Assigning Value to Nature

The Inaugural East Africa Transboundary Ecosystems Journalists’ Conference

The conference was supported by the East African Community (EAC), USAID Kenya and East Africa through the Conserving Natural Capital and Enhancing Collaborative Management of Transboundary Resources (CONNECT) project, Environmental Incentives and Internews.
The East African Region is endowed with several biological and natural resources including forests, water, minerals, fish, wildlife and soils, among others. The ecosystems support the livelihoods of a majority of people and are vital for socio-economic development. Despite these endowments, the region is also facing numerous environmental challenges that undermine efforts to improve the quality of life of citizens and attain sustainable development objectives. These include pollution, desertification, and deterioration of aquatic and fresh water ecosystems, climate change, deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Various initiatives in response to the above environmental challenges are being implemented at the local, national and regional levels. Through the East Africa Community (EAC) Treaty, Partner States recognize that a clean and healthy environment is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

In October 2021, The East African Community (EAC), IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Office (IUCN ESARO), WWF, TRAFFIC and Environmental Incentives (EI) in collaboration with Internews and USAID Kenya and East Africa, organized a four day media trip in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

The trip took place in the three countries concurrently from 25–28 October 2021, attracting participation of over 20 journalists from leading media houses in the region. The journalists visited key landscapes in the three countries to experience the value of transboundary natural resources and spoke to community members as well as various experts.

Objectives of the media trip

- Sensitize and increase awareness for media practitioners on how East Africa’s most iconic wildlife and habitats are inextricably linked to its people’s survival and well-being.

- Highlight the value of Natural Capital and its benefits to local communities and the economy in different part of East Africa.

- Promote the need to develop ways of recognizing and increasing the value of wildlife and our natural capital.

The discussions and feedback gathered during the media trip provides valuable direction for further collaboration among various stakeholders in the region that will empower media to have an active role in conservation of natural capital.
# Media participation by country

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>MEDIA HOUSE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Geoffrey Kamadi</td>
<td>Freelance Journalist</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Njagi</td>
<td>Mongabay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cynthia Nyamai</td>
<td>Joining as the main moderator for the trip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winnie Kamau</td>
<td>President Kenya Association of Freelance Journalists / Talk Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reuben motochi</td>
<td>Citizen TV (Based in Narok)</td>
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<td>George Sayagie</td>
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<td>Dan Kaburu</td>
<td>K24 TV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nzula Nzyoka</td>
<td>KBC/KNA</td>
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<td>Aghan Daniel</td>
<td>Media for Environment, Science, Health and Agriculture (MESHA)</td>
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<td><strong>TANZANIA</strong></td>
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<td>Zephania Ubwani</td>
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<td>Marc Nkwame</td>
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<td>Patty Magubira</td>
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<td>Edward Qorro</td>
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<td>Joyce Shebe</td>
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<td><strong>UGANDA</strong></td>
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<td>Amumpiire Bismac Moses</td>
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<td>Saad Shamim</td>
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<td>Olivia Nakalembe</td>
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<td>Ngabo Amon</td>
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<td>Ssebwami Javira</td>
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<td>Ezaruku Franklin Draku</td>
<td>Daily monitor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herman Maubania</td>
<td>Photogrpher</td>
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<td>Deo Wasswa</td>
<td>Capital FM</td>
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*Journalists speak with members of Kabukwiri reformed poachers' group in Rubirizi District - Pictures Herman Maubania*
**Thematic areas during the media trip**

**Kenya**

**Conservancies and Agriculture**

Conservancies are a recognized conservation success story. While many challenges remain, conservancies contribute to strengthening communities’ rights, voice and stewardship of the wildlife on which they depend for their livelihoods and cultures.

The East Africa region including Kenya, needs climate-friendly agriculture production to improve yields while feeding a growing population within resource boundaries. This involves a) enhancing agrobiodiversity and redirecting some hectarage towards new or less farmed crops, and b) promoting climate-smart agricultural production including regenerative practices and community-led localised solutions.

The team in Kenya visited various sites as shown below:

**Tree seedling venture supported by the Mara River WRUA in Mulot.**
- Paul Rono, the Secretary Mara River Water Users Forum spoke on the work they do with communities and the linkages between economy, environment and wildlife.

**Enongishu Conservancy**
- Visit to the Enongishu Holistic rangeland management training centre - Manager Rebekah Karimi elaborated on the
impact of climate change on their work. She also spoke about their economic model and how communities are benefiting from wildlife and livestock in the conservancy.

- At one of the holistic rangeland management sites, the team met local herders who explained the tactics they are using to reduce human wildlife conflict and improve grassland productivity.

**Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA)**

- Discussion on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on tourism and the conservancies’ responses
- CEO- Mr Daniel Sopia explained the conservancy models used by its members and their economic models.

