

National Preparatory Workshop for Desertification in Kenya



Group photo during National Preparatory Workshop for Desertification in Kenya, September 2025

Organized by:
Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Kenya
at
Sportsman's Arm Hotel, Nanyuki.
Date: 16th-18th September 2025.



Executive Summary

The National Preparatory Desertification Workshop was held from 16th to 18th September 2025 at the Sportsman's Arms Hotel in Nanyuki, bringing together civil society organizations, government agencies, county representatives, academia, development partners, and grassroots communities. The workshop sought to consolidate evidence, policy perspectives, and local experiences in preparation for Kenya's participation in the UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia and Désertif'actions 2026 in Tunisia. Under the theme *"Strengthening Civil Society Participation in Combating Desertification, Land Degradation, and Drought in Kenya,"* the forum provided a platform for dialogue, learning, and joint planning around pressing challenges of desertification and drought, which disproportionately affect arid and semi-arid lands.

The opening session featured presentations from PELUM Kenya, IUCN, NEMA, Egerton University, and county officials, highlighting the urgency of inclusive policies, indigenous knowledge integration, and stronger community participation in environmental governance. A policy panel on Day One showcased strategies from Laikipia and Samburu Counties, the National Drought Management Authority, and the Permaculture Training Center, covering areas such as rangeland management legislation, early warning systems, climate change adaptation, and community-driven livelihood innovations. Day Two was dedicated to a field visit in Laikipia County, where participants observed practical community-led initiatives including sand dams, tree nurseries, kitchen gardens, beekeeping, and innovative uses of invasive species such as *Opuntia* for food and livestock feed. These experiences demonstrated the value of linking policy dialogue with local action and underscored the central role of women and youth in restoration and resilience.

On Day Three, Dr. Che Thoner Victorine of IUCN led an interactive session on agroecology for sustainable rangelands, emphasizing its potential as a transformative pathway for restoring degraded ecosystems while empowering communities politically and socially. Case studies from Baringo, Northern Kenya, and community cooperatives illustrated how agroecological practices are addressing soil erosion, strengthening land rights, enhancing food security, and turning challenges such as invasive species into economic opportunities. Group discussions further



explored policy influence, indigenous practices, and research gaps, while plenary reflections consolidated lessons learned. Participants agreed that community-led approaches remain the most sustainable, but stronger financing, inclusivity, localized research, education, and cross-sectoral partnerships are needed to scale solutions.

The workshop concluded with a strong call to action: to finalize and finance critical environmental policies, direct resources to the community level, build the capacity of women and youth, strengthen research and innovation in ASALs, and institutionalize environmental education. It reaffirmed that Kenya's fight against desertification and drought must be community-driven, inclusive, and adequately resourced. The outcomes of this workshop not only strengthen Kenya's preparedness for international platforms but also chart a practical roadmap for building resilient ecosystems and livelihoods at the national and county levels.



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ACRONYMS

- ✓ **ASALs** – Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
- ✓ **CBO** – Community-Based Organization
- ✓ **CIDP** – County Integrated Development Plan
- ✓ **COP** – Conference of the Parties
- ✓ **CSO** – Civil Society Organization
- ✓ **EMCA** – Environmental Management and Coordination Act
- ✓ **FMNR** – Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration
- ✓ **GIZ** – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Development Cooperation)
- ✓ **IUCN** – International Union for Conservation of Nature
- ✓ **IYRP** – International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists
- ✓ **KWS** – Kenya Wildlife Service
- ✓ **LPC** – Laikipia Permaculture Center
- ✓ **NDMA** – National Drought Management Authority
- ✓ **NEMA** – National Environment Management Authority
- ✓ **NGO** – Non-Governmental Organization
- ✓ **PELUM** – Participatory Ecological Land Use Management
- ✓ **SDGs** – Sustainable Development Goals
- ✓ **UNCCD** – United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
- ✓ **UNCBD** – United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
- ✓ **UNFCCC** – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- ✓ **WRA** – Water Resources Authority
- ✓ **WSTF** – Water Sector Trust Fund



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The National Preparatory Desertification Workshop was held from 16th – 18th September 2025 at the Sportsman’s Arms Hotel, Nanyuki. The workshop brought together civil society organizations, government representatives, development partners, and community actors to deliberate on the pressing challenges of desertification, land degradation, and drought in Kenya.

The session commenced with a word of prayer, followed by a welcome from Mr. Jeff Kuhuho of PELUM Kenya, who officially opened the proceedings. He emphasized the importance of collective action and collaboration among stakeholders in addressing ecological challenges.

The theme of the workshop was:

Strengthening Civil Society Participation in Combating Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought in Kenya.

1.2 Objectives of the Workshop

The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- 1) Facilitate consultations between civil society organizations and rural communities on drought and desertification issues.
- 2) Gather evidence-based information for Kenya’s input into the UNCCD COP 17 (Mongolia) and Désertif’actions 2026 (Tunisia).
- 3) Identify actions implemented by rural and pastoral women and other stakeholders in combating desertification.
- 4) Promote dialogue between duty bearers and rights holders to develop practical solutions.



- 5) Develop policy recommendations and advocacy messages for both national and international platforms.

