

VCA

VOICES FOR JUST CLIMATE ACTION

STORIES OF CLIMATE JUSTICE IN ACTION



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	Africa Climate Summit	NGCCAP	National Gender Climate Change Action Plan
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands	NRC	Nairobi Rivers Commission
CCCAs	County Climate Change Action Plans	NCGQ	New Quantified Climate Finance Goal
COP	Conference of the Parties	PCRAs	Participatory Climate Risk Assessments
CDF's	Community Climate Change Dialogue Forums	PWD's	Persons with Disabilities
CIDPs	County Integrated Development Plans	VCA	Voices for Just Climate Action
CSO	Civil Society Organisations	WCCPC's	Ward Climate Change Planning Committees
CBO	Community Based Organisations	WGC	Women and Gender Constituency
FLLoCA	Financing Locally-Led Climate Action		
G.E.S.I	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion		
KYCTV	Know Your City Television		
LCOY	Local Conference of Youth		
MCA	Member of County Assembly		
MCCAP	Marsabit County Climate Change Action Plan		
NBS	Nature Based Solutions		
NLGF	Next Level Grant Facility		
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions		





PROJECT OVERVIEW

Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) is a five-year climate justice programme (2021-2025) funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under its "Power of Voices" framework and implemented by two Northern-based and four Southern-based alliance organisations - Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), Fundación Avina, Hivos, Slum Dwellers International (SDI), SouthSouthNorth (SSN) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Implemented in six countries, including Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Indonesia, Tunisia, Zambia, and Kenya, it brings together a global alliance of civil society organisations dedicated to shifting climate action to the local level, ensuring the voices of those most affected are at the forefront in shaping solutions.

Why VCA? Our world has warmed by 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels. The effects are devastating, fueling droughts, floods, displacement, rising inequalities, and a projection that climate change could push 100 million more people into poverty by 2030. COVID-19 further widened this gap, and those most affected, among them, women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and grassroots communities, remain excluded from decisions that impact their future. VCA believes that sustainable climate solutions must be just,

inclusive, and locally driven.

Business as usual is no longer an option. Traditional top-down approaches to climate action have failed. It's time for a shift from carbon-focused responses to people-powered solutions rooted in justice, equity, and local leadership. At the same time, civic space is shrinking. The very communities most affected by climate change are often excluded from the decisions that shape their lives and environments. Their voices are sidelined, and their solutions overlooked.

Through the VCA programme, VCA Kenya is amplifying local voices for climate justice by promoting inclusive, locally shaped, nature-based solutions, while influencing climate policy, finance, and governance to work for both people and the planet.

ALLIANCE PARTNERS

Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) is a feminist Pan-African leadership development organisation based in Uganda, working across the continent to advance gender equality, social justice, and women's rights. With a strong foundation in feminist research, advocacy, and training, AMwA empowers African women to take up leadership and influence policy and decision-making processes.

Under the VCA programme, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) leads the gender justice pillar, ensuring that climate action is both inclusive and intersectional. Through initiatives like the African Women's Leadership Institute (AWLI), AMwA trains women leaders in climate justice advocacy and fosters feminist dialogue and strategy-building via "Rethink Spaces." The organisation also develops critical tools such as the Intersectional Feminist Climate Justice Guide and conducts gender audits to shape more equitable climate policies. At its core, AMwA's work amplifies the voices of women and marginalised

groups, positioning them as central actors in climate action spaces.

Fundación Avina is a Latin American foundation that promotes sustainable development through collaborative processes. Avina connects social and environmental innovation with systems thinking, creating large-scale transformations through partnerships.

Within the VCA programme, Avina's key role is to foster innovation, build coalitions, and drive digital transformation. They facilitate collaborative models that bring together civil society, the private sector, and governments to co-create solutions. Avina supports the amplification of digital voices through alternative storytelling and citizen-led campaigns, while promoting scalable, tech-enabled, and locally rooted climate innovations. Additionally, they help partners integrate movement-building tools that strengthen advocacy networks across global and local levels.

Hivos is an international organisation based in the Netherlands, working in over 30 countries. It focuses on inclusive and sustainable development, human rights, and transparency. Hivos has a long history of strengthening civil society and supporting media freedom and citizen engagement.

In the VCA programme, Hivos leads the strategic pillar on amplifying local voices. Through media grants and mentorship, Hivos supports and empowers grassroots organisations, independent media, citizen journalists, creative storytellers and climate actors to shift the public narratives by telling their own stories and promoting narratives grounded in lived experiences around climate justice and locally shaped solutions. By connecting these storytellers with media platforms and policy spaces, Hivos helps influence national and global climate discourse, ensuring local voices are heard where it matters most.

Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is a global network of federations of the urban poor, operating in over 30 countries. With a strong base in community organising, SDI supports the most marginalised urban populations, especially people in informal settlements, to advocate for their rights and shape inclusive urban development in the VCA programme.





Slum Dwellers International (SDI) champions urban climate resilience by centring the experiences and solutions of slum communities. SDI mobilises grassroots networks to actively participate in the planning, budgeting, and implementation of climate actions, while supporting community-led data collection and mapping to inform urban adaptation strategies. They foster dialogue between urban poor communities and city authorities, ensuring grassroots solutions shape municipal and national climate policies. Additionally, SDI facilitates peer-to-peer learning exchanges among informal settlement leaders across countries, strengthening global solidarity and knowledge sharing.

SouthSouthNorth (SSN) is a South African-based NGO that brings extensive experience and expertise in knowledge and partnership brokering for climate-compatible development and building unique relationships with decision-makers in various contexts. As an organisation, SSN supports national and regional responses to climate change through knowledge interventions, partnerships and deep collaboration.

In the VCA programme, SouthSouthNorth (SSN) supports the generation, dissemination, and brokering of

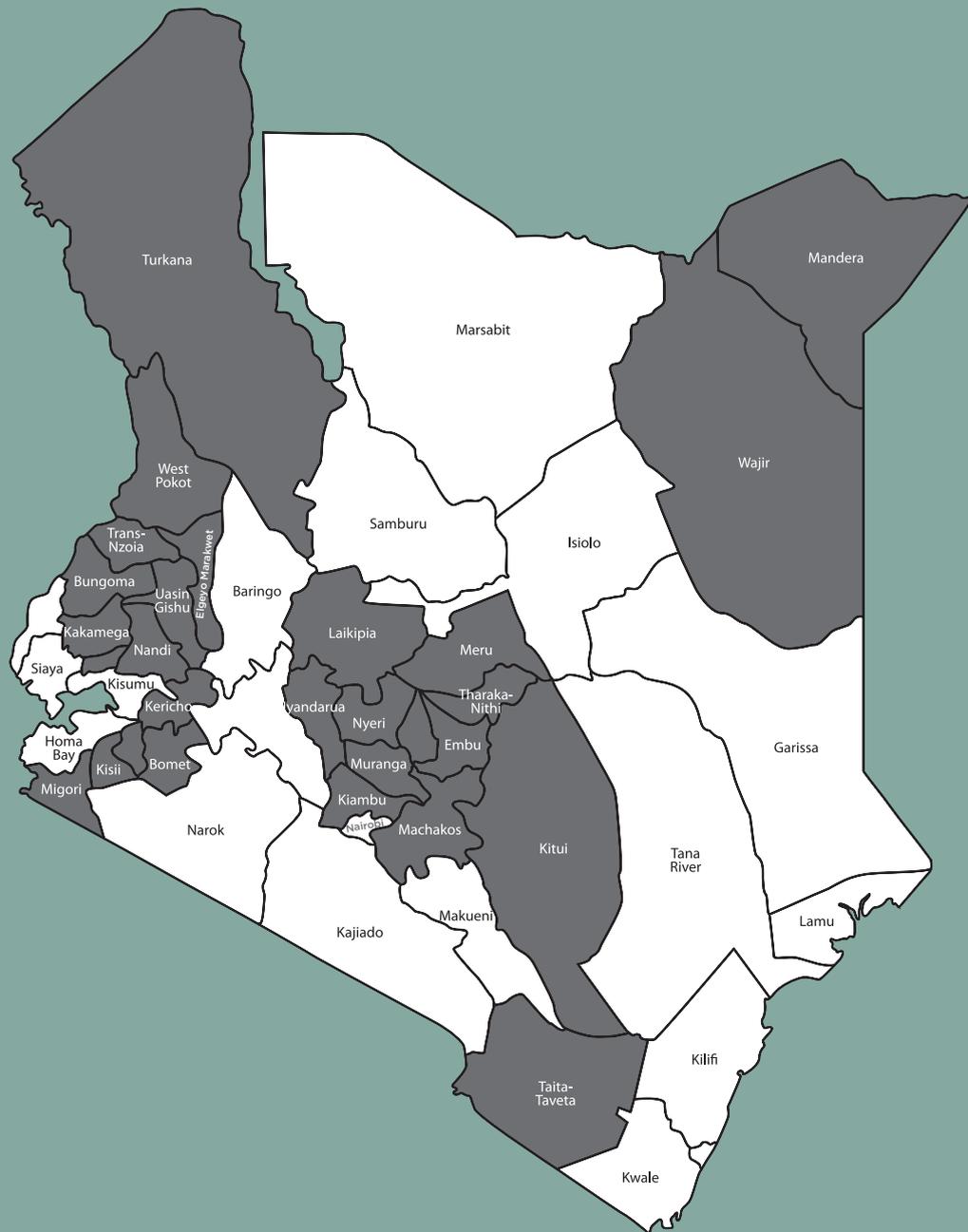
information, drawing on a network of experts and practitioners, and strengthening partners' capabilities to enable them to respond innovatively to the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change. At the global level, in partnership with other alliance members, SSN supports the sharing of knowledge from local to global platforms, supports knowledge exchange sessions, and contributes to global knowledge brokering.

WWF is a locally registered conservation NGO and part of the global W/WF network, which is active in over 100 countries. Established to champion environmental conservation and sustainable development in Kenya, WWF-Kenya works across landscapes and communities to protect biodiversity, promote nature-based solutions, and build climate resilience.

