The Ogiek described customary rules for clan territories, sacred sites, beehive trees, medicinal plants, sustainable harvesting and forest monitoring. Women identify indigenous seedlings, collect and care for them, teach younger generations and protect water and biodiversity. Men described scouts and customary rules that guide forest protection.

The recurring problem is non-recognition by formal institutions. Knowledge may be shared in discussions, but it does not consistently determine project design. Participants asked for documentation and community learning while also retaining rights to control sensitive knowledge and forest access.



Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women described sustainable harvesting, medicinal plant knowledge, sacred-site protection and identification of indigenous seedlings. **(Ogiek women and girls FGD summary)**

Men and youth described sacred beehive trees, initiation-linked planting obligations, customary scouts and careful herb harvesting. **(Ogiek men and male youth FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities reported knowledge of medicinal plants, biodiversity, water protection and Indigenous environmental monitoring. **(Ogiek women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

The rich indigenous knowledge held by women is affirmed through this excerpt; *“Women are Knowledge keepers, women are knowledge developers. Talk of knowledge on medicinal plants, the practice of the medicine. Women have better knowledge of the practice of indigenous medicine than men”* (Executive Director-The Hub).

This excerpt highlights the role of women in the transmission of indigenous knowledge particularly medicinal plans and traditional healing practices. It is therefore important that this knowledge be integrated to ensure cultural continuity and community resilience.

4.7.6 Policy and advocacy pathways

Participants asked for full consultation, fair representation, accessible information, carbon training, equal benefit-sharing, community development benefits, stronger land and resource rights, recognition of customary scouts, more women in CFAs and leadership, accessible venues and transport, and support for Indigenous nurseries and restoration enterprises.



A responsible carbon-governance framework should identify the developer, land and carbon rights, consent process, revenue, allocation formula, monitoring system, community role and grievance mechanism. The current evidence suggests that these basic elements are not visible to the affected community.

Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

All three groups recommended consultation before design, clear information, community representation and fair benefit-sharing in carbon projects. **(Ogiek FGDs)**

Men and youth proposed allocating part of carbon benefits to community services such as schools and health facilities. **(Ogiek men and male youth FGD recommendation)**

Women with disabilities requested accessible participation, transport, assistive support, leadership training and inclusive restoration livelihoods. **(Ogiek women and girls with disabilities FGD recommendation)**

4.7.7 Ogiek Case Conclusion

The Ogiek evidence is not a conflict between livelihood and conservation. It is a conflict between community stewardship and systems that do not consistently recognize Ogiek territory, knowledge, consent, scouts or benefit rights. The community's position is constructive: carbon and restoration programmes may proceed, but only with transparent actors, informed consent, local authority and fair benefit.

The recent carbon-market regulations (2024) and the carbon markets registry (became operational around March of 2026); the governing Act refers to benefit-sharing (including a stated percentage for communities), participants observed a general pattern of exclusion of community members, especially women and persons with disabilities, from negotiations over amounts and terms.



4.8 Samburu Community, Samburu County

4.8.1 Introduction

The Samburu are one of Kenya's recognized Indigenous pastoralist communities, predominantly residing in Samburu County in northern Kenya. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, the Samburu have a population of 310,327 people. Samburu County lies within Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) and is characterized by expansive rangelands, acacia woodlands, rocky hills, seasonal rivers, and diverse wildlife ecosystems. The county is home to renowned conservation areas, including Samburu National Reserve, Buffalo Springs National Reserve, and Shaba National Reserve, which support rich biodiversity and contribute significantly to Kenya's tourism sector. For generations, the Samburu have maintained a semi-nomadic pastoral way of life centred on communal land tenure, seasonal livestock mobility, and Indigenous knowledge systems that guide grazing management, water resource governance, drought preparedness, and biodiversity conservation. Livestock keeping is deeply embedded in Samburu culture and remains central to their social, economic, and cultural identity.

The Samburu economy is primarily based on the rearing of cattle, camels, goats, and sheep, supplemented by beadwork, small-scale trade, tourism-related enterprises, and limited crop farming in suitable areas. However, the community faces increasing climate-related challenges, including recurrent droughts, erratic rainfall, water scarcity, land degradation, and declining pasture productivity, all of which threaten pastoral livelihoods and food security. These challenges are compounded by increasing pressure on communal grazing lands arising from population growth, land-use changes, conservation initiatives, and human-wildlife conflict. Despite these challenges, the Samburu continue to rely on Indigenous knowledge and customary institutions to manage natural resources and adapt



to changing climatic conditions. Their experiences provide valuable insights into how climate governance frameworks can strengthen pastoral resilience, promote sustainable rangeland management, support Indigenous knowledge systems, and foster inclusive natural resource governance in Kenya's dryland ecosystems.

4.8.2 Adaptive governance and environmental context

The Samburu County evidence describes a pastoral system under prolonged climatic stress. Men and youth reported longer droughts, changing rainfall seasons, hotter conditions, stronger winds and dust storms, faster drying of water sources and the disappearance of preferred pasture grasses. Women and girls described the same changes through reduced milk, food insecurity, malnutrition, longer journeys to boreholes and falling household income. The evidence therefore links environmental change directly to livestock survival, nutrition, education and social stability.

Pastoral mobility remains the principal adaptive institution. Elders and grazing committees assess pasture, water and security; youth scouts verify conditions and increasingly share information through phones and WhatsApp; and households move livestock to protect herds and allow grazing areas to recover. Communities also close rangelands for dry-season use, reserve pasture, destock, draw on kinship-based restocking, dig pans and wells and use traditional forecasting. This is a coordinated risk-management system rather than an unplanned movement of livestock.

The system is increasingly constrained by farms, private ranches, conservancy rules, permits, insecurity, cattle rustling, migration costs and conflict with farmers. Conservancies can protect wildlife, restore rangelands and provide managed grazing, but fixed restrictions during severe drought can also block access to pasture when herds need it most. Adaptive governance therefore requires flexible drought agreements, shared early warning and clear rules for mobility across conservancies and neighbouring community territories.