1.3 Opening Session Remarks

Several key presentations and speeches were made during the opening session:

- **Ms. Manei Naanyu, Head of Programmes, PELUM Kenya**
Introduced PELUM Kenya, its role in promoting agroecology and gender inclusion in women and youth programs, and outlined the workshop's objectives.
- **Dr. Che Thoner Victorine, IUCN**
Presented IUCN's work under the Forest and Grasslands Thematic Area, focusing on drylands, grasslands, and rangelands. She emphasized the need to bring visibility to these often-neglected ecosystems, which support vibrant communities and rich biodiversity.
- **Mr. Joseph Lentunyoi, Director, Laikipia Culture Center**
Welcomed participants from Kenya and abroad, highlighting his organization's efforts in ecosystem restoration through practical initiatives such as *half-moon swells*. He stressed the importance of social inclusion in land restoration and the need for genuine community ownership of projects.
- **Mr. Peter Putunoi, Representative of the office of Laikipia North MP**
Spoke on the main causes of desertification and reaffirmed government recognition of civil society's work. He announced upcoming initiatives such as the Seed Fair in Echipre County (14th–15th October) and called for stronger networking, partnerships, and linkages with community groups.
- **County Commissioner Mr. Leman (Samburu County)**
Officially opened the forum, commending the timeliness of the discussions and affirming government support for collaborative conservation efforts.
- **Representative of the Governor**
Delivered the Governor's remarks, acknowledging the Governor's absence due to discussions on conservancy and wildlife management bills. The speech welcomed participants and expressed a strong commitment to tackling desertification, land



degradation, and drought as urgent environmental and socio-economic challenges. It further underscored the role of women, rural communities, and multi-stakeholder dialogue in shaping sustainable solutions.

1.4 Presentations

1.4.1 PELUM Kenya

Presenter: Ms. Manei Naanyu, Head of Programmes

Title: Civil Society Participation in Combating Desertification

1. Introduction

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Kenya is a network of civil society organizations that promotes agroecology, sustainable land use, and participatory ecological land management. It supports communities and institutions through advocacy, training, and partnerships aimed at strengthening resilience against climate change, land degradation, and food insecurity.

2. Workshop Theme

Strengthening Civil Society Participation in Combating Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought in Kenya.

3. Specific Objectives

- ✓ Facilitate consultation between civil society organizations and rural communities.
- ✓ Gather evidence for Kenya's contribution to COP 17 and Désertif'actions 2026.
- ✓ Identify women's and stakeholders' actions in combating desertification.
- ✓ Promote dialogue for practical solutions.
- ✓ Develop advocacy messages for national and global platforms.

4. Expected Outcomes

- ✓ Documentation of strategies to strengthen resilience.
- ✓ Incorporation of women in decision-making.



- ✓ Analysis of agriculture, food systems, and resource management challenges.
- ✓ Evidence to strengthen Kenya's input at international forums.

5. Key Highlights

- ✓ The need for participatory, inclusive, and gender-responsive approaches.
- ✓ Integration of indigenous knowledge in biodiversity preservation.
- ✓ Role of CSOs in shaping policies and supporting communities.
- ✓ PELUM's commitment to ensuring grassroots voices influence the national and global desertification agenda.

1.4.2 NEMA

Presenter: Dr. Charles N. Lange, National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)

Presentation 1: Understanding the UNCCD Landscape

- **UNCCD Context:** One of the three Rio Conventions (alongside UNCBD and UNFCCC).
- **History:** Adopted in 1994; Kenya signed in 1994 and ratified in 1996.
- **Institutions:** COP, CST, CRIC, Secretariat, Global Mechanism, Evaluation Office.
- **UNCCD Strategic Framework (2018–2030):**
 - ✓ Restore ecosystems.
 - ✓ Improve livelihoods.
 - ✓ Build drought resilience.
 - ✓ Generate global environmental benefits.
 - ✓ Mobilize resources.
- **Kenya's LDN Targets:** Halt forest conversion, increase forest cover, improve productivity, rehabilitate degraded lands.
- **WDDD (World Desertification and Drought Day):** Kenya marks annually in ASAL counties with awareness campaigns and resilience activities.



Presentation 2: Desertification and Drought Outlook and Strategies

- **Global Outlook:** By 2019, over 75% of land degraded; deserts cover 15% of Earth, home to 144M people.
- **Regional Outlook:** Horn of Africa facing severe recurrent droughts.
- **Kenya's Outlook:** 90% of land degraded, 27% severely degraded, mostly ASALs; 2021–2022 drought worst in 40 years.
- **Impacts:** Food insecurity, livestock deaths, crop failures, wildlife losses, conflicts, hydropower decline.
- **Strategies:**
 - Ecosystem restoration (forests, wetlands, hills).
 - Sustainable agriculture and livestock systems.
 - Research and technology adoption.
 - Awareness creation.
 - Global dialogue, including a proposed drought protocol

1.4.3 Egerton University

Presenter: Dr. Clement Isaiah Lenachuru

Title: Nexus Between Climate Change and Desertification, and the Role of Rural/Indigenous Women in Mitigation & Resilience Building

Key Points:

1. **Climate Change as a Driver:** Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and extreme events accelerate degradation.
2. **Desertification as an Amplifier:** Degraded soils release carbon and worsen climate change.
3. **Feedback Loop:** Climate change and desertification reinforce one another, especially in ASALs.



4. **Human Dimensions:** Undermine food security, increase poverty, drive migration, and spark conflict.
5. **Role of Women:**
 - ✓ Natural resource managers (water, firewood, fodder).
 - ✓ Smallholder farmers sustaining biodiversity.
 - ✓ Leaders in governance and land rights advocacy.
 - ✓ Resilience builders through household management and savings groups.
6. **Global Policy Link:** Aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and the UNCCD Gender Action Plan.

1.4.4 GIZ Kenya

Presenter: Ms. Stephanie Mate

Title: Role of Rural and Pastoralist Women in Combating Desertification

Key Highlights:

1. **Land as a Lifeline:**
 - ✓ Land is the main production factor for rural and pastoralist households, sustaining livelihoods and food security.
 - ✓ However, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change are placing this resource at risk.
2. **Women's Contribution to Food Security:**
 - ✓ Women perform over 50% of agricultural work and hold rich traditional knowledge.
 - ✓ Equal access to productive resources could increase yields by 20–30%, reducing global hunger by 12–17%.
 - ✓ In Kenya, if women had equal access to land and inputs, yields could rise by 8%.



3. Empowerment and Resilience:

- ✓ Women's land ownership (e.g., in Tanzania) has shown positive effects on household food security.
- ✓ With equal rights and resources, women strengthen economic security and community resilience.