Under the VCA programme, WWF-Kenya plays a central role in scaling locally shaped, nature-based climate solutions, strengthening community structures such as Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs), and facilitating inclusive engagement with county and national governments. WWF-Kenya also ensures effective alignment with national climate priorities, builds cross-sectoral partnerships, and supports the integration of climate justice into policy and planning processes.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS





PROGRAMME LOCATIONS IN KENYA



Siaya, Homabay, Kisumu, Kajiado, Narok, Marsabit, Isiolo, Samburu, Tana river, Mombasa, Kilifi, Makueni, Kwale, Nairobi, Garissa, Baringo, Nakuru, Lamu

VCA STRATEGIC PILLARS IN KENYA

Pillar 1: Mutual Capacity Strengthening for Co-Creating Alternative Scaled Climate Solutions. This pillar focuses on strengthening civil society capability and fostering strategic coalitions to drive inclusive climate action. VCA supports and connects a diverse range of local actors, including women's groups, youth movements, forest communities, indigenous leaders, urban slum dwellers, and digital activists, to align around a shared climate justice agenda. Through joint capability strengthening, the programme enhances skills, knowledge, and leadership across organisations. It creates enabling environments for new partnerships to emerge, encourages collaboration across constituencies, and helps build a pipeline of scalable, fundable, and locally rooted climate solutions that reflect the realities and priorities of affected communities.

Pillar 2: Agenda Setting and Movement in Climate Action Through Amplified Story Telling. This pillar focuses on transforming climate narratives by centering the voices, experiences, and knowledge of grassroots actors. VCA amplifies local voices through media grants, citizen journalism, digital platforms, and traditional storytelling, increasing the visibility of community-based climate heroes and making climate knowledge more

accessible. By supporting alternative narratives that reflect lived realities, the programme shifts public discourse, builds societal support for climate justice, and helps set the agenda for inclusive and locally shaped climate action.

Pillar 3: Joint Lobbying and advocacy to make policy and financial flows responsive to locally shaped climate solutions. This pillar focuses on ensuring that locally shaped climate solutions are recognised, funded, and integrated into national and global policy frameworks. VCA supports grassroots actors in co-creating advocacy strategies, influencing inclusive climate policies, and unlocking public and private climate finance. By building clear pathways from community-level action to decision-making spaces, the programme ensures that climate finance and governance mechanisms become more responsive, equitable, and accountable to the needs of those most affected.





From 2021 to 2025, the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme in Kenya has been a bold and transformative powerhouse. As the programme nears its conclusion, this collection of impact stories captures the soul of a movement brought to life by communities, civil society, youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, and frontline defenders of our environment.

Telling these stories matters because they document the power of collective action in a time of climate urgency. They remind us that the most meaningful solutions are often born where the impacts are felt the hardest, and that true climate justice can only be achieved when those traditionally excluded are not only heard but also shape decisions and lead action. These voices are often overlooked in global narratives, yet they hold the knowledge, lived experience, and determination essential to just and sustainable climate solutions.

Each story echoes the strength of the VCA's three core pillars. From mutual strengthening that fostered new partnerships and empowered local actors to co-create and scale grassroots climate solutions, to agenda setting through storytelling, where local narratives shifted

perceptions, policies, and paradigms, and finally, to joint lobbying and advocacy, where diverse actors came together to demand climate finance and policies that reflect local realities and aspirations.

Throughout this journey, the alliance partners and all implementing partners across Kenya have walked and worked together with communities, co-learning, co-creating, and co-advocating for a just climate future. The stories in this book are testimonials to that shared commitment. They are the footprints left by a powerful alliance that dared to believe in justice, inclusion, and the power of collectives.

VOICES THAT SHAPE CLIMATE JUSTICE



AMPLIFIED VOICES

UNLOCKING CLIMATE FINANCE AND BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY THROUGH WARD CLIMATE CHANGE PLANNING COMMITTEES (WCCPCS)

In Kenya, the urgency of climate change has collided with an equally pressing need for local ownership of climate solutions. While national frameworks and global summits dominate headlines, the real battle is unfolding in villages, wards, and counties where communities face the brunt of rising temperatures, floods, droughts, and resource scarcity. Yet until recently, many of these communities had no formal structures to represent their voices in climate decision-making.



Impact film screening at Shomani Girls and Meru School respectively, to sensitize young people on issues climate change.

Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs) emerged to fill this gap. They are the central pillar of community decision-making for the utilization of climate finance aimed at addressing climate challenges at the community level. It is a critical institutional structure designed to decentralize climate governance in Kenya under the country's climate legislation. They offer a platform for communities to plan, prioritize, and implement climate interventions that reflect local realities, bridging the gap between national policy and grassroots action for bottom-up climate governance. The WCCPCs are part of the broader devolved climate governance institutions whose goal is to enable county governments to not only implement inclusive and locally led climate policies, but also to build resilient, community-based systems capable of identifying, planning, and managing their own climate adaptation and mitigation priority actions. The framework also aims to ensure that climate finance reaches those on the frontlines who bear the impacts of climate change but have, in the past, lacked the platform to act, even with the knowledge and solutions that can address them.

Community Inclusive decision making for climate action

The Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme commenced in Kenya at the point when a devolved climate governance framework was being rolled out across the country. Partners implementing the programme recognised an important opportunity to complement and support county governments' efforts to operationalise and implement the framework, especially at the community level through the Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs). To enhance their effectiveness and unlock their full

potential, VCA provided strategic support to several counties including Marsabit, Nakuru, Kajiado, Garissa, Homa Bay, Siaya, Kisumu, Lamu and Narok.

This support involved facilitating broad community participation in the formation of WCCPCs through elective processes with the aim of ensuring inclusivity. Marginalized segments of society such as women, persons with disabilities, youth and minorities, among others are included in the committees together with other stakeholders such as private sector, community based organisations, religious organisations, business. Other support under the programme included strengthening the capabilities of the newly established WCCPCs through training on the climate change legal framework (including their mandate), the science and impacts of climate change, participatory climate risk assessment, proposal development, project implementation and management, among other areas.



H.E Dr. Wilbur Ottichilo Governor of Vihiga County and Chair of Environment and Climate Change Committee at the Council of Governors, Launching the Ward Climate Change Planning Committees Trainers' Guide on 14th April 2025.

In addition, through the VCA program, a WCCPCs Facilitators Guide was developed to standardize capacity building for Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs) under Kenya's devolved climate finance mechanism. This initiative was driven by the need to address inconsistencies in training for WCCPCs, ensuring they are equipped to manage climate adaptation and resilience projects effectively. The expected impact of this Manual is to provide a unified resource material that empowers climate change stakeholders across Kenya to engage in effective climate adaptation, resilience projects, and the management of climate finance, ultimately ensuring communities are better equipped to participate in decision-making and sustainable management of these investments.

Tools such as the participatory climate risk and resilience assessment and the Ward Climate Finance Scorecard were used to enable WCCPCs to better undertake their mandate through representation, consultation, designing and developing climate adaptation interventions, monitoring project implementation progress, and strengthening financial accountability. The programme also supported tailored sessions on bankable proposal development, helping to enhance the committees' ability to access climate finance from county budgets and external partners. Exposure visits and facilitated linkages with institutions such as the Marsabit County Assembly Committee on Climate and Environment enabled WCCPCs to actively participate in planning and budgeting processes. By building on existing structures, the VCA programme helped

reinforce WCCPCs as empowered, community-rooted mechanisms for advancing Kenya's climate resilience agenda.

From Passive Beneficiaries to Powerful Advocates
The support extended to Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs) has led to a remarkable shift in how climate action is defined and driven at the grassroots. Once modest and uncertain in their roles, WCCPCs have evolved into functional, confident, and proactive structures that now convene regular community consultations, shape project priorities, and actively monitor the implementation of climate initiatives such as the FLLoCA and County Climate Funds. Committees in wards such as Turbi, Helu Manyatta, Karare and Dukana in Marsabit County have transitioned from having limited technical capacity to crafting compelling, fundable proposals, some of which have already attracted additional financing beyond county allocations. Their growing confidence and capabilities have positioned them as trusted actors in climate governance, ensuring local needs and voices inform meaningful change.

Beyond functionality, WCCPCs are reshaping the concepts of inclusion and sustainability in climate planning. Women, youth, and persons with disabilities are no longer spectators, but decision-makers, embedded in the committees and shaping policies and projects with the insights that only they can offer. The quality of community input in climate dialogues has significantly improved, influencing both county-level policy direction and resource allocation. Furthermore, many of the projects being designed and

implemented are not only climate-smart but also income-generating and designed for long-term resilience to climate change. Through strategic support, WCCPCs are not only accessing climate finance but also proving that they can manage it responsibly and drive transformational, community-owned climate solutions that endure well beyond programme timelines.

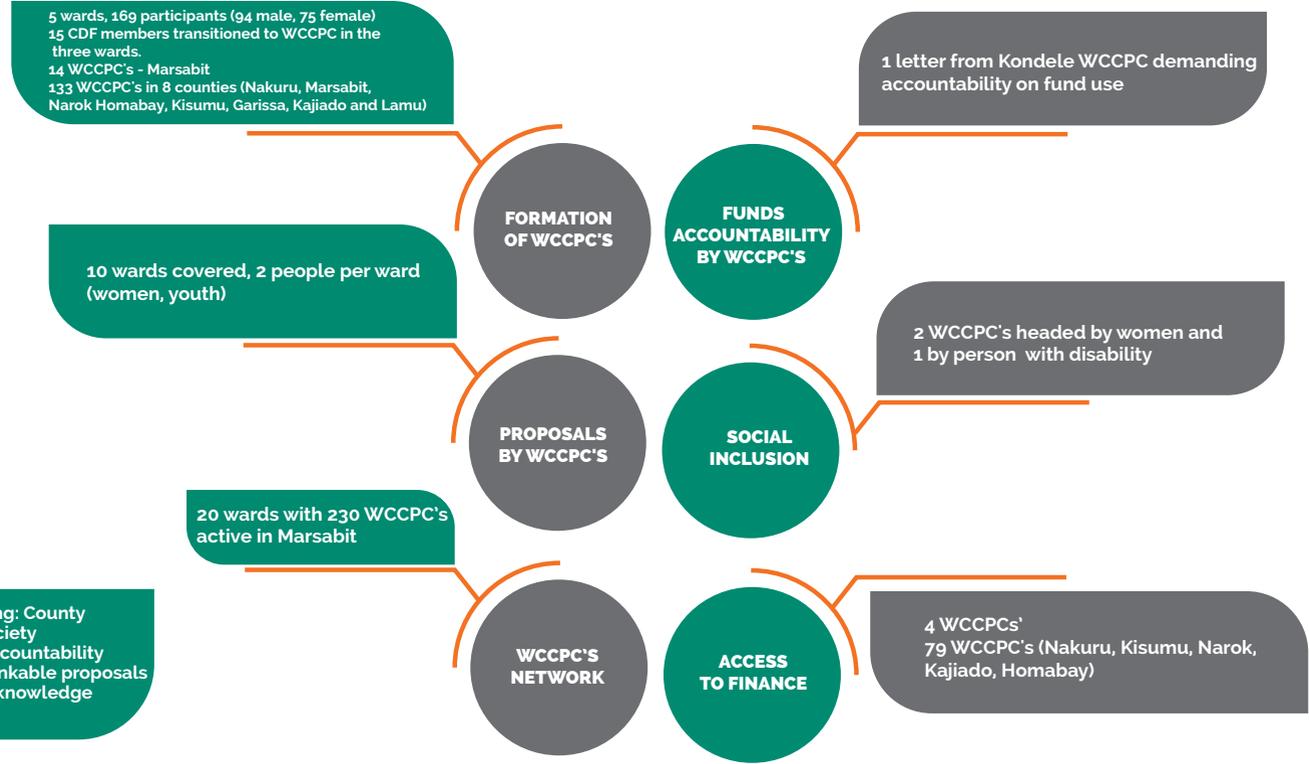


"As a woman, I felt honoured as this was the first time I had an opportunity to lead the process of finding local solutions at the grassroots level,"

Magdalene Khaemba, Chairperson of the Kaptembo, Ward Climate Change Planning Committee.