**Oloisukut Conservancy**

- David Kinanta, Oloisukut Manager explained the conservancy model and the different revenue streams they work with.
- David also talked about the livestock programme, their planned grazing and holistic management systems they have in place.
- Komoni Ologisoi, a Maasai lady talked about the conservancy apiary an initiative that is driven by the women in the community as an alternative source of income.
- The group conducted some water quality sampling to understand river health and to highlight the interconnectivity within the landscape.

**POST TRIP OUTPUTS**

The media team managed to produce a number of stories as shown below:

1. **NTV - Maasai Mara herders find innovative way to keep hungry lions at bay**
2. **Nation Newspaper - Maasai Mara herders find innovative way to keep hungry lions at bay**
3. **Nation Newspaper - East Africa’s natural capital faces grave future**
4. **KBC - Conservancies benefit by involving local communities and women in conservation efforts**
5. **Citizen TV - Upanzi wa miti wafanyika kuhifadhi msitu wa Maasai Mau**
6. **Inooro TV - Gikundi kimwe na aikari kühanda miungurwa ya miti ñitiganite mútitü-ini wa Mau, Narok**
7. **Inooro TV - Atumia 160 kühimbìria ürimi wa njüki, Narok**

![Journalists interview Mr. Daniel Sopia during the media trip - Picture Anthony Diang’a](image)

![Team Kenya visit to the Maasai Mara during the media trip - Picture Anthony Diang’a](image)
The Great East African Plains supports some of the highest density and most diverse large herbivores on earth, as well as some of Africa’s most famous protected areas. This vast wealth of natural resources makes for an active tourism sector.

On the other hand, livestock is the most important source of livelihood and food security for communities in the East Africa landscape. This livelihood type is dependent on healthy grasslands, hence ecosystem services.

The team in Tanzania visited:

- Maasai community living in Mkonga Ijinyu village bordering the Mkomazi National Park to experience the pastoral livestock keeping and efforts to mitigate climate change impacts and Human Wildlife Conflicts (HWC).
- Mkomazi National Park to experience Black rhino conservation and general tourism in light of the COVID 19 pandemic.

The team met and had a discussion with community leaders, natural resource managers, wildlife game officers and other stakeholders to learn about:

- The growing impacts of wildlife and habitat loss on humans and the economy;
- Potential strategies for climate change adaptation, reducing threats and human-wildlife conflicts; and
- Practical strategies deployed to protect endangered species, e.g., the black rhino.

**Mkonga Ijinyu village**

- Human wildlife conflicts involving crop damage by elephants and livestock predation by the large carnivores like wild dogs, hyena, lion etc;
Much of the conflicts involve competition for scarce water resources with wildlife and WWF Tanzania constructed a dam to mitigate this conflict but it is yet to be filled with water due to lack of rains;

The space for livestock and people has become small and more land is needed – the reason why livestock keepers take their livestock into the park;

The community is willing to support conservation efforts but should also derive benefits from the natural resources;

A huge elephant population has moved into the area from Tsavo National Park, Kenya.

**Mkomazi Rhino Tourism Sanctuary**

- Officially launched in July 2021 to promote Mkomazi National Park as a tourism destination;
- Over 98% chance of seeing a rhino in the new sanctuary;
- The number of tourists has started showing signs of increase after the launch of the tourism sanctuary;
- Infrastructural facilities for tourism are lacking including good hotels and connectivity to the park from the adjacent districts.

**POST TRIP OUTPUTS**

The media team managed to produce a number of stories as shown below:

2. [https://www.wwf.or.tz/?37022/Can-Improving-Livelihoods-reduce-wildlife-crimes](https://www.wwf.or.tz/?37022/Can-Improving-Livelihoods-reduce-wildlife-crimes)
7. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CWD3h2KF0vt/?utm_medium=copy_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CWD3h2KF0vt/?utm_medium=copy_link)
8. [https://www.wwf.or.tz/?37183/Assigning-Value-to-our-Natural-capital-The-Media-Field-Trip](https://www.wwf.or.tz/?37183/Assigning-Value-to-our-Natural-capital-The-Media-Field-Trip)
9. [https://dailynews.co.tz/news/2021-11-0161800b4e47f1d.aspx](https://dailynews.co.tz/news/2021-11-0161800b4e47f1d.aspx)
Albertine Rift Forests landscape contains some of the world’s most diverse forests, with many endemic plants, mammals, and birds. The landscape hosts 52% of all bird species and 39% of all mammal species of the African continent, with more endemic and globally threatened vertebrates than any other region in Africa.

On the other hand, fuelwood scarcity is driving illegal harvesting of wood from protected areas endangering these natural systems. There is a need to harness opportunities to support community initiatives through measures that restore and safeguard natural vegetation and also support strategies related to payments for ecosystem services (PES) for forest restorations.