Livelihood diversification is already part of the response. Men and youth described small businesses, boda boda, casual labour, and limited farming and savings groups. Women and girls described beadwork, poultry, table banking, food preservation and small trade, while women with disabilities relied on self-help groups, family support, drought foods and activities that can be undertaken from the manyatta. These strategies reduce immediate pressure but require water, capital, markets and social protection if they are to protect rather than merely replace lost pastoral assets.

Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"Now we experience prolonged droughts." - **Samburu men and male youth FGD**

"Good pasture grass is disappearing. Only hard grass remains." - **Samburu men and male youth FGD**

"Migration to areas with grazing during drought keeps livestock alive." - **Samburu women and girls FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Mobility, drought reserves, destocking, youth scouting and phone-based information were described as central adaptation practices. **(Samburu men and male youth FGD summary)**

Women and girls reported livelihood diversification through beadwork, poultry, small trade, savings and table-banking groups. **(Samburu women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities described water conservation, milk preservation, drought foods and self-help groups as coping strategies. **(Samburu women with disabilities FGD summary)**



The findings are further affirmed by a staff of Samburu Women Trust (SWT) who noted that *“among the Samburu Community, decisions are made on behalf of the community by NAAPO (an institution of council of elders) that serves a traditional parliament and Court that governs the community. This is a men only institution”*. NAAPO makes all decisions including environmental governance.

4.8.3 Implementation of legal and institutional frameworks

Climate, mobility and conservancy decisions are made through overlapping institutions: household heads, councils of elders, grazing committees, chiefs’ barazas, conservancy boards and county actors. These structures provide local coordination, but authority is concentrated. Men and youth said adult men dominate drought structures and conservancy leadership. Women may attend meetings yet have little opportunity to speak or influence security, grazing and migration decisions. Girls are largely absent, and persons with disabilities are frequently not invited or supported to attend.

Information systems reproduce the same inequality. Drought and climate information is shared through radio, barazas and community networks, but women in remote manyattas, persons who are deaf, people with mobility barriers and those without transport may not receive it in time.

Women reported that county and NGO information was not always available in Samburu or accessible formats. Women with disabilities also described relief and consultation points that were physically inaccessible and beneficiary-selection committees in which they were not represented.

Conservancies show both the value and the weakness of current implementation. Participants recognised jobs, bursaries, water projects, road rehabilitation,



beadwork markets, rangeland recovery and drought planning. At the same time, communities reported grazing restrictions, wildlife predation, crop damage, limited compensation and uncertainty about the use of tourism revenue. Women, youth and persons with disabilities occupy few board or committee positions, so benefits may reach them without giving them authority over how benefits and burdens are decided.

Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"Women attend barazas but rarely speak. Girls are mostly absent." - **Samburu women and girls FGD**

"Most drought management governance and decision-making structure are dominated by adult male." - **Samburu men and male youth FGD**

"They are sometimes left last during aid distribution." - **Samburu women with disabilities FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Conservancy boards, management teams, county actors and barazas were identified as the main decision structures, but women, youth and PWDs held few decision-making positions. **(Samburu FGDs)**

Participants valued conservancy jobs, bursaries, water projects and rangeland rehabilitation while also raising grazing restrictions, human–wildlife conflict and limited transparency. **(Samburu FGDs)**

4.8.4 Effects on Indigenous Women, Girls and defenders

4.8.4.1 Drought, Mobility and Gendered Labour

Drought and livestock mobility redistribute work within households. When men and older boys move with livestock, women and girls remain with children, older



persons, sick relatives and animals left near the manyatta. They collect water and firewood, manage scarce food, maintain households and seek additional income. Women reported walking more than ten kilometres to some boreholes, while men and youth acknowledged that the workload of those left behind increases as milk and household support decline.

The distance that women have to walk in search of water increases the propensity to Gender Based violence. *"During drought, the scarcity of food and water forces women to walk long distance exposing them to GBV. This is worsened by the distance one has to walk to be able to report such cases. For instance a case of GBV in Loiyangalani, walking to report is not an option".* (Samburu Woment Trust-Staff). This demonstrates the extent to which drought intensifies gender inequalities by increasing their responsibilities, and the inequalities on access to resources and protection is worsened. Further, the distance makes it impossible to seek justice and report cases of GBV consequently normalizing non-reporting consequently perpetuating cycles of violence and impunity.

This is affirmed by CEO-KNHRC who notes, *"Indigenous women Environmental Human Rights Defenders continue to face significant security risks while protecting community land and natural resources. Killings of Environmental Human Rights Defenders have been reported in Samburu and the coastal region, underscoring the need for stronger protection mechanisms".*

The consequences extend to nutrition, education and protection. Livestock deaths reduce milk, food and school fees. Girls may miss school to fetch water and firewood, and households facing severe poverty may consider early marriage as an emergency coping response. Women reported malnutrition, water-borne disease and safety risks when girls travel alone. Beadwork, milk sales, petty trade



and savings groups help households cope, but they also add income-generation responsibilities to already heavy care and collection work.

4.8.4.2 Disability and compounded exclusion

Women and girls with disabilities experience drought through the intersection of gender, disability, distance and poverty. Water points and grazing areas may be unreachable across rough terrain, assistive devices are limited and caregivers may migrate with livestock. Isolation in remote manyattas increases personal vulnerability, while access to Wamba Hospital, relief distributions, cash transfers, education and disability-related services becomes more difficult. Some women reported being reached last in aid distribution or excluded because information and distribution sites were inaccessible.

The disability evidence also provides a capability counter-narrative. Women with disabilities described knowledge of water conservation, food and milk preservation, drought signs, pasture conditions and care for vulnerable household members. They participate in beadwork, poultry, savings and table-banking groups and can help design more inclusive drought programmes. Their exclusion therefore reflects inaccessible institutions and attitudes rather than absence of knowledge or leadership capacity.