IMPACT NUMBERS



LESSONS LEARNT

Leveraging on partnerships within VCA partners and with Governments/ climate Action has enhanced quality inputs on climate change policy dialogue.

BEYOND VCA

Sustainability through Capacity Building: County Departments, Community and Civil Society Organizations have improved social accountability for CSO's, fostered development of bankable proposals and seen incorporation of Indigenous knowledge within the climate dialogue forums.

LESSONS LEARNT

Tools Drive Accountability: Instruments like the climate finance scorecard not only improve transparency but give communities a sense of ownership and monitoring ability.

BEYOND VCA

Attracting additional funds: Besides government Climate Action Funding, WCCPCs are leveraging grants through quality proposals that have become bankable.

LESSONS LEARNT

Linkages with Government Accelerate Impact: Formal connections between WCCPCs and county assemblies or environment committees ensure that local voices influence budgeting and planning processes.

BEYOND VCA

Income generating projects by WCCPC's that are self-sustaining for long term climate resilience of communities and will go a long way in boosting communities' livelihoods and food security in the established counties.

MORE INFORMATION



SCAN

FOLLOW THE MONEY

DRIVING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN CLIMATE FINANCE

Globally, the fight against the climate crisis is not just about emissions or policies but about sovereignty, power and resources. It's a struggle about the global financial architecture, who is controlling financial resources needed for climate action, who gets to decide how, when and where it's spent especially in the Global South where communities continue to bear the brunt of the crisis. It is also a struggle about whose knowledge counts. In Kenya, Climate finance can be traced through initiatives like the Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA), a flagship Kenyan government program supported in collaboration with the World Bank and other donors, that channels climate finance directly to the local level, enabling counties and communities to plan, implement, and monitor climate actions that respond to their specific vulnerabilities and priorities.

But for many citizens at the grassroots level, these funds are inaccessible, abstract, or entangled in systems they were never invited to understand or influence. Across rural villages and urban informal settlements, communities face the harsh realities of

climate change's effects, yet they often remain locked out of the very processes meant to fund and deliver climate solutions. Limited community oversight, and a lack of accessible public data have created a wall between decision-makers and the people most affected by climate change.

Despite the promises of devolution, many citizens, especially women, youth, and indigenous communities, are excluded from planning, budgeting, and implementation processes. They're not at the table during public participation forums. Often, they're not even told those tables exist.

Kenya is no exception to this pattern. The transparency of climate budgets remains limited, and the opportunity to engage in county budgeting processes is still low in many regions. Even when people are willing to get involved, the lack of access to clear, timely, and usable data makes it nearly impossible to track how much climate funding is allocated, who benefits, and whether the community's priorities are reflected in these investments. But this story is not just about what's broken. It's about what happens when communities begin to demand better. It's about tools,

training, and courage, and how citizens are turning invisibility into voice. The Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme and its in-country partners have walked this journey with Kenyan communities, through meticulous guidance on how ordinary Kenyans can follow the money and de-mystify climate finance.

Communities at the centre of climate finance monitoring and decision making

The VCA programme has been championing a transformative shift that places citizens at the heart of climate finance monitoring and decision-making. Recognising that real change starts from the ground up, VCA has invested in tools, capacities, and frameworks that empower communities to hold governments accountable for climate finance flows.

At the heart of this movement are community-driven social accountability tools, including: the Mulika Tracking Tool, Community Participation Guide, Ward Climate Finance Scorecards, and the County Climate Finance Tracking Tool. These innovations are not just documents or digital platforms, but are instruments of power designed to institutionalise citizen monitoring of how climate funds are allocated, spent, and whether they meet the priorities of those most affected.



VCA's approach was grounded in collaboration and training. With technical and financial support from VCA partners, communities in counties such as Marsabit, Homa Bay, and Kisumu have been trained to utilize tools like the Mulika Tracking Tool. Additionally, VCA's technical and financial support has not only enabled communities to access and use climate finance tracking tools effectively, but has also propelled these innovations beyond Kenya's borders. The Mulika Tracking Tool, originally available in printed version to help citizens monitor climate-related budgets and flag irregularities, is now digital, improving user experience and bolstering its reach. Its user-friendly design and community-centred approach have made it a powerful model for grassroots accountability. In recognition of its impact, *horizont3000*, an Austrian development organisation, has adopted the tool for global deployment, incorporating it into their work across multiple countries to strengthen transparency and citizen oversight.

These milestone signifies that locally rooted solutions, when nurtured and supported, can inspire and inform global best practices, demonstrating that communities VCA's



contribution also complements the government-led FLLoCA programme. Across various counties, VCA partners provide technical support to FLLoCA's implementation, ensuring that climate actions are responsive, inclusive, and truly reflective of local needs, particularly those of women, youth, persons living with disabilities, and marginalised communities.

Through these efforts, the VCA programme has not only strengthened climate governance structures but also redefined accountability, by rooting it in local communities. As the funds continue to flow, so too does the ripple effect of change. With increased funding for climate change interventions, community members can track climate finance at the grassroots level, petition counties and share petitions. This is climate finance accountability done differently, through a just, inclusive, and community-led approach.

These efforts are already yielding results. In Nakuru County, a community-led petition on waste management, supported by VCA partners, led to the review of unfair waste levies. This is a clear example of how organised citizen action can lead to policy reforms. These efforts also showcased the impact of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) collaboration between local groups and external stakeholders, and how they can yield tangible benefits within the community.

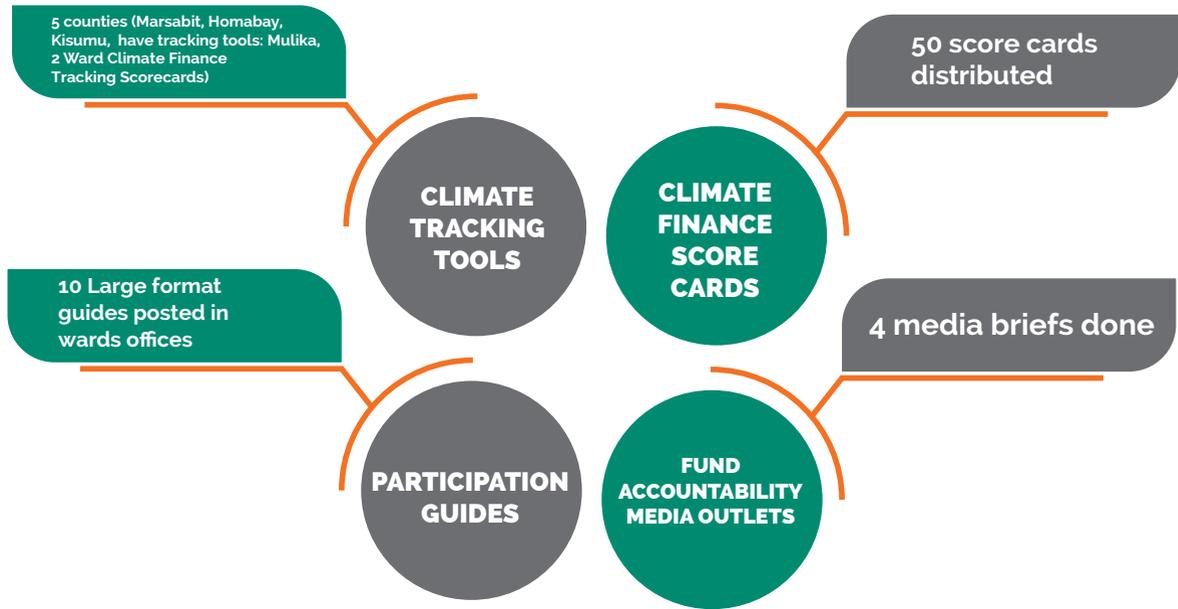


"Mulika Tracking Tool accords us the opportunity to track climate change funds in Marsabit County and ask relevant questions,"

**Hon Mamo Huka Galgalo,
Chairperson, Water, Environment and Climate
Change Committee, Marsabit County Assembly.**



IMPACT NUMBERS



LESSONS LEARNT

Power of empowerment: Invested communities can effectively influence and demand accountability from duty bearers.

BEYOND VCA

Social accountability tools have been embraced by communities and subsequent stakeholders with communities on board in climate funds distribution.

LESSONS LEARNT

Media partnership is necessary in amplifying communities' concerns on social accountability.

BEYOND VCA

Tools for life: An endorsement and adoption of accountability tools by other actors will ensure the longevity of their application, e.g., Horizon 3000

LESSONS LEARNT

Readily available tools for use: Accountability tools and platforms should be ready, versatile and widely available to be used by diverse audiences

LESSONS LEARNT

Informed decision making at the community level as far as interventions in the ADP are concerned.

MORE INFORMATION



SCAN

BACK TO THE ROOTS

LOCAL SOLUTIONS LEADING THE WAY

For generations, communities have drawn their knowledge from the land, learning from nature, nurturing it, and passing on knowledge in songs, stories, and shared practices. Whether it is the art of seed saving, the wisdom of tracking seasonal winds, or the rhythms of communal land care, indigenous knowledge has long been a quiet but powerful force in sustaining life.