4. Practical Roles of Women in Combating Desertification:

- **Change Agents:** Mobilizing communities for land conservation, climate-smart agriculture, water harvesting (e.g., zai pits, water pans, tanks).
- **Enablers:** Engaging in alternative income-generating activities (beadwork, poultry, irrigation) to reduce pressure on land.
- **Custodians of Knowledge:** Preserving drought-resistant species, climatic knowledge, and traditional practices.
- **Land Managers:** Leading rotational grazing, controlled livestock movement, and household-level reforestation.
- **Community Leaders:** Participating in water user associations, community groups, and local governance structures.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Promoting energy-saving cookstoves, solar energy, and seed saving for biodiversity and food security.

5. Conclusion:

Women, though traditionally marginalized, are indispensable actors in sustainable land management. Their empowerment benefits entire households and communities, strengthens food security, and advances land restoration.



CHAPTER TWO

Policies and Practices for Combating Desertification

2.1 Introduction

This session took the form of a panel discussion moderated by Ms. Nancy Marangu. It provided an opportunity for counties, national agencies, and civil society organizations to share their policies, strategies, and on-the-ground practices in combating desertification, land degradation, and drought.

The panel emphasized:

1. The importance of aligning local initiatives with national frameworks.
2. Integration of indigenous knowledge into modern land management approaches.
3. Promotion of community ownership in restoration programs.
4. Building resilience in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs).

2.2 Panelists

2.2.1 Laikipia County – CEO for Environment

The Laikipia County Government has put in place several policy instruments to guide environmental conservation and land restoration.

Key Policy Instruments:

- **County Land Rehabilitation and Restoration Plan** – provides a framework for sustainable land use.
- **Forest Management Plan** – an eight-year strategy awaiting national government approval.



- **Laikipia County Climate Change Act** – already enacted to address climate resilience.
- Draft **Rangeland Management Bill** and **Wildlife Association Management Bill** – under development.

Practical Interventions:

- **Tree planting initiatives** in schools, household woodlots, and community campaigns.
- **Environmental committees** bringing together farmers, NGOs, CBOs, and stakeholders for planning and monitoring.
- **Youth engagement:**
 - ✓ School-based tree nurseries.
 - ✓ Conservation challenges under the “Green Economy” approach.
 - ✓ Awareness activities integrated into sports events like the *Governance Unity Cup*.

Observation: These initiatives combine environmental education with civic participation, ensuring continuity of restoration efforts.

2.2.2 Samburu County – Hon. Patrick Lekiman, CEC for Environment

Samburu County addresses land degradation through a community-based approach led by County Forest Associations (CFAs).

Key Approaches:

- Securing degraded land, fencing it, and allowing natural regeneration, leveraging the land as a natural seed bank.
- Budget allocation by the county government to support environmental conservation.
- Provision of incentives such as carbon credits, which generate income for communities and encourage long-term conservation.

Challenges Identified:



- Overgrazing.
- Charcoal production.
- Spread of invasive species.
- Conflicts over natural resources.

Indigenous Knowledge in Use:

- Communities apply traditional weather prediction methods based on environmental and animal behavior.
- Local plant species, such as acacia, have untapped potential for livestock nutrition and land rehabilitation.

Recommendations from Samburu County:

- Increase civic education on land management.
- Strengthen research on local resources.
- Enhance youth involvement in environmental initiatives.

2.2.3 National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) – Ms. Tiffany Kataka

The NDMA coordinates drought management across 23 arid and semi-arid counties in Kenya.

Framework:

- **Ending Drought Emergencies (EDE) Framework**, which focuses on six pillars:
 1. Peace and security.
 2. Human capital.
 3. Climate-proofed infrastructure.
 4. Drought risk management.
 5. Sustainable livelihoods.
 6. Institutional development.

Key Interventions:



- Operation of an early warning system monitoring vegetation, water, and climate conditions.
- Monthly production of drought bulletins.
- Support for contingency planning and implementation of emergency measures during severe drought.
- Resilience-building projects including:
 - Community water supply systems.
 - Drought-related conflict assessments.

Technology in Use:

- Satellite imagery and drones.
- Mobile applications for data collection and dissemination.
- A new mobile app (in development) to translate bulletins into local languages (e.g., Kikuyu, Maasai, Samburu) for accessibility.

Challenges:

- Heavy reliance on donor support, particularly from the European Union.
- Limited government funding, which mainly covers staff salaries and operational costs.

Sustainability Measures:

- Training communities.
- Handing over completed projects to well-structured community groups for long-term management.

2.2.4 Permaculture Training Center – Mr. Joseph Lentunyoi

The Permaculture Training Center shared its practical ecosystem restoration work in Laikipia and surrounding regions.



Key Initiatives:

- **Water harvesting structures:** Sand dams and catchment systems to support livestock, irrigation, and erosion control.
- **Livelihood diversification:**
 - ✓ Beekeeping and honey production.
 - ✓ Aloe vera farming for cosmetic and medicinal products (with licenses from KWS).
 - ✓ Innovative use of cactus (Opuntia) to produce juice, animal feed, and handicrafts.
- **Kitchen gardens:** Enhancing household food security and nutrition, with a focus on empowering women.
- **Advocacy and Policy Engagement:** Active through networks such as PELUM Kenya, promoting county-level agroecology policies for sustainable land use.

Key Message from Mr. Joseph:

Partnerships with county governments, NDMA, and CSOs are essential to scale up and sustain restoration efforts.

2.3 Synthesis of the Panel Discussion

The panel discussion highlighted that although each institution operates within its own mandate, common ground exists in their approaches to combating desertification, land degradation, and drought.

Emerging Themes:

1. **Community Ownership and Participation** – Effective and sustainable solutions depend on the involvement of local communities.