4.8.4.3 Conservancy benefits, burdens and environmental voice

Conservancies provide concrete benefits, including ranger and guide employment, bursaries, water projects, markets for beadwork and honey, livestock support and restoration of degraded grazing land. These benefits are important to household resilience. However, women's roles are concentrated in cultural and livelihood activities while leadership remains male-dominated. Women have limited involvement in human-wildlife conflict resolution, and women with disabilities reported that many programmes target able-bodied youth.



The evidence does not document systematic retaliation against Samburu environmental defenders. It does show a weaker form of environmental marginalisation: people most affected by grazing restrictions, wildlife loss, water scarcity and benefit decisions have limited platforms to influence those decisions. Strengthening environmental voice therefore requires representation, accessible complaints, and transparent benefit-sharing and timely compensation alongside conservation investment.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"Women and girls walk longer distances to boreholes in Wamba and Lerata, sometimes over 10km, reducing time for other activities."

- Samburu women and girls FGD

"Women's workload increases in fetching water, firewood, and caring for children." **- Samburu men and male youth FGD**

"Access: Water points and grazing areas are far and terrain is difficult for those with mobility challenges." **- Samburu women with disabilities FGD**

"Some attitudes still view PWDs as unable to lead." **- Samburu women with disabilities FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Girls' school attendance, nutrition and safety were affected by water collection, livestock loss and household poverty. **(Samburu women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities described inaccessible relief, reduced caregiver support and limited representation in beneficiary selection. **(Samburu women with disabilities FGD summary)**

Conservancy benefits reached households through employment, bursaries, water and livelihood projects, but leadership and conflict-resolution roles remained unequal. **(Samburu FGDs)**

4.8.5 Indigenous knowledge and customary governance

Samburu climate governance draws on close observation of animals, plants, wind, clouds and stars. Men and youth described goat behaviour, acacia flowering, wind



direction, mountain clouds and star patterns as indicators used to plan movement. Women described bird migration, cloud patterns, livestock behaviour, rotational grazing, dry-season reserves and water protection. Women with disabilities described the same knowledge through household water, food preservation and care practices.

The knowledge system is dynamic. Youth scouts and educated young people use phones and WhatsApp to supplement field observation, while elders retain authority over movement and grazing. Participants also reported that some traditional indicators are becoming less reliable under changing climate conditions. The appropriate response is not to replace Indigenous knowledge, but to combine it with local-language forecasts, systematic monitoring and intergenerational learning.

Recognition must include the knowledge held by women and persons with disabilities. Their experience of household water, nutrition, food preservation, caregiving and accessibility reveals impacts that livestock-focused monitoring can miss. Bringing these knowledge holders into drought and conservancy committees would improve both the accuracy of planning and the fairness of response.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"Traditional indicators like stars are no longer reliable." —

Samburu men and male youth FGD

"When goats eat certain trees, rain is near." — **Samburu men and male youth FGD**

"Reading bird migration, cloud patterns, and behavior of live-stock to predict rains in Wamba East." — **Samburu women and girls FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Customary drought management included rotational grazing, protection of dry-season reserves, rules on tree cutting and management of water pans and earth dams. **(Samburu men and male youth FGD summary)**

Women and women with disabilities described water conservation, food and milk preservation, traditional herbs and environmental observations passed across generations. **(Samburu women and disability FGD summaries)**

4.8.6 Policy and Advocacy Pathways

The Samburu recommendations form a coherent resilience package. Water priorities include solarised boreholes, water storage, water trucking during severe drought and restoration of pans and grazing areas.

Mobility priorities include formal resource-sharing agreements, flexible drought access to conservancy grazing, strengthened grazing committees and early warning that coordinates movement before conflict develops. Mobile health, education and veterinary services were proposed so that migration does not



leave women, children and persons with disabilities without support.

Governance reforms should reserve seats and voting roles for women, youth and persons with disabilities in climate, drought, grazing and conservancy committees. Meetings should be held at accessible ward or community locations, with transport, assistive support and information through radio, CHPs, PWD leaders and SMS in Samburu. Representation should extend to beneficiary selection, benefit-sharing and monitoring so that inclusion changes outcomes rather than only attendance.

Conservancy accountability requires public reporting of tourism revenue, expenditure and allocation; fair compensation and mitigation for predation and crop damage; and targeted livelihood programmes for women and persons with disabilities. Participants also proposed beadwork, poultry, honey, table banking, pasture production, grants, market linkages, leadership training and mentorship. Timely cash transfers, food support and assistive devices should be delivered before drought peaks, when households can still protect productive assets and avoid harmful coping strategies.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct recorded quotations

"Reserve seats for women, youth and PWD representatives in conservancy boards and committees." — **Samburu men and male youth FGD recommendation**

"Improve water access: Solarize boreholes that provide household water storage." — **Samburu women and girls FGD recommendation**

"Targeted social protection: Provide cash transfers, food aid, and assistive devices specifically for women and girls with disabilities during drought." — **Samburu women with disabilities FGD recommendation**

"Flexible grazing agreements: Work with conservancies and neighboring communities to create drought grazing agreements that allow access while protecting rangelands for future use." — **Samburu men and male youth FGD recommendation**

Recorded FGD evidence

Participants requested accessible early warning, mobile services, transparent benefit-sharing and inclusive drought and conservancy committees. **(Samburu FGD recommendations)**

Leadership training, mentorship, grants and market linkages were proposed for women-, youth- and PWD-led groups. **(Samburu FGD recommendations)**



“Women’s voice must be heard and included the development and implementation of environmental laws. Leaving women out due to the existing structural inequalities will not help environmental governance. For this to be effective, civic education must be prioritized and local information sharing channels, such as Rendile FM would be the best channel” (Staff-SWT).