This deep understanding of ecosystems has been passed down through generations, from grandmothers, herders, farmers, and forest dwellers, offering more than mere survival. It holds the promise of harmony between people and the planet. However, somewhere along the way, these homegrown solutions were pushed to the margins, overshadowed by distant policies, top-down interventions, and one-size-fits-all approaches that often overlooked the people most closely connected to the land.

Today, as the harsh realities of climate change unfold, communities are



Solutions were there, but needed recognition and support to scale up.

revisiting past knowledge, retracing the steps of their ancestors, reviving their practices, and reimagining them for today's challenges. Before the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme's intervention, communities held rich knowledge and practical solutions to address the climate crisis. However, these efforts remained fragmented, overlooked, and lacked the necessary support to scale. Nature-based practices were undervalued and seldom seen as viable responses. Local communities, despite bearing a significant portion of the climate burden, often had limited access to leadership opportunities or resources.

The VCA programme marked a turning point in how climate action is imagined and implemented. Rather than introducing foreign solutions, VCA amplified what communities already knew, trusted, and practised. It acted as a bridge, linking indigenous knowledge with critical resources, creating networks of collaboration, and giving visibility to grassroots innovations that had long gone unnoticed.

Communities have revived and scaled up indigenous conservation practices applied by their forefathers that are now being implemented in a more structured and coordinated manner to restore and protect nature. With support from VCA, communities have identified local solutions, upscaled them and devised local governance structures to scale up implementation and compliance. Some of the local solutions have included farmer-management.

In northern Kenya, Women have emerged as powerful agents of change, embracing alternative livelihoods that build both ecological and economic resilience. Through VCA support, 14 groups have ventured into climate-smart enterprises, including beekeeping, permaculture, crab farming, and octopus rearing. Among them, five women-led groups secured over KES 2 million each to expand their initiatives. These women are now not just participants but decision-makers; owning assets, leading restoration efforts, and shaping the future of their communities. In Siaya and Homa Bay, elderly women are reviving indigenous food systems, saving native seeds and passing on knowledge to the younger generation.

Young people and grassroots organisations were mentored on climate resilience, clean energy solutions, and waste management to unlock their potential to drive transformation. Safe and inclusive spaces for peer learning and knowledge exchange were created, including vibrant exhibitions and local dialogues where communities could showcase their ideas and learn from one another. One of the most transformative innovations is the Ramat Model - a co-created, nature-based solution that empowers communities in northern Kenya to take charge of their landscapes. Through monthly collective action to restore and manage their rangelands, local voices are not only being heard but are actively shaping climate resilience in regions that need it most. More than 1,400 community members, including elders, women, and youth, worked together to revive over 550 hectares of degraded land. Through Ramat, which means 'to take care of', indigenous trees are identified, cared for, and marked with paint to show they're under communal protection. Restoration days are now an integral part of community life, and young people are utilising mobile apps and mapping tools to track progress and maintain momentum. This model alone has saved over 13,000 indigenous trees, serving as a winning example of what's possible when conservation is driven from within. Community



Local Women with a watermelon harvest from Shurr Climate Smart Farm- Shurr, Marsabit County



“*The beauty of this model is that it's locally led. The Samburu community is using indigenous knowledge to conserve and restore their ecosystem. This is what VCA is about, supporting communities to actively participate in climate action and amplifying the solutions that work for them.*”

Jacqueline Kimeu,
Climate Change & Energy Coordinator

governance approach drew from traditional bylaws and knowledge through the establishment of community-led conservation committees and local champions. In addition, VCA, through its in-country partners, trained women on fodder production, which helps ease pressure on pastureland. Through additional support from the Ward Climate Change Planning Committee, communities in Marsabit county are managing grazing patterns in Karare and Obbu Wards.

Efforts to revive indigenous food systems also gained traction, with initiatives promoting traditional seed saving, herbal medicine, and climate-resilient crops. In urban and arid regions, alternative livelihoods such as kitchen gardening and aquaculture emerged as sustainable income sources amidst rising climate pressures.

Representation has also expanded, with grassroots actors stepping into national and continental arenas. Organisations like Eco-Lusion Community-Based Organisation have elevated community voices to the Africa Climate Summit, participating in high-level dialogues and leading campaigns on loss and damage, demonstrating that climate governance is strongest when it starts at the grassroots level.

IMPACT NUMBERS

572.68 hectares in Mount Marsabit Ecosystem under active restoration engaging local communities.

20 Acres of the degraded Kiborgoch Community Wetland and Wildlife Conservancy in Baringo County restored through reseedling as well as assisted natural regeneration.

LAND RESTORATION

1 climate adaptation panel

AFRICA CLIMATE SUMMIT REPRESENTATION

Over 13,000 indigenous trees preserved through RAMAT model (Shurr Conservancy)

RANGELAND RESTORATION

CONSERVATION OF DRYLAND ECOSYSTEMS

4 ecosystems

- Ndoto Ecosystem in Samburu County - 90 champions
- Mt. Marsabit Ecosystem - 60 champions
- Baringo Ecosystem - 6,100 tree seedlings planted around
- 3 springs and 9 schools.
- Kilifi Ecosystem - 567 seedlings of Mwavuli (Umbrella) and Mkilifi (Neem) species planted at Bore Singwaya in Magarini Sub County led by the local communities i.e Nyari Self Help Group.

LOCAL WOMEN-LED INITIATIVES

15 women groups planted 3,450 grafted fruit tree seedlings (mangoes and Hass avocados) in Baringo County promoting agroforestry and promoting environmental restoration.

20 kitchen conical gardens by women in Marsabit, fostering food security while building resilience to climate change shocks. A women led movement "hands off our Acacia Trees" in Saka ward Garissa, advocating for the protection of acacia trees and conservation of the standing forests.

CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE (CSA) ACTIVITIES

6 farmer groups of 175 members formed and trained on CSA techniques (Zai Pits, Sunken Beds, Vertical Bags & raised Bed), equipped with farming start-up kits (6 Water Storage Tanks, 10 Solar Pumps, Drip Irrigation Kits & seeds) in Samburu County.

Operationalization of a 10 Acre Climate Smart Farm within Shurr Community conservancy

14 groups supported in Marsabit and Baringo Counties

IMPACT NUMBERS

LESSONS LEARNT

Community driven activities: For change to be realized, the envisioned solutions must be owned and led by the affected community

BEYOND VCA

Power of oneness: Groups morphed into registered organisations now attracting funds by themselves. (Eco-Lusion CBO) (NLGF) (Kenya Marine Fisheries Social Economic Development - Project)

LESSONS LEARNT

Not all solutions apply to all regions: For the locally-led solutions to work, they must be context specific (What works in Samburu cannot work in Nairobi)

BEYOND VCA

Grassroot voices amplified at regional events: Grassroot organisation representatives admitted in advocacy spaces such as the Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi

LESSONS LEARNT

Strengthening community livelihoods: Locally led solutions build community resilience

BEYOND VCA

Community governance: The Ramat Model is being institutionalized to continue land restoration efforts.

LESSONS LEARNT

Locally-led actions create dignity and economic empowerment. When women and youth lead, the ripple effect transforms entire communities.

BEYOND VCA

Grant Ready: Women's networks are now grant-ready and integrated into national and county platforms

MORE INFORMATION



SCAN

SILOS TO SYNERGY

POWER OF MOVEMENTS, FOR UNIFIED ACTION

The power of movements lies in their ability to transform and bring visibility, voice, and speed to issues that need to be addressed. Before the emergence of coordinated climate justice facilitated under the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme, many civil society groups and grassroots actors in the climate spaces operated in silos, their actions disconnected and often duplicated. Without structured collaboration or platforms for joint advocacy, their influence on policy and public dialogue remained minimal. Shrinking civic space further eroded their ability to mobilise. However, as these actors come together from across regions and sectors, a shift occurred. What was once pockets of isolated interventions evolved into a united front for climate justice, proving that synergy drives lasting change.

The Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme played a key role in transforming



small, scattered efforts into strong, united climate movements. Instead of working in isolation, local groups were brought together to form Community Climate Change Dialogue Forums (CCDFs) and networks in counties like HomaBay,

Marsabit, Nairobi, Kisumu, Naivasha and Nakuru. These networks included youth, women, and people with disabilities working on issues such as water resource conservation, river clean-ups, waste management, and clean energy. VCA supported the identification through group profiling, created linkages through peer-to-peer learning exchanges, and helped build their skills in advocacy through creative campaigns using puppetry and street theatre. They also enhanced skills for communities on how to engage in public decision-making. VCA also brought groups together to work on shared goals, such as tracking climate budgets, mainstreaming climate change in county budgets, influencing county investments in community priority climate change projects, and creating climate-friendly businesses. Platforms like the Nakuru Climate Forum and the ASAL Climate Bloggers Network provided them with a space to share their stories and ideas. With the proper support and training, these groups evolved into strong, active movements that can raise their voices, influence policy, and effect real change in their communities. These deliberate efforts transformed isolated community actions into coordinated, visible, and influential movements capable not only of resisting injustice but also of shaping climate solutions from the ground up.

Championing Climate action, through movements that matter.

Through the (VCA) programme, the power of

collective organising has come to life through capability-building community groups into movements that shape the climate justice agenda.

One of VCA's key strategies was to support the formation and growth of CCDFs, movements of local climate actors and county-level networks like the Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs). These platforms empowered communities to influence climate decisions, coordinate and scale-up existing innovative climate solutions, organise media campaigns, and mobilise citizens around key issues. In places like Marsabit, the WCCPC network has become a united voice that is steering climate budget decisions and strengthening community-led advocacy.

At the ward level, CCDFs have become engines for localised climate action. They championed projects such as tree planting, water catchment protection, and the adoption of clean energy. Importantly, these forums helped shift behaviour in communities, with women, in particular, becoming more visible and vocal. During the court appeal against the proposed coal power plant in Lamu, women showed up in large numbers, participated in campaigns and press conferences, and helped delay the ruling through sustained pressure and visibility.