2. **Integration of Indigenous Knowledge** – Traditional practices such as weather prediction, rotational grazing, and natural regeneration are invaluable when combined with modern science.
3. **Partnerships and Collaboration** – Strong linkages between counties, national agencies, CSOs, and communities are crucial for scaling up land restoration efforts.



Panel discussion on Day 1 featuring representatives from PELUM Kenya, IUCN, County

The collective insights from Laikipia County, Samburu County, NDMA, and the Permaculture Training Center show that effective solutions require a combination of policy frameworks, practical interventions, and inclusive participation. Special attention must be given to women and youth, who are emerging as critical actors in environmental stewardship.



CHAPTER THREE

Field Visit and Practical Demonstrations

3.1 Introduction

The second day of the National Preparatory Desertification Workshop (17th September 2025) was dedicated to a field visit in Laikipia County.

Objective of the Visit:

- To provide participants with practical exposure to community-led initiatives addressing land degradation, water scarcity, and livelihood challenges in dryland ecosystems.
- To enable direct interaction with local groups, observation of restoration practices, and discussions on both achievements and challenges.
- To link policy dialogue from Day One to real-world community experiences.

3.2 Laikipia Permaculture Center (LPC)

Established in 2014, LPC works closely with agro-pastoral communities to promote sustainable land use, ecological restoration, and climate resilience. It currently supports approximately 22 groups across Laikipia and neighboring areas.

Mission: To enhance community adaptive capacity to climate change by combining permaculture principles with practical livelihood initiatives.

Key Areas of Focus:

1. Ecosystem Restoration and Water Access

- Construction of sand dams.
- Soil conservation measures.
- Sustainable farming systems to restore degraded landscapes.



2. Tree Nurseries

- Establishment and management of nurseries.
- Supply of indigenous and fruit seedlings to schools, households, and community woodlots for reforestation and agroforestry.

3. Value Addition Enterprises

- Beekeeping and honey processing from naturally growing acacia trees.
- Moringa farming and processing into powder as a nutritious supplement for drylands.
- Aloe products developed in partnership with KWS under propagation licenses (cosmetic and medicinal products).
- Innovative use of invasive species (Opuntia), processed into jam, juice, and wine.

Observation: LPC demonstrates how local natural resources can be **transformed into profitable products** while simultaneously promoting ecological restoration.

Key Need Identified: Support for upscaling these initiatives to reach more communities in Kenya's drylands.





3.3 Rapunye Women's Group

The Rapunye Women's Group, represented by its secretary, showcased the role of women in cultural preservation, conservation, and livelihood improvement.

Key Initiatives:

1. **Sand Dams** – Construction of large concrete dams across valleys to harvest water, reduce erosion, and recharge shallow wells.
2. **Soil Fertility Enhancement** – Promotion of organic amendments and soil restoration practices.
3. **Climate Adaptation Measures** – Sundams, semicircular bunds, and fertility improvement for degraded land.
4. **Human–Wildlife Conflict Mitigation** – Establishment of an “Elephant B Fence” to minimize crop destruction by elephants.

Observation: The group demonstrates how women act as change agents in linking cultural identity, climate adaptation, and land restoration. Their leadership has significantly improved water access and strengthened community resilience.



Rapunye Women's Group demonstrating conservation practices, including sand dams and zai pits



3.4 Dupoto Bees Cooperative

The Dupoto Bees Cooperative Society, led by Mr. James Masayne, brings together over 400 members across 24 working groups in the Mukokodo landscape. It collaborates with the Community Forest Association (CFA) to manage and protect forests while advancing innovative livelihood and restoration projects.

Key Initiatives:

- Beekeeping and honey production with marketing partnerships.
- Pellet production from Opuntia, turning invasive plants into animal feed.
- Biogas initiatives, converting cow dung into clean household energy.
- Partnerships with LPC and other organizations to strengthen production, marketing, and conservation outcomes.

Challenges Identified:

- Lack of pelleting machines for Opuntia feed production.
- Financial limitations restricting the scale-up of cooperative activities.

Observation: Dupoto illustrates the power of cooperatives in mobilizing communities for ecological restoration and diversified livelihoods. However, greater investment in technology and financing is required.



Dupoto Bees Cooperative demonstrating agroecology practices



3.5 Indigenous Women and Children Organization

Presented by Mr. Peter Putunoi, this community-based initiative focuses on empowering women and children through small-scale agroecology.

Key Initiatives:

- Establishment of kitchen gardens and small farms incorporating indigenous and fruit trees.
- Agroecological training to build community capacity for sustainable practices.
- Restoration impact: Areas under cultivation showed reduced invasion of *Opuntia* compared to surrounding landscapes, demonstrating agroecology's effectiveness.

Challenge Identified: There is a need for greater training and capacity building to strengthen adoption of agroecological practices at the household level.

Observation: The initiative proves that small, household-level actions, when replicated widely, can significantly contribute to land restoration, food security, and women's empowerment.

3.6 Synthesis of the Field Visit Day

The Laikipia field visit connected policy discussions from the workshop with community-led actions. While each site showcased unique approaches, several common threads emerged:

1. **Value Addition and Innovation** – Communities are transforming local and invasive resources such as acacia, moringa, aloe, and *Opuntia* into profitable products that simultaneously restore ecosystems.
2. **Water Security as a Foundation** – Sand dams, sundams, and water harvesting systems are central to resilience by ensuring water for households, livestock, and agriculture.
3. **Role of Women and Youth** – Women's groups and youth networks lead in conservation, cultural preservation, and livelihood diversification, proving indispensable in restoration.



4. **Community Ownership and Partnerships** – Grassroots cooperatives and organizations demonstrate that lasting change requires local ownership supported by partnerships with county governments, CSOs, and development partners.
5. **Persistent Challenges** – Despite successes, gaps remain in financing, access to technology, and agroecological training, limiting the scaling of successful models.



Mr. Peter Putunoi, representing the County Government, engaging with participants at the demonstration farm and highlighting the role of kitchen gardens and agroecological farming in building community resilience.