This assertion demonstrates the critical value of women’s meaningful participation in environmental governance especially in contexts where structural inequalities have consistently and for a long time limited the voices of women. It demonstrates the importance of civic education in enhancing the knowledge of women on environmental rights and capacity to make decisions. Use of local platforms such Rendile FM would be critical in bridging this information gap hence facilitates inclusion of women in environmental governance.

4.8.7 Samburu County Case Conclusion

The Samburu County case shows that adaptive capacity already exists in mobility, customary grazing management, Indigenous forecasting, youth scouting, women’s livelihood strategies and conservancy restoration. The weakness is that ecological flexibility is narrowing while authority remains concentrated among adult men, elders and conservancy boards. Women, girls and persons with disabilities carry a disproportionate share of drought, service and mobility costs without equivalent decision power. The most credible reform is mobile, accessible and transparent co-governance: flexible grazing agreements, inclusive early warning and services, representative committees, fair benefit-sharing and direct investment in resilient household livelihoods.



4.9 Sengwer Community, Elgeyo Marakwet

4.9.1 Introduction

The Sengwer are one of Kenya's recognized Indigenous forest-dependent communities, predominantly residing in Elgeyo Marakwet County, particularly within and around the Embobut Forest in the Cherangany Hill ecosystem. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, the Sengwer have a population of 33,157 people. Elgeyo Marakwet County is characterized by diverse landscapes comprising highland forests, escarpments, rivers, valleys, and agricultural lands. The Cherangany Hills, where the Embobut Forest is located, constitute one of Kenya's five major water towers and are vital for biodiversity conservation, water catchment protection, and climate regulation. For generations, the Sengwer have maintained a deep cultural, spiritual, and economic connection with the forest, relying on Indigenous knowledge to sustainably manage forest resources while conserving biodiversity. Traditionally, the community practiced hunting and gathering, although over time they increasingly adopted beekeeping, livestock keeping, and the sustainable harvesting of medicinal plants, wild fruits, honey, mushrooms, and other non-timber forest products as key livelihood activities.

The Sengwer economy is currently based on beekeeping, livestock rearing, small-scale farming, and the sustainable use of forest resources. However, the community faces growing challenges arising from climate change, including changing rainfall patterns, prolonged dry spells, forest degradation, and declining biodiversity that affect both livelihoods and ecosystem services. In addition, conservation initiatives, restrictions on access to Embobut Forest, and longstanding land tenure disputes have significantly disrupted the community's traditional way of life, limiting access to ancestral lands and natural resources that are central to their cultural identity and livelihoods. Despite these challenges, the Sengwer continue to play an important role as custodians of the Cherangany



Forest ecosystem through their Indigenous knowledge of sustainable forest management and environmental conservation. Their experiences provide valuable insights into how climate governance frameworks can promote Indigenous land rights, strengthen community-based conservation, and enhance the resilience of forest-dependent communities in Kenya.

4.9.2 Adaptive governance and environmental context

Embobut Forest was described as a watershed, source of food and medicine, beekeeping territory, cultural space and spiritual home. Participants also reported less reliable rainfall, lower river levels, reduced forest cover and declining plant species.

The evidence highlights the role of Sengwer women as custodians and protectors of the community's natural environment and cultural knowledge. Women are involved in conservation activities, including tree planting and protection of natural resources, while the community continues to depend on the forest for livelihoods, medicinal plants, and other resources. Changing weather patterns are also making land and livelihood systems increasingly difficult to manage.

Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Embobut Forest was described as the source of rivers and springs, medicine, honey, food, cultural practice and spiritual identity. **(Sengwer FGDs)**

Women reported water-source monitoring, pollution prevention, tree planting, rainwater harvesting and livelihood diversification. **(Sengwer women and girls FGD summary)**

Men and youth described customary protection of springs and community systems for reporting forest fire. **(Sengwer men and male youth FGD summary)**



4.9.3 Implementation of legal and institutional frameworks

Participants described a shift from clan and elder governance to stronger control by Kenya Forest Service and other formal actors. The main complaint was not the absence of meetings, but consultation after decisions. Women were underrepresented in forest, compensation and land decisions, and younger women and girls had even less access.

The evidence highlights a significant gendered governance gap: Sengwer women are simultaneously custodians of Indigenous knowledge, environmental protectors, advocates for girls' rights and important community actors, yet their participation and influence in formal land, conservation, and compensation decision-making remain limited.

Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"Most decisions are communicated to us after they have already been made." — **Sengwer men and male youth FGD; coded Segment 254**

Recorded FGD evidence

Women reported limited representation in formal forest governance and decisions about compensation, land rights and conservation. **(Sengwer women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities described inaccessible venues, lack of transport and views that were rarely reflected in final decisions. **(Sengwer women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

4.9.4 Effects on Indigenous women, girls and defenders

Eviction and displacement are the defining experience in the Sengwer material. Participants reported loss of homes, farms, beehives, ancestral territory, sacred



sites and livelihood resources. Women then travelled farther for water, firewood, medicine and food while continuing household care. Men and youth described loss of beekeeping and grazing income, unstable casual work and school interruption.

Women with disabilities faced particular difficulties moving assistive devices, finding accessible housing, maintaining health and rehabilitation, and rebuilding support networks. The evidence shows how one institutional action can deepen existing inequalities across gender, disability, income and age.

Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"houses were burnt" — **Sengwer men and male youth FGD; coded Segment 258**

Recorded FGD evidence

Women described losing homes, ancestral land, livelihoods, culture and community support systems together. **(Sengwer women and girls FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities reported disrupted healthcare, rehabilitation, assistive-device support and access to familiar community networks after displacement. **(Sengwer women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

The direct phrase and related accounts are reproduced as reported experiences. Independent verification should be undertaken through legal, administrative and documentary sources.

4.9.5 Indigenous knowledge and customary governance

Sengwer knowledge is place-based. It depends on access to beekeeping sites, medicinal plants, springs, sacred places and the social relations through which elders teach younger people. Displacement therefore affects not only land



and income but the conditions under which knowledge can be practiced and transmitted.