One of the most powerful outcomes of these movements has been the regeneration of urban river ecosystems. Community groups successfully united to coordinate their efforts in reclaiming riparian land along the Nairobi, Ngong, and Gitathuru rivers. These areas were transformed into green spaces, recreational parks, tree nurseries, and urban farms. Involvement in these projects has even helped rehabilitate young people previously involved in crime, providing them with alternative livelihoods and a sense of purpose. Despite the drawbacks created by the floods experienced in Nairobi in 2024, and the government's directive to clear and protect the 30-meter space along the Nairobi River basins, local initiatives have shaped the government-led agenda for the rehabilitation of the Nairobi River basins through the Nairobi Rivers Commission (NRC). Community representatives from various networks across the city have successfully

influenced the government's plans and investment decisions along the Nairobi River through their inclusion and active involvement in the Nairobi Rivers Commission sub-committees. Meanwhile, the zoning of the Nairobi River basin into 18 distinct areas created structured opportunities for community involvement. Movement representatives now sit on the Nairobi Rivers Commission, actively contributing to the development and implementation of the Nairobi River Regeneration Plan. At the policy level, movement-led petitions led to the passage of a Climate Change Act by the Nairobi County Assembly.

In Nakuru and Naivasha, VCA-backed networks pushed for the integration of waste pickers into the formal waste management system. Their unified advocacy leading to NEMA reducing annual waste levies from KES 184,000 to KES 8,000 was a major

win that made the sector more inclusive and sustainable. Funds raised from collective waste efforts in Nakuru are even used to connect underserved areas to piped water, demonstrating the broader impact of organised climate movements.

Across all these efforts, VCA supported amplifying the voices of grassroots women and youth by elevating them from passive observers to key influencers in climate governance. By connecting local knowledge with policy action and advocacy, these movements have proven that when people come together, they can drive change that is not only visible but lasting. Through its support for coordinated action, capability building, and community-led advocacy, the VCA programme has shown that climate movements rooted in local realities are the most powerful force for just and inclusive climate action.



“Empowering young people is not just changing lives, it's also about building a movement that transforms cities from the ground up.”

IMPACT NUMBERS

LESSONS LEARNT

Critical mass is key in advocacy: it opens doors for access of legal status of the groups (registration, designation of holding points)

BEYOND VCA

Incorporation of networks and groups into the river basin commission for sustainability

LESSONS LEARNT

Media engagement is a powerful tool in collaboration

BEYOND VCA

Climate actions turned to income generating activities i.e. waste collection, urban farming, reclamation of the rivers.

LESSONS LEARNT

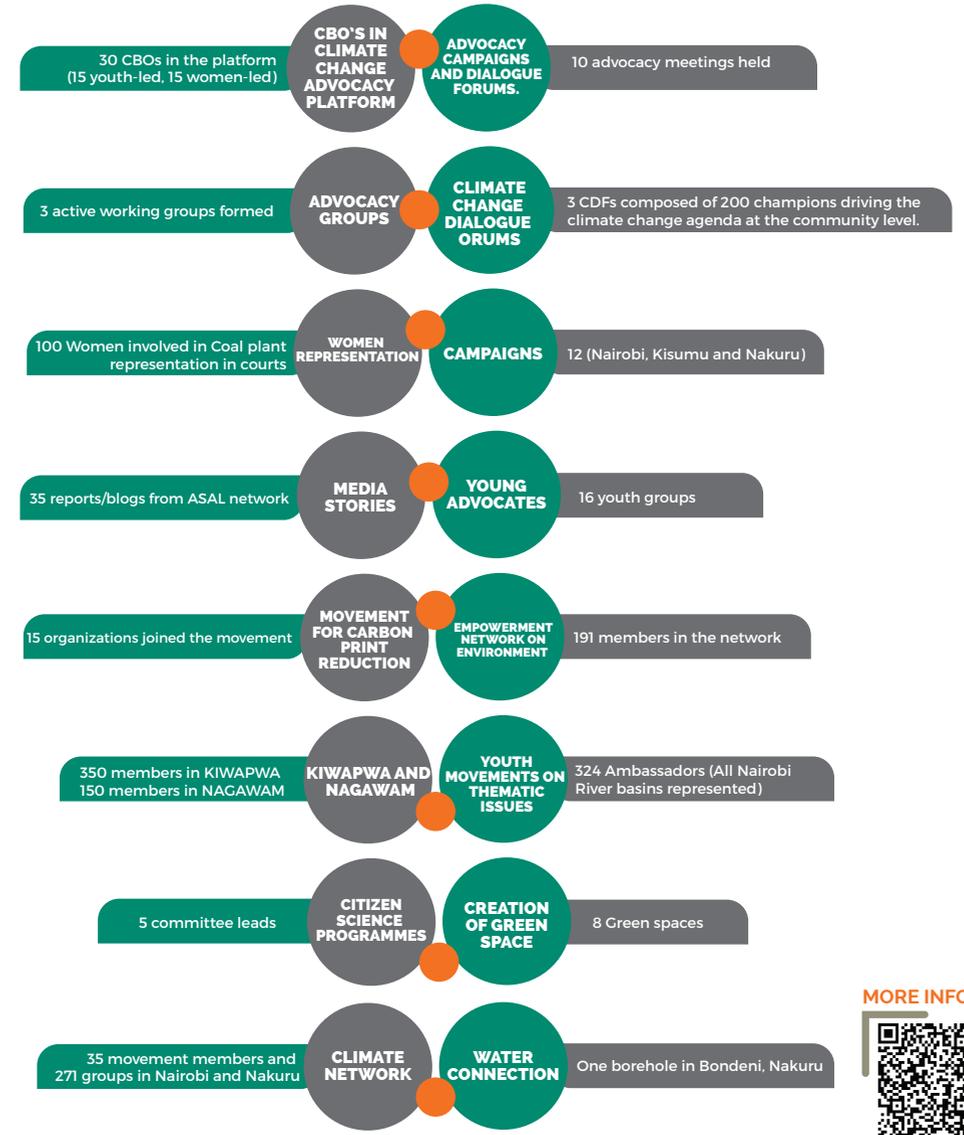
Power of the coalition in instituting strategic litigation

BEYOND VCA

Waste levies moderated: NAGAWAM (Nakuru County) influencing pricing for the recognition as waste pickers at the local level.

LESSONS LEARNT

Power in movements by working together they are stronger than working in their silos. (Existing actions/solutions by groups along Mathare River basins influenced the formation and mandate of NRC)



MORE INFORMATION



SCAN

SMALL GRANT BIG CHANGE

IMAGINE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIRECTLY FUND THE COMMUNITY?

In the face of climate change, local communities often bear the brunt of the burden. Facing floods, food insecurity, and biodiversity loss, yet they are the least resourced and most overlooked in decision-making and funding flows. Long bureaucratic processes and exclusionary funding models have historically sidelined grassroots groups, especially marginalized constituencies like youth, women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), ex-convicts, young mothers, the elderly, indigenous communities and street families, commonly known as “hard to reach groups”. But imagine what happens when the power of funding is placed directly in the hands of those living the crisis? The Next Level Grant Facility



(NLGF) is an innovative financing model under the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme, currently being implemented across seven countries in the Global South. In Kenya, the facility is managed by Slum Dwellers International (SDI)-Kenya. The NLGF was created as a response to a funding system that failed to recognise the capabilities and wisdom of local actors. Designed to challenge conventional donor systems, the NLGF responded to a broken funding landscape by trusting local actors to define, drive, and implement their own climate solutions. Flexible, inclusive, and community-led, the facility reimaged how money flows and who gets to decide what matters and how to prioritise the needs of the resource.

What changed?

Backed by the VCA programme, NLGF broke down the structural barriers that had long kept grassroots groups at the margins. The small grants guarantee a short turnaround time and, instead of complicated applications and rigid eligibility, the model embraces flexibility, allowing submissions in Swahili, videos, or voice notes. This was welcoming for both registered and unregistered groups,

prioritising women, youth, persons with disabilities, and elderly. By focusing on sectors such as food security, water and sanitation, biodiversity, and climate-smart innovations, NLGF ensured that community needs led the agenda. VCA partners, who served as the first point of contact for grantees in their respective counties, didn't just support the funding process, but also stood beside communities, coaching groups on the capacity gaps they identified. This was about restoring power, agency, and dignity to those at the frontline of the climate crisis, and not charity.



Madiaba CBO training Women youth on how to make energy saving cook stoves that they can sell to substitute incomes.

NLGF opened doors to influence, inviting several grassroots groups to participate in formal county climate planning processes. Others attracted new donors and development partners eager to support their growing initiatives. The impact is visible in both tangible outcomes and transformed lives. With modest micro-grants, communities across each county turned their ideas into action. From permaculture farms to energy-saving stoves, from indigenous vegetable gardens to water kiosks, these locally driven initiatives have proven that small grants can lead to significant change.

In the area of food security, urban and school-based kitchen gardens began to flourish, providing fresh produce for families and improving household nutrition. Community groups introduced innovative and resilient farming techniques, promoted indigenous vegetable farming, and established demonstration plots that inspired neighbours to replicate the practices in their own backyards.



For water access, NLGF-supported projects to undertake rainwater harvesting systems, and water pans to drought-prone areas, ensuring clean, reliable water sources for drinking, farming, and sanitation. In places where water scarcity had long been a challenge, these interventions brought a new sense of hope and stability.

In the realm of climate adaptation, communities have adopted innovative and sustainable practices, including waste recycling, the construction of gabions to control erosion, and black soldier fly farming to manage organic waste and provide alternative animal feed. These projects not only addressed local environmental issues but also created new income streams and job opportunities.

NLGF also proved critical in times of crisis. In Sindo, Homabay County, over 100 flood-affected households received material support, enabling them to rebuild and relocate to safer grounds. This rapid response helped restore dignity and stability to families who had lost everything to climate-related disasters. More than just funding projects, NLGF sparked a shift, demonstrating what's possible when communities are trusted to lead, barriers are removed, and red tape is replaced with genuine

partnerships where local solutions flourish.

"When there is a drought, it becomes difficult for us to sustain our project due to water shortages. First, we have to walk a long distance to fetch water, then a jerrycan is sold for 50 KES. You have to choose whether to use it for your consumption or for watering the vegetables."