3.5 Conclusion

The field visit reaffirmed that empowering communities with the right tools, skills, and partnerships is essential to combating desertification and building resilience in Kenya's drylands.



CHAPTER FOUR

Agroecology for Sustainable Rangelands

4.1 Introduction

The third day of the National Preparatory Desertification Workshop began with an interactive presentation by Dr. Che Thoner Victorine (IUCN) on *Agroecology for Sustainable Rangelands*.

Dr. Victorine emphasized a collaborative learning approach, encouraging participants to share their experiences instead of passively receiving information. She highlighted that drylands, which cover nearly half of Africa's surface, are not empty spaces but ecosystems rich in biodiversity and home to vibrant pastoralist communities with deep traditional knowledge.

Agroecology was presented as a transformative pathway for:

1. Restoring rangelands and degraded ecosystems.
2. Empowering communities through inclusion in governance, advocacy, and political processes.
3. Building food security, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience.

The session was divided into two blocks:

- **Block 1:** *Learning from Practice – Case Studies* (community applications of agroecology).
- **Block 2:** *Creating Conditions for Scaling Agroecology* (policies, financing, and governance).

Dr. Victorine urged participants to seize the momentum of the *International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP)* as a flagship initiative for *COP17 in Mongolia*, to elevate the visibility of rangelands and pastoralists globally.



4.2 Block 1: Learning from Practice – Case Studies

4.2.1 Case Study 1: Indigenous Children Associative – Baringo (Presenter: Ms. Monica Etor)

- **Context:** Baringo faces severe ecological challenges including recurrent floods, the 2022 drought, soil erosion, and swelling lakes displacing communities.
- **Approach:**
 - Promotion of sustainable farming practices and use of traditional wisdom.
 - Techniques such as *earth wounds*, *half-moons*, and *zai pits* to control erosion and improve land productivity.
- **Advocacy:** Ms. Etor criticized the government's tree-planting campaigns for neglecting drylands and pastoralist regions, perpetuating their marginalization.
- **Key Point:** Community training and financial support are essential to strengthen agroecological resilience in Baringo.

4.2.2 Case Study 2: IMPACT (Movement for Advancement and Conflict Transformation) – Northern Kenya

- **Focus:** Securing community land rights as the foundation for sustainable rangeland management.
- **Achievements:**
 - ✓ Engagement of over 40 communities, with about 30 formally registered.
 - ✓ Communities manage tens of thousands of acres through rangeland management plans.
 - ✓ Integration of indigenous knowledge such as traditional weather forecasting and semi-circular bunds.
- **Peacebuilding Dimension:** Peace and conflict resolution are treated as prerequisites for successful ecological restoration in conflict-prone drylands.
- **Partnerships:**



- ✓ Collaboration with the National Land Commission on policy.
- ✓ Support for women's groups, teacher-led gardening, and applied research to align with community needs.

4.2.3 Case Study 3: Community-Based Development Organization – Water Security and Agroecology(presenter:Benson Masila)

- **Focus:** Community-driven water security and agroecology initiatives.
- **Achievements:**
 - Establishment of over 1,800 sand dams.
 - Formation of solidarity groups practicing organic farming, establishing tree nurseries, and creating kitchen gardens for year-round food supply.
- **Nature-Based Solutions:** Used to restore degraded lands.
- **Women's Empowerment:** Introduction of grass seed banks, which regenerate ecosystems while providing income from seed sales.

4.3 Key Lessons and Recommendations from the Case Studies

From the three case studies, several important lessons emerged:

1. **Direct Funding to Communities:** Effective solutions are locally driven, yet communities lack direct access to resources. Decentralized funding would accelerate impact.
2. **Indigenous Knowledge as a Resource:** Traditional methods such as *zai pits*, *semi-circular bunds*, and *local weather forecasting* remain invaluable and must be integrated into formal programs.
3. **Innovative Management of Invasive Species:** Communities are transforming *Opuntia* into livestock feed, juice, wine, and gel. Scaling requires research investment and pelleting technology.
4. **Women and Youth as Agents of Change:** Women's groups are central to restoration, food security, and water management, necessitating gender-responsive policies.



5. **Policy and Governance Gaps:** Challenges of land tenure and the marginalization of drylands remain barriers to scaling agroecology.

Overall Message: Agroecology is more than an ecological solution—it is a platform for empowerment, equity, and resilience. By channeling resources directly to communities and addressing systemic barriers, grassroots innovations can be scaled to transform Kenya’s rangelands.

4.4 Block 2: Creating Conditions for Scaling Agroecology

This section examined the policies, financing mechanisms, and governance systems required to expand agroecological approaches.

Key themes included:

1. The International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) as a flagship initiative for COP17 in Mongolia.
2. The need for enabling policies that formally integrate agroecology into county and national frameworks.
3. Innovative financing models to reduce reliance on donors and build long-term sustainability.
4. Strengthening multi-level governance systems that elevate the role of communities, women, and youth in decision-making.

Introduction by Dr. Che Thoner Victorine

Dr. Che Thoner Victorine guided participants into a reflection session, encouraging them to share opportunities, challenges, and recommendations drawn from the field experiences. She reminded everyone that no idea is too small or insignificant—each contribution can influence broader advocacy efforts. She emphasized that IUCN, as part of the Technical Committee of the UNCCD COP, will use such community-driven recommendations in policy spaces, including a side event on agroecology.



She stressed that the reflection process is collective and inclusive: “No idea is too small. No idea is a bad idea. You never know where it might lead.”

Participant Reflections

1. Hosea

- ✓ **Opportunity:** Direct financing to communities can unlock locally-led solutions.
- ✓ **Challenge:** Funds are often centralized, with little reaching grassroots actors despite their proven innovations.
- ✓ **Recommendation:** Advocate for direct funding flows to communities to enable them to implement and expand their own solutions.