This is a critical finding for policy analysis. A framework may refer positively to Indigenous knowledge while undermining it through removal from territory. Recognition must therefore include land, access, cultural continuity and authority, not only the recording of practices.

Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women described teaching medicinal plant use, water protection and cultural knowledge within the forest landscape. **(Sengwer women and girls FGD summary)**

Men and youth described customary catchment protection, elder and clan authority and beekeeping knowledge. **(Sengwer men and male youth FGD summary)**

Women with disabilities reported that reduced access to ancestral land and sacred sites disrupted intergenerational knowledge transfer. **(Sengwer women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

Women from Sengwer know herbal medicine before they reach the hospital.
-Mary, Sengwer community leader

4.9.6 Policy and advocacy pathways

All three groups prioritized recognition of customary land rights, an end to forced eviction, consultation before conservation decisions, community-led conservation, restoration of livelihoods and stronger customary representation.



Women with disabilities added accessible venues, transport, information formats, land-rights training, committee representation and targeted livelihood support.

The community's proposed bargain is straightforward: conservation and rights are compatible when the Sengwer are treated as partners rather than threats. This should be reflected in formal co-governance, remedy for harm and protection of cultural access.

Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women asked for recognition of customary land rights and participation from planning through monitoring, not consultation after decisions. **(Sengwer women and girls FGD recommendation)**

Men and youth proposed community-led conservation, an end to forced eviction and restoration of beekeeping and nursery livelihoods. **(Sengwer men and male youth FGD recommendation)**

Women with disabilities requested accessible recovery, committee representation, transport, information support and disability-responsive livelihoods. **(Sengwer women and girls with disabilities FGD recommendation)**

4.9.7 Sengwer Case Conclusion

The Sengwer findings show that conservation loses legitimacy when it is experienced through displacement, exclusion, weak participation, and loss of customary authority. The evidence also demonstrates that Indigenous women are not merely affected by these governance challenges; they are important actors in environmental conservation, cultural preservation, Indigenous knowledge transmission, and advocacy for the protection of girls. The immediate priorities



include secure recognition of customary land rights, protection from forced eviction, meaningful participation in land and conservation decision-making, fair and adequately explained compensation processes, restoration of livelihoods and cultural access, and stronger support for women-led conservation and advocacy. There is also a need to document and support Indigenous medicinal knowledge and strengthen community-led efforts to prevent FGM and early marriage.

4.10 Waata Community, Lamu County

4.10.1 Introduction

The Waata (Aweer/Waata) are one of Kenya's recognized Indigenous Peoples, primarily living in Lamu County, with smaller populations in Tana River and Garissa counties. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, they number 20,103 people. Traditionally, the Waata were forest-dependent hunter-gatherers inhabiting the Boni and Dodori forests, where they developed extensive Indigenous knowledge of biodiversity, wildlife, medicinal plants, honey harvesting, and sustainable natural resource management. Their close relationship with Lamu's diverse ecosystems has enabled them to conserve forests while maintaining their cultural identity and livelihoods.

Over time, conservation restrictions, reduced access to forests, and changing environmental conditions have forced many Waata households to diversify into farming, livestock keeping, beekeeping, casual labour, charcoal production, and petty trade. The community continues to face climate-related challenges, including prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, forest degradation, and biodiversity loss, alongside socioeconomic marginalization and land-use pressures. These experiences highlight the importance of climate governance frameworks that recognize Indigenous rights, strengthen community-led forest conservation, support Indigenous knowledge systems, and enhance climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods.



4.10.2 Adaptive governance and environmental context

The Waata evidence describes a livelihood system that cuts across forest, livestock, fisheries, mangrove and land resources rather than fitting neatly into a single coastal or pastoral category. Men and young boys identified forests and honey, livestock, wildlife, fisheries, mangroves, gypsum and land as important sources of food, medicine, grazing, cash income and household security. Women and girls placed particular emphasis on livestock and forests, while women and girls with disabilities described forests and livestock as essential but harder to use when mobility and support are limited. This diversity is a source of resilience because households can combine several resource systems, but it also means that degradation in one ecological zone quickly transfers pressure to another.

Participants reported longer and more frequent droughts, declining rainfall, hotter conditions, flooding, forest degradation, lower soil fertility, livestock losses and reduced household income. Women also raised concern over the spread of *Prosopis juliflora* and described the risks created when upstream water is held or released by a mining project without sufficient community involvement. The gendered consequence is a redistribution of time: as water, pasture and firewood become harder to obtain, women and girls spend more hours collecting household resources and have less time for schooling, enterprise and public participation. Men and youth confirmed the unequal burden, while the disability group showed that the same environmental change is more severe for those who cannot travel long distances or reach difficult terrain.

Adaptive practices already exist. Participants described indigenous-tree planting, household conservation, fishing, fish farming, honey production, tourism-related activities, forest stewardship and community environmental education. The weakness is that adaptation remains fragmented and under-resourced.



Community decision-making is still strongly elder- and male-led, women lack capital and equipment to move beyond small-scale activities, and women with disabilities are frequently outside the information and meeting systems through which adaptation projects are planned. The Waata case therefore illustrates a central adaptive-governance problem: ecological knowledge and willingness to act are present, but the institutions that allocate voice, information and productive resources do not yet include all knowledge holders.

Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"The impacts are more on women." — **Waata men and young boys FGD**

"Decisions by the community are made by the community elders/men." — **Waata men and young boys FGD**

"This leaves less time for education, business, and community participation." — **Waata women and girls FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Women and girls with disabilities reported reduced access to natural resources, greater dependence on relatives and fewer livelihood options as environmental conditions deteriorate. **(Waata women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

Youth described planting indigenous trees and participating in safeguarding forests and wildlife as part of community adaptation. **(Waata men and young boys FGD summary)**

4.10.3 Implementation of legal and institutional frameworks

The clearest institutional finding is not the total absence of governance structures but the distance between those structures and many Waata women. Natural-resource decisions are channeled through the elders, men, local committees



and conservation organizations. Men described a hierarchy in which older men are the highest decision makers, committees manage community resources and youth help safeguard them. Women reported that they are affected by mining, conservation and other projects while receiving little information and having minimal representation in the places where decisions are made. The implementation problem is therefore one of recognition and influence: consultation may occur around the community, but it does not reliably place Waata women at the beginning or through the process of decision-making.

The evidence also shows weak institutional recognition of Indigenous knowledge and uncertain recourse. Men and youth stated that government does not sufficiently recognize Waata forest knowledge and reported conflict between formal conservation authority and customary access, including allegations of displacement or eviction. Women asked where grievances can be raised when projects affect the community, which indicates that legal rights have limited practical value when reporting and remedy pathways are unclear. Women with disabilities experience an additional implementation barrier: they reported rarely receiving invitations, information or accessible opportunities to participate in environmental programmes.

This combination weakens legitimacy. A decision may be legally valid yet remain poorly grounded if women, persons with disabilities and other directly affected groups learn about it late, cannot reach the forum or cannot influence the outcome. For the Waata, better implementation therefore requires more than another public meeting. It requires early information in accessible form, direct representation, a clear grievance route, disability-responsive participation and formal recognition of the customary knowledge used to manage forests and other resources.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"As Waata women, we are not heard." — **Waata women and girls FGD**

"We are not informed about anything." — **Waata women and girls FGD**

"Government does not recognize our traditional and indigenous knowledge on forests." — **Waata men and young boys FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Women and girls with disabilities reported that decisions are mainly made by community leaders and local committees and that they rarely participate in those meetings. **(Waata women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

Women reported uncertainty about where to raise grievances when mining and other projects affect them. **(Waata women and girls FGD summary)**

4.10.4 Effects on Indigenous Women, Girls and Defenders

4.10.4.1 Gendered livelihoods, blue-economy access and time poverty

Environmental decline affects Waata women through both household labour and market position. Longer searches for water, firewood and pasture reduce time for education, business and participation. Livestock losses reduce food, savings and school income, while fish and forest-based livelihoods remain small and vulnerable to climate variation. In the blue economy, women participate mainly through fish processing, marketing and related small enterprises, but the evidence repeatedly identifies lack of education, equipment, finance and market access as constraints. This means that women can carry a large share of value-chain labour without controlling the assets that generate the largest returns.



The women's FGD adds a more structural concern. Participants described feeling of being unrecognized, unheard and unrepresented, and linked this to limited access to projects, training and leadership. They also prioritized secure land and marine-resource rights, including meaningful access to near-shore fisheries, intertidal zones and mangrove resources. The finding is important because livelihood support cannot be separated from rights: credit and equipment will have limited value if the community's access to the land and marine spaces on which those enterprises depend remains uncertain.

4.10.4.2 Disability, Protection and Environmental Voice

Women and girls with disabilities experience the sharpest intersection of environmental stress and institutional exclusion in the Waata material. Participants described physical difficulty reaching natural resources and conservation sites, dependence on family members, limited information, discrimination, exclusion from meetings and weak emergency support.

They also reported little direct benefit from mangrove or blue-economy programmes and few opportunities designed around accessibility. Disability therefore changes not only the severity of climate exposure but also access to the institutions and livelihood programmes intended to respond to that exposure. The women's group also provided evidence of social retaliation against environmental voice. Participants described verbal stigma, rumors, misinformation and attacks on women's character when they speak publicly. These accounts do not establish a pattern of formal state retaliation, but they do show a gendered environment in which speaking out can carry reputational and household costs. A protection framework for IWEDs must therefore recognize non-physical forms of silencing alongside physical safety and access to justice.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"We are not recognised, we are not heard, we are not represented and we are left behind." — **Waata women and girls FGD**

"Women lack education, equipment and capital." — **Waata men and young boys FGD**

"We are not heard and we are not represented." — **Waata women and girls FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Women and girls with disabilities reported discrimination, lack of invitations, inaccessible conservation spaces and limited inclusion in climate and livelihood programmes. **(Waata women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

Women described stigma and misinformation, including attacks on their morality or mental fitness when they raise environmental concerns. **(Waata women and girls FGD summary)**

4.10.5 Indigenous Knowledge and Customary Governance

Waata Indigenous ecological knowledge remains active in forest use, traditional medicine, tree protection, wildlife stewardship and intergenerational teaching. Men and youth described customary restrictions against unnecessary cutting and bush burning and referred to periods when access or harvesting from forests was regulated. Women were identified as holders of traditional medicinal knowledge and as teachers who pass environmental knowledge to children. The knowledge system is therefore distributed across gender and generation rather than held only by elders.



Two risks threaten transmission. First, prolonged drought and environmental change make some customary practices harder to maintain and reduce the reliability of resource calendars built around past ecological conditions. Second, participants reported weak formal recognition and a lack of institutional space in which Waata culture, language and ecological knowledge can be preserved and taught. This matters because Indigenous knowledge cannot be integrated into climate planning if the social institutions that reproduce it are eroding.

Participants did not ask for customary knowledge to replace contemporary science. Their recommendations favored documentation, intergenerational teaching and combination of Indigenous and modern conservation knowledge. That position is consistent with adaptive governance: different knowledge systems can be used together, while the community retains authority over how its knowledge is represented and shared.