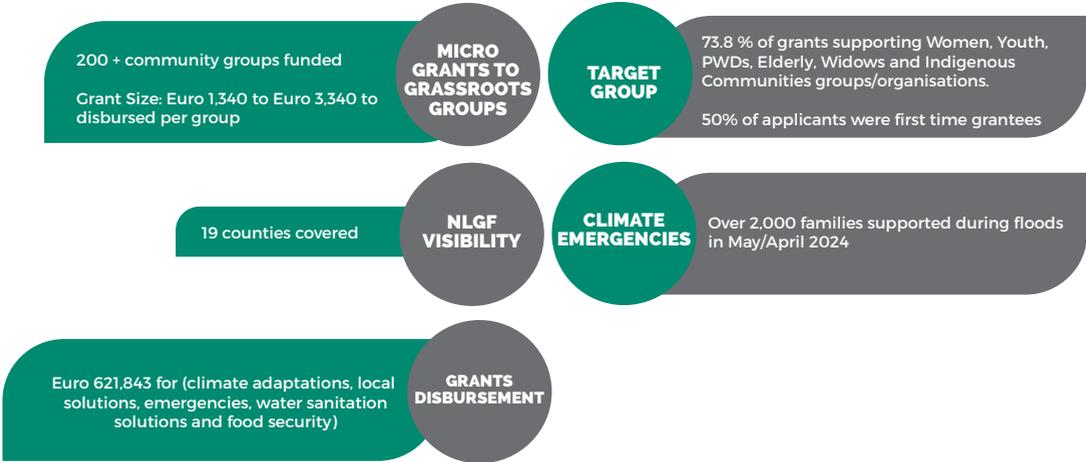
Grace Nashipae

"KIWAPWA's clean-ups and waste management services have led to a reduction in diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera, decreased burning of waste, and improved environmental hygiene."

Kevin Akwota



IMPACT NUMBERS



LESSONS LEARNT Simple and Clear: By simplifying the funding model, it removed barriers allowing submissions by communities to activate grassroots-led solutions.	BEYOND VCA Community Empowerment: NLGF Projects are now community led and Livelihood focused opening pathways to influence resources attracting new donors, with some groups joining formal spaces.
LESSONS LEARNT Micro-grants Drive Macro Results: Small Grants to local communities can contribute to big.	BEYOND VCA Income generative projects established: NLGF has supported communities to venture into income generative activities e.g., beekeeping, permaculture among many, ensuring long-term livelihood sustainability for communities.
LESSONS LEARNT Upscaling existing projects immensely impacts the marginalized groups i.e. prioritizing women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and elders.	BEYOND VCA The adoption of Peer-to-Peer exchanges on best local-led solutions and practice will facilitate learning and linking the communities with other interested donors.
LESSONS LEARNT Collaboration between VCA Partners has increased NLGF communities' reach.	BEYOND VCA Linkages established during the project will play a key role in future collaboration in climate change interventions
LESSONS LEARNT Quick Action Matters – In emergencies, fast funding saves lives and restores dignity.	BEYOND VCA Catalytic Shift: Beyond funding, the real impact of NLGF lies in the shift it created from donor-driven agendas to community-led climate action, where local voices shape both priorities and solutions.
LESSONS LEARNT Crowd sourcing in storytelling in diverse formats attracted recognition, not just within the communities, but also from county governments and other partners	
LESSONS LEARNT Fast response and quick turnaround in granting crisis situations is key	

MORE INFORMATION



SCAN

POWER OF INCLUSION TOWARDS A CLIMATE AND GENDER-JUST FUTURE

Kenya's climate journey has been dynamic, with communities across the country rising to meet the challenges of a changing environment due to effects of climate change. Yet, certain voices have remained unheard, not for lack of insight or impact, but because systems haven't been fully tuned to hear them.

Conversations around gender often leaned toward a binary understanding, overlooking the complex and intersecting experiences of people living with disabilities, indigenous communities, and those in rural or informal settlements. Inclusion existed in name, but rarely in practice, with many gender initiatives stopping at mainstreaming, rather than embracing deeper,



transformative approaches grounded in equity and justice.

On the other hand, young people, especially from underserved areas, have been navigating climate impacts without the platforms to influence the decisions that shape their futures. Across policy spaces, both nationally and at county level, gender and social inclusion have not always been prioritised. But these gaps were never signs of failure, but a starting point for reimagining what truly inclusive climate action could look like.

Creating Inclusive Spaces for Voice and Power

From the informal settlements of Nairobi to the arid lands of Marsabit and the coastal regions of Kwale, communities that have long been overlooked are now rewriting their script on climate justice. Inclusive representation is becoming a lived reality, reshaping how solutions are imagined, policies are formed, and funding is allocated. At the heart of this shift has been the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme.

Through the programme, VCA focused on amplifying their voices, particularly women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and indigenous communities. These communities are no longer passive recipients of climate interventions. They are designing policies, shaping county budgets, leading grassroots advocacy, and taking the stage in global climate negotiations where they are telling their own stories, in their own words.

To make this transformation possible, VCA partners undertook a series of strategic interventions that spanned from grassroots mobilisation to global representation. To strengthen gender-responsive climate action, VCA Kenya supported the training of women

leaders on climate justice and feminism. Through mentorship under the African Women Leadership Institute (AWLI), which created platforms dubbed "Rethink Spaces", women leaders were enabled to critically examine systemic inequalities and envision a just, inclusive society. This work was further supported by the development of key tools, including the Intersectional Feminist Climate Action Guidebook, a gender audit tool, and gender analyses of national frameworks and key programmes, such as FLLoCA. Together, these efforts laid a strong foundation for more inclusive climate change plans, policies, and programmes.

In parallel, young people and women began occupying global spaces. Youth movements such as Komb Green in Korogocho, Sinai Unified, and Greener Cities became showcases of community-led innovation. The Young Climate Negotiators Program has created a pipeline linking youth from informal settlements to the African Group of Negotiators, while VCA's support for the Local Conference of Youth (LCOY) and participation at COP28, COP29, and SB62 helped ensure that grassroots perspectives shaped Kenya's international climate commitments.



Inclusive policy engagement was central to the approach. Nine county-level climate policies were assessed through a gender lens, and VCA partners played an instrumental role in the development of Kenya's National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (NGCCAP 2025–2027). Importantly, these platforms modelled equity in practice, such as ensuring balanced representation in key convenings, like the 14 women and 14 men seated equally in policy inception forums.

Efforts to elevate visibility and advocacy have seen female-led media campaigns challenge stereotypes and amplify the lived experiences of women. Strategic collaborations with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) resulted in co-designed programmes, while support for PWD-led urban farms demonstrated inclusive, climate-resilient livelihoods in practice.

VCA also championed indigenous inclusion. The Pemba community, one of Kenya's smallest and only recently recognised tribes, was engaged in climate decision-making processes. Indigenous women were supported in presenting their cases on climate-linked human rights violations at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul, demonstrating that climate justice must also be rooted in historical and cultural justice.

The results of these deliberate efforts are far-reaching. Women-led community-based

organisations, such as CADACHE and Winam Grassroots, now actively participate in fiscal planning and county-level climate policy-making.

Through inclusion, climate finance is increasingly flowing to initiatives led by women, youth, and PWDs. Strategic partnerships with institutions like NCPWD and the UNFCCC's Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) are opening new channels for collaboration and policy influence. Akina Mama wa Afrika, a member of the leadership of the African Women and Gender Constituency, convened the launch of this network. Grassroots youth negotiators are not only present in national and global conversations, but they are also helping shape Kenya's positions at the COP and ensuring that youth priorities are heard at the highest levels. Persons living with disabilities are directly engaged in climate justice activities under VCA, bringing diverse perspectives to the forefront. What once seemed like systemic gaps are now spaces of shared power and transformation, where inclusion is not only a principle but a proven strategy for resilience, equity, and lasting climate solutions.



**Women meeting with their member of parliament to discuss gender issues in the climate action context
Makueni County**

“

“As a woman, I felt honoured and that this was the first time I had the opportunity to lead the process of finding local solutions at the grassroots level.”

Magdalene Khaemba, Chairperson of the Kaptembo, Ward Climate Change Planning Committee, Nakuru County

”

IMPACT NUMBERS

4 cohorts with 30 participants for 3 years

INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST CLIMATE JUSTICE TRAINING AND MENTORSHIP

1 Analysis covering 3 counties (Lamu, Siaya, Homa Bay) and National policies

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY FRAMEWORKS ANALYSIS

1 assessment done covering 6 counties

GENDER ASSESSMENT OF FLOCCA

52 women trained on finance, justice, and resilience

WOMEN LED CBO'S

MEDIA ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

10 female-led media engagement

14 women vs 14 men in all platform meetings

EQUAL GENDER REPRESENTATION

WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE

4 counties covered where they influence and shape climate agenda

COP- 28, COP-29 and SB 62: 15 people supported and mentored for each event including youth, women, and PWDs

UNFCCC PROCESSES REPRESENTATION

WOMEN, YOUTH AND PWD'S PARTICIPATION

200 participants involved in planning and budgeting processes at the counties

Over 500 PWD's supported to attend
Over 300 women, youth participated

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY (PWD'S)

GLOBAL UNFCCC PROCESSES LIKE COPS LOCALIZED AND CONTEXTUALIZED FOR WOMEN AND YOUTHS AT THE GRASSROOTS

4 Localized Pre-COPs; Pre-COP 27 in Isiolo, 2 Pre-COP 28, for Youth and for Women in Homabay and Pre-COP-29 in Homabay.

2 Communique shared in the media by women at the grassroots.

23 movements with youths and women

YOUTH MOVEMENTS

NATIONAL GENDER CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN (NGCCAP) 2025-2027 LAUNCH AND DEVELOPMENT

5 Regions representing 47 counties and a National writes shop

1 complete National Gender Climate Change Action Plan

Inform2 indigenous women supported to represented decision

AFRICAN HUMAN AND PEOPLES COMMISSION IN BANJUL

COP 28 AND SB 62 SUBMISSIONS

2 Letters Submitted to UNFCCC

IMPACT NUMBERS

LESSONS LEARNT

Shift focus: From gender mainstreaming to gender transformative approaches

BEYOND VCA

Mainstreaming accountability tools such as gender audits and scorecards into county and national climate processes to promote transparency and inclusive evaluation.

LESSONS LEARNT

Need for integrated approaches that combine advocacy and economic empowerment to sustain livelihoods

BEYOND VCA

Building Long-Term training Structures: The program invested in training manuals, toolkits, intergenerational mentorship programs, and technical leadership development for GESI (Gender Equality and Social Inclusion), equipping local actors and institutions to carry forward this work independently.

Next Level Grant Facility given directly to communities to implement locally-led Climate solutions to strengthen their resilience.

LESSONS LEARNT

Collaboration is crucial: Linkages between development actors, National and County stakeholders to continuously offer technical support to youth, women, PWD and other vulnerable groups will go a long way.

BEYOND VCA

Establishing Collaborative Knowledge Networks: VCA fostered strong partnerships and knowledge-sharing ecosystems among civil society, government actors, and community groups, creating sustainable spaces for dialogue, coordination, and joint action on climate justice issues.