2. Myson

- ✓ **Opportunity:** Communities are turning invasive species (e.g., cactus) into resources such as livestock feed.
- ✓ **Challenge:** Scaling up is hindered by lack of financing, research support, and critical machinery (e.g., pelletizers).
- ✓ **Recommendation:** Support research and technology investment to upscale invasive species utilization, thereby strengthening climate resilience and livelihoods.

3. Third Participant

- ✓ **Opportunity:** Communities already hold knowledge and skills to address land degradation, herbicide misuse, invasive species, and livelihood resilience.
- ✓ **Challenge:** Current efforts remain small-scale, limiting their overall impact.
- ✓ **Recommendation:** Provide technical and financial support to scale up community innovations (e.g., jam, wine, and other products from invasive species) for broader restoration and adaptation outcomes.

Closing Reflections by Dr. Che Thoner Victorine



In concluding the session, Dr. Che Thoner Victorine highlighted the risks of hidden agendas among organizations and negotiators that may not align with community priorities. She called for synergy and honest collaboration, centered on shared values rather than competing interests.

She emphasized that agroecology is a transformative pathway because it:

- Brings life and humanity into practice and policy.
- Ensures social inclusion, where even the most excluded can find a place.
- Creates space for all stakeholders—negotiators, researchers, policymakers, communities, CBOs, CSOs, and international organizations—to participate meaningfully.

Dr. Che Thoner Victorine raised critical questions about rules of engagement:

- Who defines them?
- Who manages them?
- How can they ensure fairness, dignity, and value for every stakeholder?

She closed by urging participants to use these reflections not only to guide local actions but also to shape advocacy in regional and global policy spaces.

Table 1: Summary of Opportunities, Challenges, and Recommendations

Opportunities	Challenges	Recommendations
Direct financing can empower communities to lead solutions.	Funds remain centralized and rarely reach grassroots actors.	Advocate for direct funding to communities.
Communities innovate by using invasive species (e.g., cactus) for livestock feed and other products.	Lack of financing, machinery, and research support to scale these initiatives.	Invest in research, tools, and upscaling invasive species utilization.



Communities already hold practical solutions to degradation, invasive species, and resilient livelihoods.	Initiatives remain small-scale with limited impact.	Provide technical and financial support to expand community-led solutions.
Agroecology promotes inclusion and shared humanity.	Hidden agendas among stakeholders can undermine synergy.	Establish clear, fair rules of engagement to ensure dignity and equal participation.



CHAPTER 5:

Group Discussions and Plenary Synthesis

5.1 Introduction

The third day of the workshop featured intensive group discussions followed by plenary reflections. Participants were divided into three thematic groups focusing on policy influence, indigenous practices, and research gaps. The outcomes were then presented in plenary, where lessons were drawn, questions raised, and a collective way forward identified.

5.2 Group Discussions

Table 2: Group 1: Key Policies to Influence in Kenya to Combat Desertification

Policy / Area	Action Points	Responsibility	Timeline
Agroecology Policy	Draft a bill and pilot in pastoral counties	PELUM, Laikipia & Marsabit Counties	1 year
Kenya Rangeland Management Policy (Draft)	Finalize the policy, validate through public participation	PELUM, IUCN	Ongoing
EMCA (1999, rev. 2015)	Strengthen effective implementation; consider revision	NEMA, MoE	Continuous
National Water Policy (2021) & Water Act (2016)	Enhance implementation at county level	WRA, WSTF, County Governments	Continuous
Kenya Climate Change Act (2016) & NCCAP II	Ensure inclusive participation in updates	PELUM, CSOs	Ongoing



Cross-cutting	Secure budget allocations, integrate CIDPs, champion indigenous knowledge	CSOs, County Governments	Continuous
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Table 3: Group 2: Inclusive Indigenous Practices to Combat Desertification

Practice	Actors	Where
Tree nurseries & afforestation	Youth and women groups	Community lands & farms
School environmental clubs	Teachers, CBOs	Schools
Community awareness forums (barazas)	CSOs, leaders, elders	Community
Inclusive decision-making	NRM committees, CBOs	Local committees
Alternative livelihoods (beekeeping, poultry, biogas)	CSOs, local farmers	Community
Indigenous rangeland management (rotational grazing)	Grazing committees	Rangelands
Training in organic farming & IPM	Ministry of Agriculture, CSOs	Community & schools
Agroecology field days & exchanges	CSOs, farmers	Community & national
Water harvesting (sand dams, catchments, rooftop)	Ministry of Water, CSOs, NEMA	Rangelands & settlements
Gully rehabilitation (gabions, grasses)	Communities, schools	Landscapes
Cross-community exchanges	Multi-sectoral stakeholders	Regional
Agroforestry enterprises	Farmers, cooperatives	Farms & agroforestry plots
Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)	Farmers, CSOs	Degraded lands



Table 4: Group 3: Research Gaps and Solutions in ASALs

Research Gap	Proposed Solutions
Insufficient funds for ASAL research	Re-prioritize national & county budgets; flexible donor funding; community-driven research
Weak monitoring & planning systems	Standardize methods; involve communities; set up regional monitoring stations
Lack of cultural sensitivity	Integrate songs, rituals, indigenous knowledge into research processes
Weak dissemination due to literacy/language barriers	Simplify findings in local languages; produce action-oriented outputs
Poor integration of local knowledge	Hybrid models combining modern & traditional practices; community knowledge-sharing platforms
Idle/unimplemented research	Harmonize outputs; digitize research for access
Low technological adoption	Develop low-cost, user-friendly tools; devolve labs (e.g., soil testing); promote local innovations



Panel discussion and group work session during the National Preparatory Workshop, fostering dialogue and joint reflections among participants.



5.3 Plenary Discussions

After the group presentations, a plenary session consolidated insights, providing space for reflection, questions, and joint recommendations.