Evidence from the focus groups

Direct respondent quotations

"Women practice indigenous and traditional medicine and also pass information to the younger generation." — **Waata men and young boys FGD**

"Traditionally, the Waata Community was not supposed to cut down trees, were not supposed to burn trees, were restricted from entering or harvesting from the forests at certain times." — **Waata men and young boys FGD**

"Recognize that we exist and that we are important in supporting conservation." — **Waata women and girls FGD**

Recorded FGD evidence

Women and girls with disabilities demonstrated knowledge of medicinal plants, indigenous trees, sustainable charcoal practices and environmental protection but said their knowledge is rarely acknowledged. **(Waata women and girls with disabilities FGD summary)**

4.10.6 Policy and Advocacy Pathways

The Waata recommendations can be organized around recognition, representation, accessibility and livelihood capability. Recognition begins with secure community, land and marine-resource rights and with formal acknowledgement of Waata identity and Indigenous knowledge. Representation requires women, youth and persons with disabilities to hold seats and meaningful decision roles in environmental committees rather than attending only as observers. Accessibility requires timely information, disability-friendly venues and programmes, civic education and a grievance pathway that people can use without relying on political intermediaries.

Livelihood priorities include training, finance, equipment and market links for fish, honey, beekeeping, fish farming and other locally viable blue-economy activities.



Women recommended continuous leadership development, while the men's group called for education and equipment that allow women and youth to participate more equally. The disability group requested accessible fish-farming and livelihood programmes rather than generic opportunities that cannot be reached or used. Women also proposed a citizen-led gender monitoring mechanism to track whether conservation and government programmes distribute power, agency and benefits fairly.

A distinctive Waata recommendation is that men and traditional leaders should be included in gender-transformative work. Women argued that training women alone is insufficient if household and community norms prevent them from using the skills or authority gained. The policy pathway is therefore relational: women's capability, male support, institutional accountability and resource rights have to change together.

Evidence from the focus groups

Recorded FGD evidence

Women with disabilities prioritized civic education, representation, accessible climate and livelihood programmes, fish farming, skills training and financial support. **(Waata women and girls with disabilities FGD summary).**

Women prioritized secure land and marine-resource rights and integration of traditional ecological knowledge into policy **(Waata women and girls FGD summary).**

Participant recommendations

"Women could be increasingly included in forums and activities, leadership and they could sit at the decision-making table." —

Waata men and young boys FGD

"Establish a citizen-led gender monitoring unit/framework to ensure government and conservation policies fairly distribute power, agency and benefits." — **Waata women and girls FGD**



4.10.7 Waata Case Conclusion

The Waata case shows that environmental vulnerability is produced by the interaction of ecological change and unequal institutional access. The community retains diverse livelihoods, Indigenous knowledge and a willingness to conserve, but women and persons with disabilities remain poorly connected to decision-making, information, finance and productive assets. Climate resilience will therefore depend on more than ecosystem restoration. It requires recognition of Waata land and marine rights, accessible and representative governance, protection of women who speak publicly, formal respect for Indigenous knowledge and practical investment in inclusive blue-economy and forest-based livelihoods.



5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This assessment demonstrates that Indigenous Peoples in Kenya possess strong adaptive governance systems, rich Indigenous ecological knowledge, and resilient community institutions that continue to sustain livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation across diverse ecological landscapes. Customary governance structures remain central to managing land, forests, water resources, pastoral mobility, and conflict resolution. However, these systems are increasingly undermined by climate change, environmental degradation, insecure land tenure, fragmented governance, and limited recognition within formal policy and institutional frameworks. While Kenya has established progressive legal and policy frameworks that recognize community land rights, environmental governance, gender equality, and public participation, implementation remains inconsistent, resulting in persistent gaps between policy commitments and the lived realities of Indigenous communities.

The assessment further reveals that Indigenous women, girls, and women with disabilities continue to experience multiple and intersecting forms of exclusion despite their indispensable contributions to environmental stewardship, climate resilience, and community wellbeing. Limited representation in decision-making, unequal access to land and productive resources, inadequate protection of Indigenous knowledge, and insufficient participation in climate governance constrain both community resilience and sustainable development.

"Women with disabilities remain overlooked in Indigenous community leadership and development processes. Existing systems do not adequately respond to the needs of Indigenous women with disabilities. Indigenous women with disabilities continue to experience exclusion from leadership, decision-making, education, and economic opportunities" (Founder-EIWEN).



Strengthening Indigenous-led governance, recognizing customary institutions, institutionalizing meaningful participation, and advancing gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approaches will be critical to protecting Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders and ensuring that climate action, conservation, and development initiatives are equitable, rights-based, and locally owned.

CEO-KNHRC notes *“The Council of Governors has developed a Blueprint on Climate Change and Governance, which provides a framework for strengthening county climate governance, including FLLOCA, county action plans adopted by all the 47 counties”*. Through mechanisms such as the Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) programme and County Climate Change Action Plans adopted across all 47 counties, the framework promotes locally led, participatory, and context-specific responses to climate change.

Its effective implementation, however, requires meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples, women, and other marginalized groups to ensure that county climate actions are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to local knowledge and vulnerabilities. This is further reinforced by National Gender and Equality Commission-Nakuru who noted that *“Effective implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks is essential to safeguard the rights of Indigenous communities”*.

5.2 Recommendations for WHRD and other CSOs

- i. As the Programme Coordinator-The Hub recommends; address the structural and systemic barriers that limit Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders’ (IWEDs) meaningful participation in climate and environmental governance. This should include tackling discriminatory social norms, limited access to education and information, inadequate financial resources, insecure land and resource rights, limited representation in decision-making structures, and threats to the safety



of women defenders. Government agencies, county authorities, and civil society organizations should create inclusive and accessible platforms that strengthen IWEDs' leadership, recognize Indigenous knowledge, and ensure their participation in the design, implementation, and monitoring of climate change policies and programmes.