LESSONS LEARNT

Representation is Strategy: Inclusion in technical working groups, budget hearings, and negotiations led to more effective, equitable decisions.

BEYOND VCA

Securing Representation Mechanisms for Inclusion: maintain inclusivity of youth, women, PWD in various spaces championed by VCA to ensure that they are still able to engage beyond VCA

MORE INFORMATION



SCAN

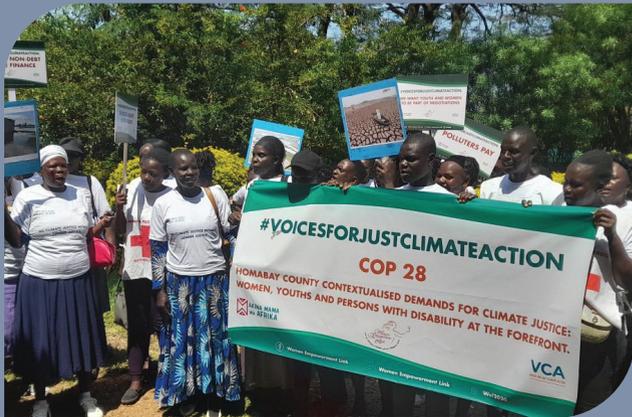
FROM PASSIVE OBSERVERS TO POLICY INFLUENCERS

For decades, climate-related decisions in Kenya have been made far from the people they most affected. Important meetings and laws have been drafted in offices and boardrooms with minimal, if any, input from local communities. Climate policies have often moved slowly, laws have been delayed, and when plans were made, they didn't always reflect the needs or knowledge of the people on the ground. Many communities were unaware of these policies. They watched from the sidelines, affected by climate change but unable to shape the solutions.

But that is changing. All over Kenya, local voices are rising. Community groups are now helping shape the very policies that guide climate action. They are co-creating county laws, influencing national plans, and bringing local knowledge and lived experiences into the conversation. The distance between decision-makers and communities is finally shrinking.

Key challenges included the absence or stagnation of legal frameworks, with many counties lacking climate change policies or legislation; limited public participation in planning processes like County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and budget hearings, resulting in missing community voices; weak grassroots representation in national climate decision-making; low awareness among communities about existing climate policies and their rights to participate; and a fragmented landscape of climate actors, such as CSOs, CBOs, and community groups that often worked in silos with minimal coordination or policy influence. VCA Driving Community Power in Policy Spaces When the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme began its work in Kenya, it addressed a critical gap in the country's climate landscape, where communities most affected by climate change were excluded from the decision-making process. VCA stepped in to support by building capability, improving coordination, and supporting communities and civil society organisations (CSOs) to actively engage in shaping climate policy and legislation. One of VCA's early interventions was at the county level, where it provided both technical

and financial support to draft the Homabay County Climate Change Bill, including related regulations. This effort also ensured that climate change was mainstreamed into every sector of the Homabay County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2023–2027. VCA also mobilised and sensitised Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) on the importance of climate governance, laying the foundation for stronger institutional structures. In Marsabit, Nakuru, Kisumu, Siaya, Homabay, Garissa, and Kajiado counties, VCA supported the development of Participatory Climate Risk Assessments (PCRAs). These assessments ensured that the voices of local residents were heard and integrated into the development of County Climate Change Action Plans (CCCA). In Kisumu and Nairobi (Kiamaiko Ward), VCA backed the creation of climate Adaptation Plans that addressed specific vulnerabilities faced by those communities.



VCA also played a significant role in shaping policy at both county and national levels. It supported the review of the Kisumu Gender Mainstreaming Bill, which is now undergoing redrafting to reflect inclusivity and community priorities better. In Nakuru, the programme contributed to the development of a County Waste Management Policy. At the national level, it helped influence the National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan 2025–2027, working through partners such as the CRAWN Trust, which participated in the technical working group.

The influence of grassroots actors now extends to the national stage. Civil society organisations, such as LAWA and CRAWN Trust, have played a key role in the development and adoption of the National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (2025–2027). Their insights have shaped Kenya’s Nationally Determined Contributions



Ground Breaking Launch of Mulika Climate Change Funds tracking Tool.

(NDCs) and helped frame strong advocacy positions at COP28 and COP29. Meanwhile, in Kisumu, the process to develop a more inclusive Gender Mainstreaming Bill is currently underway, driven by diverse stakeholder participation. These milestones reflect a growing recognition that community power is the foundation for effective climate action. It also helped launch a Compendium on Ecological Jurisprudence, documenting landmark legal cases that advanced climate justice.

To ensure sustained impact, VCA invested in building the skills of community actors and County Climate Change structures. Through the in-country partners, VCA trained community groups on policy review, advocacy, and the County Climate Change Act (2020), equipping them to participate effectively in climate governance. To further support grassroots action, VCA developed a Local Climate Action Guidebook, a practical tool designed to help communities understand and engage with local climate policy processes.

Communities have begun institutionalising climate governance structures that will endure beyond the life of the Programme. The journey from passive observers to active policy influencers stands as proof that when people are equipped with the right tools, supported with the right platforms, and trusted with decision-making power, they engage and lead. This is the essence of just and inclusive climate action.

VCA Interventions

1. Legislative Breakthroughs in Homabay County

VCA’s support led to a major legislative milestone with the enactment of the Homabay County Climate Change Act 2022, alongside its supporting regulations. This legal framework has institutionalised climate governance in the county and also laid the foundation for long-term planning and funding for climate action. Additionally, climate change has been successfully mainstreamed across all sectors of the Homabay CIDP 2023–2027, ensuring a coordinated and integrated response across the county.

2. Strengthening Partnerships for Community-Led Engagement

To promote ongoing public engagement and awareness, VCA facilitated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between national stakeholders, private sector actors, and civil society groups (including CUTS), launching the innovative “Chief’s Climate Week.” This monthly initiative provides a dedicated platform for continuous



community dialogue and action on climate issues at the grassroots level.

3. Advancing Gender-Responsive Climate Policy at the National Level

At the national level, VCA played a critical role in the adoption of the National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (NGCCAP). Through partners such as LAWA, who sat on the technical working group, VCA contributed to shaping a gender-just climate agenda. This process also helped pave the way for the implementation of the Climate Change (Amendment) Act Fund, ensuring gender and social inclusion are embedded in future climate financing.

4. Inclusive Planning and Budgeting in Counties

In Kisumu, VCA's interventions ensured that youth and women were actively engaged in the development of the CIDP 2023–2027, leading to the integration of community-informed climate actions into county development plans. Similarly, the Marsabit County Climate Change Action Plan (MCCAP) was made inclusive through participatory processes that centred on incorporating indigenous knowledge and local experiences - an approach now influencing planning in other counties.

5. Unlocking Funding for Local Climate Action

One of the most impactful outcomes of VCA's work has been the increased budget allocations for community-led climate initiatives. By equipping local actors with advocacy tools and facilitating their participation in planning spaces, the programme strengthened their ability to influence public spending toward climate resilience and adaptation priorities.

6. Empowering Communities Through Data and Policy Engagement

Youth groups supported by VCA played an instrumental role in collecting local climate data, which was used to inform policy

decisions, thereby bridging the gap between evidence and action.

7. Driving Progressive Legislative Reform in Kisumu

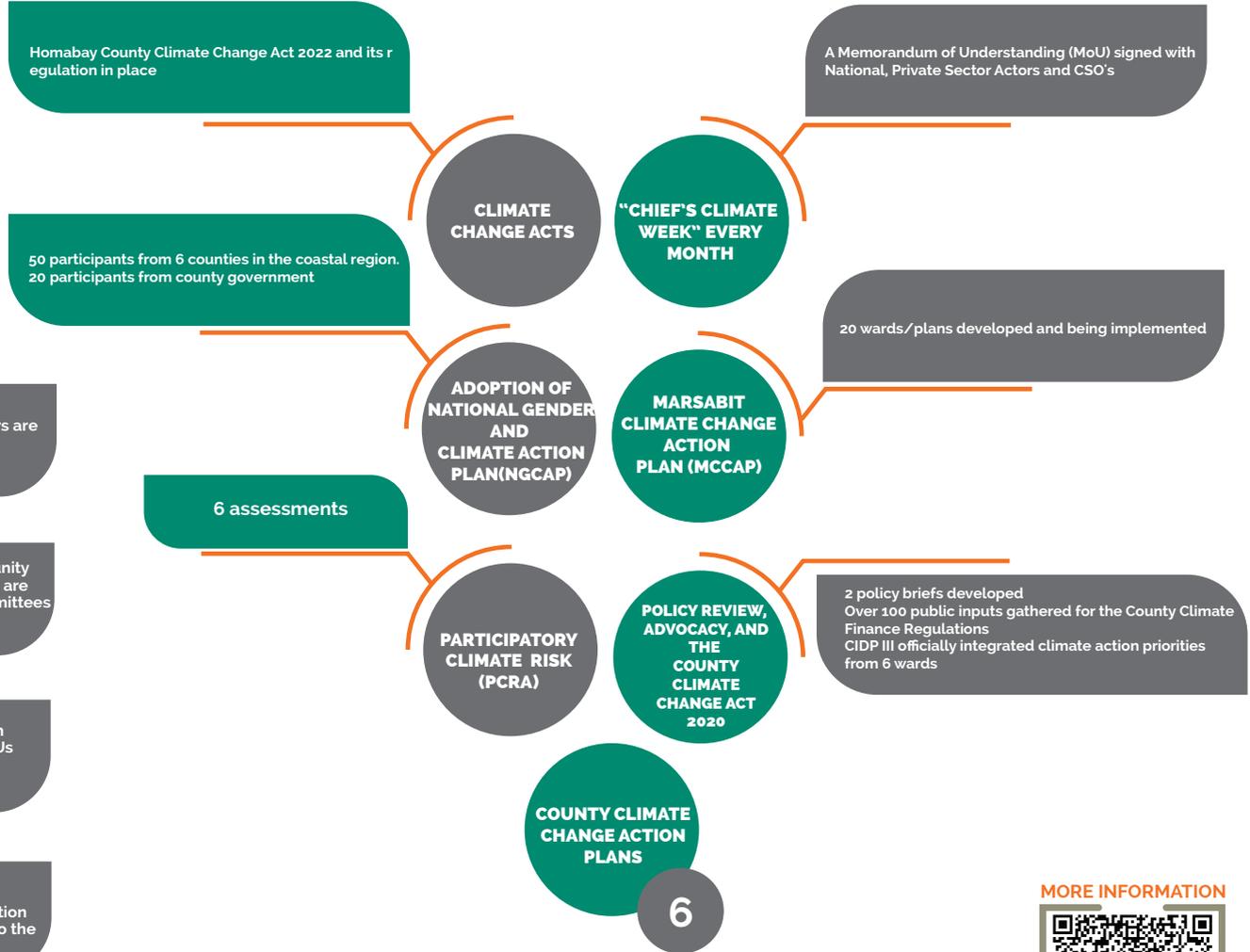
While the original Kisumu Gender Mainstreaming Bill 2024 was paused, a new, more inclusive draft is currently in development. Continuous stakeholder engagement supported by VCA has driven this. This process highlights the programme's commitment to long-term policy shaping, even when outcomes take time to mature.