5.3.1 Lessons Learned

1. Community-led approaches are sustainable – Indigenous practices (rotational grazing, sand dams, FMNR) are effective and scalable.
2. Policy without financing is ineffective – Policies must be backed with dedicated budgets.
3. Inclusivity is critical – Women, youth, and marginalized groups ensure ownership and sustainability.
4. Research must be localized – Community-driven and culture-sensitive research enhances relevance.
5. Education is vital – Schools and clubs are long-term platforms for resilience building.
6. Innovation can turn challenges into opportunities – Opuntia and other invasive species can be transformed into resources.
7. Partnerships enhance impact – Collaboration across government, CSOs, NGOs, and communities is essential.

5.3.2 Questions and Responses

Table 5: Questions and Responses

Question from Participants	Response / Key Takeaway
How can youth engagement go beyond tree planting?	Through eco-entrepreneurship (beekeeping, aquaculture, eco-tourism) and governance roles (e.g., grazing committees).
Why do policies exist but fail to deliver?	Weak funding and community awareness hinder implementation; budget advocacy is needed.
How can indigenous knowledge be harmonized with science?	By hybrid models that combine rotational grazing, weather prediction, and agroecology with scientific methods.



What threatens project sustainability post-donor funding?	Lack of ownership; sustainability requires cooperatives, income-generating activities, and community training.
Can Opuntia really become an economic resource?	Yes — communities are producing feed, juice, wine, gel, and handicrafts; scaling needs research and equipment.
How can women's role in restoration be strengthened?	By improving access to resources, leadership roles, and supporting women-led conservation groups.

5.3.3 Way Forward

1. **Policy Advocacy** – Push for finalization and funding of key policies (Agroecology, Rangeland, Climate Change).
2. **Community Empowerment** – Direct funds and resources to communities to strengthen ownership.
3. **Capacity Building** – Train women, youth, and CBOs in agroecology, land restoration, and eco-enterprises.
4. **Research and Innovation** – Invest in localized, indigenous-driven research and scalable innovations.
5. **Partnerships** – Foster strong linkages between CSOs, governments, academia, and development partners.
6. **Awareness and Education** – Institutionalize environmental education in schools and enhance community sensitization forums

Closing remarks

Mr. Manei Naanyu from PELUM Kenya thanked all participants, partners, and donors for their active engagement and contributions to the success of the workshop.

Finally, Mr. Peter Putunoi, representing the County Government, officially declared the workshop closed. The outcomes of the workshop will guide future collaborative actions and continued stakeholder engagement at county, national, and international levels.



APPENDICES

Appendices 1: Program

Day 1: Wednesday, 17th September 2025

Time	Session	Facilitator/Speaker	Notes
08:00am – 08:30am	Arrival and Registration	Mr. Benson Isohe, PELUM Kenya	
08:30am – 09:30am	Introductions, Welcoming Remarks	Ms. Masnei Nanyui, PELUM Kenya	Official opening by His Excellency, Joshua Irungu, EGII, Governor, Laikipia County
09:30am – 10:00am	Understanding the UNCCD landscape	Mr. Charles Lange, Vice Chair in Kenya UNCCD	Facilitator: Mr. Jeff Kahubo, PELUM Kenya
10:00am – 10:30am	Description, Drought Outlook, and strategies in combating desertification	Ms. Lilian Tarana, Environment Officer, NEMA	Facilitator: Mr. Jeff Kahubo, PELUM Kenya
10:30am – 11:00am	Plenary and feedback session	Mr. Benson Isohe, PELUM Kenya	
11:00am – 11:30am	Health and Networking Break		
11:30am – 12:00pm	Agroecology for sustainable rangelands	Dr. Che Thonar Victorine, IUCN	

Day 2: Wednesday, 17th September 2025



Time	Session	Facilitator/Speaker
8:30am - 9:00am	Departure for field visit - LPCT (Dupoto bees cooperative and Raptunye women group) and LPC	Mr. Joseph Lentunyoi, LPC
12:00pm - 12:30pm	Emerging threats in the rangelands and the impacts of livelihoods and ecosystem stability amidst climate change threats	Facilitator: Ms. Monica Yator, IWGI Speaker: Dr. Oscar Koech, University of Nairobi
12:30pm - 1:00pm	Plenary feedback session	Ms. Monica Yator, IWGI
1:00pm - 2:00pm	Lunch	
2:00pm - 3:00pm	Panel Discussion 1 - Policies and practices for combating desertification	Facilitator: Ms. Nancy Marango, Chemichemi Foundation Panelists: Mr. Kimoiy Isaack, Mr. Joseph Lentunyoi, Hon. Patrick Lekimain, Hon. Richard Tamar, Hon. Leah Njeri, Mr. Liban Golicha
3:00pm - 4:00pm	Plenary feedback session	Brigid Tarus, PHDP
4:00pm - 5:00pm	Health and Networking Break	

Day 3: Thursday, 18th September 2025

Time	Session	Facilitator/Speaker
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8:30am - 9:00am	Recap and field visit feedback	Benson Isohe, PELUM Kenya
9:00am - 9:30am	Rural and pastoral women role in combating desertification	Facilitator: Benson Isohe, PELUM Kenya Speaker: Ms. Stephanie Mate, GIZ Kenya
9:30am - 10:00am	Nexus between climate change and desertification, and the role of rural/indigenous women in resilience building	Facilitator: Benson Isohe, PELUM Kenya Speaker: Dr. Clement Lenachuru, Director, Baringo Women and Youth

Time	Session	Facilitator/Speaker
10:00am - 10:30am	Health and Networking Break	
10:30am - 11:30am	Panel Discussion: Gender roles in combating desertification	Facilitator: Dr. Che Thoner Victorine, IUCN Panelists: Ms. Jackline Merinyi, Ms. Puce Mursaine, Ms. Joyce Chumwaria, Mr. Henry Chepyeon, Mr. Patrick Tolei, Ms. Monica Yator, Ms. Nabat Eplangei
11:30am - 12:00pm	Plenary feedback session	Dr. Che Thoner Victorine, IUCN