- ii. Strengthen leadership and protection of IWEDs: Invest in leadership development, mentorship, legal literacy, security mechanisms, and advocacy skills for Indigenous women and girls to enhance their participation and protection within climate governance, environmental management, and human rights processes.
- iii. Promote community-led advocacy on Indigenous land, environmental, and resource rights: Support sustained advocacy campaigns that strengthen awareness of community land rights, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), environmental justice, and access to justice while amplifying Indigenous voices in county, national, and international policy dialogues.
- iv. Strengthen Indigenous knowledge documentation and intergenerational learning: Partner with Indigenous communities to document, preserve, and promote Indigenous ecological knowledge, customary governance practices, and traditional climate adaptation strategies while facilitating knowledge exchange between elders, women, youth, and local institutions.
- v. Advance inclusive climate governance and social inclusion: Support the meaningful participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in community governance structures through leadership training, accessible public participation mechanisms, disability-inclusive programming, and gender-transformative community dialogue that addresses discriminatory social norms.
- vi. Strengthen evidence generation, strategic partnerships, and policy engagement: Collaborate with county governments, Indigenous



organizations, research institutions, development partners, and national human rights institutions to generate evidence, monitor implementation of Indigenous rights commitments, and advocate for accountability in climate governance, conservation, and climate finance initiatives.

5.3 Policy Recommendations

- i. **Institutionalize recognition of Indigenous governance systems within climate and natural resource governance:** National and county governments should formally integrate customary governance institutions and Indigenous ecological knowledge into climate adaptation planning, environmental management, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, and community land governance while strengthening collaboration between statutory and customary institutions.
- ii. **Strengthen implementation of Indigenous rights and community land legislation:** Accelerate implementation of the Constitution of Kenya, the Community Land Act, the Climate Change Act, and related legislation by securing community land tenure, protecting pastoral mobility corridors, strengthening access to justice, and ensuring effective enforcement of Indigenous rights and gender equality provisions.
- iii. **Promote gender-responsive and disability-inclusive environmental governance:** Establish institutional measures that guarantee meaningful representation of Indigenous women, youth, and persons with disabilities within county climate change structures, community land management committees, conservancies, forest governance institutions, and climate finance mechanisms through reserved representation, accessible participation, and leadership development. The CEO-KNHRC affirms this, *“Indigenous women should participate in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of climate change and environmental programmes”*.



- iv. **Improve transparency, accountability, and equitable benefit-sharing in conservation and climate finance:** Ensure that conservation initiatives, carbon markets, and climate finance programmes operate through transparent governance systems that uphold Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), disclose benefit-sharing arrangements, establish accessible grievance mechanisms, and guarantee equitable participation and benefits for Indigenous communities, particularly Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders.
- v. County and national governments, development partners, and civil society organizations should **increase and sustain dedicated funding** for Indigenous Women Environmental Defenders (IWEDs) to strengthen their capacity to protect community land, natural resources, biodiversity, and Indigenous knowledge. Funding should support leadership development, legal and civic education, advocacy, documentation of environmental violations, security and protection mechanisms, and meaningful participation in climate and environmental governance processes. Financing mechanisms should be accessible, flexible, gender-responsive, and directly reach Indigenous women-led organizations and community initiatives, enabling IWEDs to independently lead locally grounded solutions and contribute effectively to climate justice and environmental governance

	Sengwer Customary watershed protection is weakened by loss of territory.	Decisions communicated after the fact; customary authority displaced.
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[illegible]

Objective / issue	Maasai	Samburu (Samburu County)	Endorois	Ilchamus	Waata	Bajuni	Borana	Ogiek	Sengwer
Impact on IWEDs	Land/title exclusion, unequal jobs, drought labour, wildlife costs and disability barriers.	Long water journeys, unpaid work, malnutrition, school loss, early marriage, disability exclusion and wildlife/conflict costs.	Land dependence, drought burden, GBV, disability barriers and weak defender voice.	Women's land dependence, water and care burdens, school loss, early marriage, wildlife risk and disability barriers.	Women face time poverty, weak representation, limited capital and equipment, reputational attacks for speaking out and severe disability-access barriers.	Women perform major conservation and fish-value-chain work but have less control of boats, equipment, finance and decision-making; PWD accessibility is weak.	Mobility increases women's workload; disability limits migration, services and forums.	Resource loss, access restriction, defender risk and disability barriers.	Eviction, livelihood loss, care burdens and disability-specific displacement harm.
Indigenous knowledge	Weather, grazing, plants, feed and water knowledge practised but undervalued.	Animal, plant, star, wind, water, pasture and food knowledge is rich; some indicators are less reliable and women/PWD knowledge lacks authority.	Elder grazing and spring knowledge valued; women/PWDs have little authority.	Star and rain indicators, grazing norms, soil conservation and fodder knowledge survive but transmission and inclusion are uneven.	Forest rules, medicine, tree protection and intergenerational teaching remain active but formal recognition, cultural preservation and transmission are weak.	Marine and mangrove knowledge, medicinal plants and sustainable harvesting remain strong; communities favour combining Indigenous and scientific knowledge.	Forecasting, mobility and water knowledge embedded in Gadaa/Deedha.	Forest, medicine, honey, seedlings and scouts; formal recognition weak.	Place-based forest and beekeeping knowledge disrupted by displacement.



Objective / issue	Maasai	Samburu (Samburu County)	Endorois	Ilchamus	Waata	Bajuni	Borana	Ogiek	Sengwer
Policy pathway	Transparent finance, fair compensation, accessible power and drought rules.	Flexible grazing agreements, accessible early warning and services, transparent conservancies, representation quotas and resilient livelihoods.	Rights literacy, inclusive institutions, accessible justice and intergenerational dialogue.	Accessible representation, land-rights implementation, lake and rangeland restoration, water/pasture investment and early warning.	Secure land/marine rights, representable governance, defender support, gender accountability and inclusive blue-economy and forest livelihoods.	Community-land registration, early participation, direct climate-finance access, fish value addition, water solutions, women/youth assets and formal recognition of Indigenous knowledge.	Corridor protection, recognised customary institutions and accessible co-governance.	FPIC, carbon transparency, customary right recognition and direct benefit.	Land rights, remedy, livelihood restoration and community-led conservation.





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