8. Regional Leadership in Climate and Gender Policy

VCA's technical partner, CRAWN Trust, represented civil society in the technical working group for the National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan and actively participated in regional convenings. These forums helped surface local priorities and ensure they were reflected in national frameworks which are strengthening Kenya's position in both regional and global climate dialogues. PACIDA supported speedy development of the Marsabit Climate Change framework as per the Climate Change Fund Act 2020.



IMPACT NUMBERS



- LESSONS LEARNT**
- CSO engagement as watchdogs is crucial for validation of the process.
- BEYOND VCA**
- Power of numbers: Community members are currently incorporated in the WCCPCs ensuring sustainability.
- LESSONS LEARNT**
- All-inclusive activity: Including the special interest groups (SIGs) has been pivotal in safeguarding their interests; there is, however, a need to continually enhance training.
- BEYOND VCA**
- Voices of the people represented: Community groups trained on policy review, advocacy are engaged by County Assembly house committees on matters environment, Water and Climate Change.
- LESSONS LEARNT**
- Sharing our stories matter: Community storytelling and documentation can influence policy and attract recognition.
- BEYOND VCA**
- Unwavering synergies: Collaboration with National Government (NGAOs) under MoUs will sustain the ongoing climate change initiatives at the community level.
- LESSONS LEARNT**
- Involving the marginalized groups; youths, women and PWDs has seen them influencing policy change and making at the county level.
- BEYOND VCA**
- Resource mobilization by VCA partners throughout the Programme implementation will see additional resources tapping into the communities' activities
- LESSONS LEARNT**
- There is a need to solve the 'institutionalization gap' for WCCPCs; something that VCA should pioneer for posterity.

MORE INFORMATION



SCAN

SHIFTING POWER

CREATIVE STORYTELLING AT THE FRONTLINE OF CLIMATE JUSTICE CONVERSATIONS

The Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme recognizes that for climate justice to take root, the people on the frontlines had to become the storytellers. At the heart of its strategy is creative storytelling. A shift that empowered communities to narrate their own experiences, amplify their knowledge, and influence decision-making spaces. What VCA did was lean in and invest in the creative sparks already glowing in villages, settlements, and spaces often overlooked.

Across Kenya's most climate-affected regions, grassroots communities remain at the forefront of the crisis, yet their voices often go unheard. As they navigate daily realities of flash floods, prolonged droughts, and food insecurity, national climate



conversations continue to be dominated by technical jargon and urban-centric narratives. The stories from the ground often fail to reflect the lived realities of rural and marginalised communities, creating a disconnect between climate action and those who need it most.

Today, indigenous knowledge is gaining recognition as an essential part of climate advocacy. These traditional systems are built on generations of community experience, seasonal observations, and sustainable practices. They offer valuable solutions for adapting to climate change. However, this knowledge is still not fully included in formal scientific or policy discussions. In Kenya, many communities are actively leading local climate action, such as women protecting indigenous seeds and youth restoring natural ecosystems. Yet, their efforts are often overlooked in the media and national planning. As a result, important local experiences remain untold, creating a gap in understanding, visibility, and inclusion.

VCA's Creative Interventions

Rather than rewriting the story, VCA supported in co-authoring new chapters, where puppets became climate educators, podcasts carried the voices of water defenders, and women-led skits brought indigenous resilience to centre stage. In partnering

with grassroots storytellers, the programme nurtured a movement rooted not in rescue, but in recognition that justice begins when those living the crisis shape the conversation. Grassroots storytelling emerged as a powerful force. Women and youth participated in facilitated sessions that captured their personal experiences of climate change stories marked by floods, drought, and resilience. Community radio broadcasts in local dialects helped close the gap between policy and lived reality. Puppet shows, skits, and live comedy transformed technical subjects, such as climate finance or adaptation, into everyday conversations. Media briefs, animations, and documentaries ensured these stories travelled further, influencing both local and national narratives.

What began as creative expression quickly evolved into a movement of advocacy, visibility and action. Puppetry character series, such as Kasweetie, and comedy series, like Bahali Yake, made climate change tangible in both urban slums and pastoralist communities. Theatre groups like Dunga Women brought indigenous knowledge to the forefront, while podcasts such as Taps and Tensions sparked reflection on water and food justice. These storytelling efforts did more than inform. They re-centred the climate conversation

around those most affected and most engaged, turning stories into strategy and audiences into advocates.

Screenings held in schools and community gatherings across counties like Marsabit, Meru, Kisumu, Isiolo and Nairobi played a key role in breaking down complex climate jargon into relatable stories through films and documentaries. These screenings helped communities, especially young people, connect the dots between the global climate crisis and their everyday lived experiences. They didn't just watch stories; they saw themselves in them. Many came to understand that climate change isn't a distant threat, it's a reality they face daily. And through the solutions shared in these films, they discovered practical ways to adapt. This approach reached a powerful audience: pupils and students who, in the near future, will be responsible for making the decisions needed to correct the wrongs of past generations. They will step into leadership roles in critical spaces, carrying with them the urgency and knowledge to protect our planet for those who come after us.

A SHIFT IN POWER: FROM PASSIVE PARTICIPANTS TO NARRATIVE SHAPERS

Creative storytelling movements supported under the VCA programmes did more than

inform; they transformed. Communities that had long been treated as silent recipients of climate interventions have become confident narrators of their own realities. Their stories have begun to shape public opinion, influence governance structures, and fuel action. This is not just a communication shift; it was a power shift.

In places like Nyalenda -Kisumu County, youth took to the airwaves with bold clarity, merging conversations around gender-based violence and climate finance in community radio broadcasts. In Marsabit, the community's understanding of climate governance mechanisms, such as Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs), has improved significantly. What was once seen as policy for the elite became a tool for grassroots participation. In Nyandarua, conversations around gender and climate justice evolved, with communities beginning to unpack how power, access, and resilience are unequally distributed, and what must change to restore balance.

Every performance, podcast, mural, and blog post is now a tool for people's voices. Not just to speak, but to lead. Importantly, this collective storytelling has built something lasting. Blogs, videos, podcasts, and digital art now form a living archive of community-led climate action. This repository continues to inspire new advocates and inform decision-making processes. These stories have not only shaped public awareness but unlocked new partnerships and funding. This is proof that when the narrative shifts, so does the power.

In Samburu County, a series of radio talk shows were aired in partnership with Radio Mchungaji to promote the preservation and integration of indigenous knowledge in addressing local challenges. Aimed at communities with limited literacy and connectivity, the programs provided a platform for community elders and experts to share insights on traditional practices such as seasonal migration, grazing patterns, and conflict avoidance with wildlife, alongside scientific approaches to environmental conservation and early warning systems. These broadcasts not only elevated the value of indigenous wisdom but also inspired community-led solutions and greater appreciation of local knowledge systems. To sustain the initiative, Radio Mchungaji committed to a dedicated weekly slot every Thursday at 8 PM for indigenous storytelling, ensuring continued dialogue and cultural preservation beyond the project's lifespan.



"The climate summits with high-level participants don't involve the farmer who is facing the effects of climate change. Art helps people to understand the topic, based on their own realities. It simplifies the message through music, community dialogues, poetry, etc. It brings the message home."

Boniface Mwalli, African Crossroads

IMPACT NUMBERS

LESSONS LEARNT

Art as a Megaphone: Creative tools resonate more deeply than policy briefs or technical reports.

BEYOND VCA

Artists and storytellers are monetizing their content, turning advocacy into sustainable enterprises.

LESSONS LEARNT

Power of Ownership: Communities engage more actively when they see their lives reflected in the content.

BEYOND VCA

A generation of climate communicators are now equipped to take the baton forward.

LESSONS LEARNT

Media Diversity Matters: From TikTok to puppetry, different platforms attract different demographics, hence broadening reach.

BEYOND VCA

Independent Creative Climate Projects being commissioned by other climate change players outside the VCA fraternity

LESSONS LEARNT

Inclusivity Drives Innovation: Women, youth, and marginalized voices bring new dimensions to climate justice narratives.

140 live performances across 8 counties (Nairobi, Kilifi, Kwale, Kakamega, Siaya, Nyandarua, Marsabit and West Pokot)

PUPPETRY & COMEDY SHOWS

ANIMATIONS

10 visual explainers

2 in-depth engagements with community leaders

STORYTELLING SESSIONS

JOTO AFRIKA PUBLICATIONS

4 issues spotlighting local solutions

10 campaigns with 2M+ estimated listeners 10 Radio talk shows Aired at Radio Mchungaji to raise awareness and share both scientific and indigenous knowledge.

RADIO CAMPAIGNS

MEDIA BRIEFS

9 published across major outlets

22 videos with 11,000+ views

YOUTUBE VIDEOS

TWITTER/ X SPACES

14 live conversations

27 blogs, 5 features, 10 wall murals

BLOGS & FEATURES

PODCASTS

2-part series with over 5,500 combined views

MORE INFORMATION



SCAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

These stories are the product of a collaborative effort by the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) Kenya alliance partners and implementing partners, who came together during the write-shop coordinated by ALIN, to co-develop narratives grounded in experiences during the programme and guided by community-driven change. Individuals from each organisation brought their time, insights, and storytelling expertise to ensure these stories are authentic, inclusive, and impactful.

Their contributions, from identifying storytellers and shaping narratives to refining themes and messages, reflect the true spirit of the VCA programme, which is: co-creation, mutual learning, and collective action. These stories demonstrate the dedication of everyone involved in amplifying local voices and advancing climate justice across Kenya. Thank you to all Kenya partners for making this a truly shared journey.