12:30pm - 1:00pm	Group work on action planning	Ms. Masnei Nanyui, PELUM Kenya
1:00pm - 2:00pm	Lunch Break	
2:00pm - 3:00pm	Plenary reporting back	Mr. Jeff Kahubo, PELUM Kenya
3:00pm - 3:30pm	Closing Remarks (Includes a handwritten note for "Plenary reporting by")	Mr. Jeff Kahubo, PELUM Kenya Mr. Joseph Lentunyoi, LPC/PELUM Kenya Board Member
3:30pm - 4:00pm	Health Break and end of the workshop	



Appendices 2: List of Participants

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Women Empowerment for Resilient Rural Areas (WE4R)
PARTICIPANTS LIST-CONFERENCE

Date: 16.09.2025

Event: National Preparatory Workshop on Desertification
Ven Sportsmans Arm Hotel-Nanyuki

No.	Full Names	M/F	Age (18-34)/(41-55)	Organisation	Telephone	Email Address	Signature
1	Joseph Kasera	M	+35	Ularumata Community Concerns	0713634796	skital84@gmail.com	
2	Monica -lato	F	+35	IWAI	0722577326	mjato15@gmail.com	
3	Peter P. Putina	M	+35	Office of the MP	0722514975	kempukon@gmail.com	
4	Diba T. Roba	M	+35	CRDD	072224679	dibash12@gmail.com	
5	Mariage Nany	F	+35	Chemchem Foundation	0736785923	mariage.chemchem.foundation@gmail.com	
6	Soy G. Thuranis	F	+35	Soy winners	0723369972	lgaliu16@gmail.com	
7	Dr. Ernest Lucham	M	+35	BWD	0727101753	elucham12@gmail.com	
8	Patrick Leresi	M	+35	IMPACT Kenya	0721153572	Plereri@impactkenya.org	
9	Sajila Parits	F	7	IMPACT	0704577283	psajila@impactkenya.org	
10	Bridget Janus	F	7	PHDP	0716069582	bridgetjanus@gmail.com	

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No.	Full Names	M/F	Age (18-34/A/+35)	Organisation	Telephone	Email Address	Signature
11	Benson Mwila	M	+35	UWO	0723308722	benson.mwila@gmail.com	[Signature]
12	GIULIA GIANELLI	F	+35	IPSIA	0792789185	giulia.gianelli@ipsia-bcl.it	[Signature]
12	Susan Jepkoroi	F	+35	BCCA	0721481467	susajepkoroi@gmail.com	[Signature]
14	Elina Mwangi	M	+35	UCN	0710174948	elina.mwangi@ucn.org	[Signature]
15	Joseph Lutyanyi	M	+35	LPCT	0727845123	mtunyidi@gmail.com	[Signature]
16	Kandager Hasea	M	+35	MIDP	0720495628	hasea.kandager@midpkenya.org	[Signature]
17	Mary Mwangi	F	Y	Reporteur	0725761579	mary.mwangi23@gmail.com	[Signature]
18	Susan Wanjiru	F	+35	RIDEP	0721339132	wanjiru.susan@gmail.com	[Signature]
19	Hezban Sapur	M	+35	N.I.A	0720460650	hezban@makengya.org	[Signature]
20	Petrick Lekemsa	M	+35	SCA	0799242413	Plekumsinzi12@gmail.com	[Signature]

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Verified and confirmed by: Name _____

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Date: 16.09.2025

No.	Full Names	M/F	Age (18-34/A/+35)	Organisation	Telephone	Email Address	Signature
21	Victorine Che Thioner	F		UCN		victorine.chethioner@gmail.com	[Signature]
22	CAROLINE OUKO	F	A	CETRAD	0714476686	C.Ouko@ctrad.org	[Signature]
23	James Mwangi	M	Y	APAD	0711764350	james.mwangi@apadkenya.org	[Signature]
24	Esther Lokui	F	A	Agribet Women Group	0711865985		[Signature]
25	Agnes Larpei	F	Y	Rapany Women Group	0798910864		[Signature]
26	JAMES MASAINA	M	Y	DUPOTO	070606269	james.masaina89@gmail.com	[Signature]
27	John Nduabugu	M	A	C.G.L.	0722509817	john.nduabugu@gmail.com	[Signature]
28	JAMES MUGAMBI	M	A	EDUC KENYA	0724057259	james.mugambi@educKenya.org	[Signature]
29	Stephen Nury	M	A	Lakipia Community	0701259877	stephen.nury@gmail.com	[Signature]
30	ABDUR GALMA	M	A	UCN	0715290926	ambr.abul@ucn.org	[Signature]

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Verified and confirmed by: Name _____

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No.	Full Names	M/F	Age Y(18-34)/A(+35)	Organisation	Telephone	Email Address	Signature
31	Lipon Golicha	M	A	PARAAN	0725016982	libangolicha@yahoo.com	
32	Charles Lange	M	A	NEMA	0722841924	Nzavizool@yahoo.com	
33	John Kiplangat	M	A	Tharaka University	0725444716	John.kiplangat@tharaka.ac.ke	
34	Tiffany Htwiga	F	A	MBMA	0726985596	tiffany.gotakae@gmail.com	
35	Abub Boru shorano	M	A	Food Cite Hwanga	0721326924	ashwano@fhw.org	
36	Michael Mwaniki	M	A	Media	0721839582	micromwaniki@gmail.com	
37	Zakaria Muriuki	M	A	Media	0728757577	kapstadmedia@gmail.com	
38	Jeff Laluh	M	A	PELUM	0720777700	calwagale@yahoo.com	
39	Benson Doka	M	A	PELUM	0714541575	Bensonpehok@gmail.com	
40	John Mwangi	M	A	Media	0716949450	imwangi4@gmail.com	

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Signature..... Date:.....

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