The team in Uganda visited:

**Rwenzori Mountains National Park:**
- The team met with, Senior Warden, James Okware, Warden Monitoring and Research and the Warden for Community Conservation for Rwenzori Mountains National Park
- They highlighted the number of species (Flora and fauna) in the park; Tourism annual earnings for the park; The water sources originating from Rwenzori Mountains; the issue of melting glaciers of the snow-capped Rwenzori.
- The team had a nature walk in the park for close to 2KM up to River Kyoho.

**Busongola Joint farmers - Garden to the cup coffee experience**
- The team visited two coffee gardens owned by the local communities who are members of the Busongola Joint farmers association. As part of the ‘garden to cup’ experience the team proceeded to the coffee house after the farm visit to see how the coffee is processed and taste the coffee for a full experience.
- **Highlights:**
  - There is need to support the promotion of the “coffee house” as a tourism attraction that gives experience of whole experience.
  - There should be efforts to link the coffee experience to the Rwenzori Mountains National Park tourism activities.
  - The district agricultural office should be engaged further to support the communities with technical knowledge and skills to improve their gardens.
The power station/private sector

- The team met with the environment officer at the power plant that discussed how the power plant supports communities around as a form of giving back to community (CSR activities).
- He also explained that the power plant has a tree nursery bed that supports their efforts to plant more trees along the river banks as a way of supporting the resource.
- There is a need to harness opportunities to support community initiatives through measures that restore and safeguard natural vegetation and also support strategies related to payments for ecosystem services (PES) for forest restorations.

Kalinzu forest

- The element of Collaborative Forest Management where the government agency works with the organized communities to conserve the forests stood out.
- The team visited Kabukwiri reformed poachers’ group in Ndangara-Nyakyiyanja in Rubirizi District.
- Discussed the genesis and formation of the group; how the activities connect to valuing nature and how the benefits have improved livelihoods and community transformation.
- Communities have planted close to 700 hectares around the natural forest.
- Communities access timber, firewood and other resources from their planted forests, which protects the natural forest.
- Communities are running the apiary project in the planted forests which earns them income but also helps to pollinate crops especially coffee which is the main crop in the community.

Communities in Rubirizi

- The team visited the Katara Women group in Rubirizi district, a community adjacent to Queen Elizabeth National Park where women collect elephant dang and process it to make paper and other crafts that they later sell to tourists and earn a living.
- Communities have MOUs with the park to get some resources from the park.
- The crafts are sold to tourists.
Queen Elizabeth National Park boat drive

- The team met with the ENYEL ERIC, the Warden Tourism attached to Queen Elizabeth National park. There was a boat cruise on Kazinga channel-rich in aquatic and wildlife; crocodiles, birds, hippos etc. The team experienced and appreciated the value attached to conserving Kazinga Channel as a wildlife-breeding place.
- The channel earns foreign exchange through tourism
- It also harbors isolated and endangered species of wild animals eg buffalos

POST TRIP OUTPUTS

The media team managed to produce a number of stories as shown below:

1. **UBC - CONSERVING THE ENVIRONMENT, WWF CHAMPIONS SUSTAINABLE FRONTIER COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS MODEL**
2. **UG Standard - How community coffee tourism is reducing pressure on Rwenzori Mountains National Park**
3. **New Vision Story - Rwenzori trans-border communities commercializing conservation**
4. **New Vision Pictorial**
5. **Travel show preview**
Next steps

CHALLENGES:
- Insufficient time to cover extensive field areas considering the long-distance travelled in some of the countries especially Tanzania and Uganda
- Representation of 6 partner states by media and scientists is complex and resource demanding during a pandemic
- Within the CONNECT project, we can only target four countries and it was not possible you include Rwanda for this round of the trip
- Logistics for foreign travellers on COVID-19 tests interfered with the timetable but never the less the trips went well
- Social media sharing during the trip was not as active as earlier envisaged due to time constraints and internet limitations in the field
- Trip was delayed and redesigned due to COVID-19 restrictions
- The concept of natural capital is not well understood by most journalists. It needed to be unpacked and simplified – we did this through the media trip, linking the reports to actual action on the ground - but this unpacking is a continuous process

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Development of a joint plan for continued engagement of media at national and regional level Consider long term partnership with Internews for high-level engagements on media-related programs and also capacity support where the media teams can benefit from Internews training programs and grants;
- Partners to consider resource mobilization for media programs to focus on advocacy strategies and building greater awareness, including capacity building on environmental / conservation issues for journalists;
- Awards programme as a motivation for journalists - Consider synergies with other USAID funded projects such as with Wildlife direct who may already have existing awards programmes / initiatives
- Trans-disciplinary engagement of journalists who cover environment, sciences, economics and climate change leads to synergies and different lenses of sharing the situation and intricacies
- The concept of natural capital needs to be unpacked until it's clearly understood
- While the CONNECT project can only target four countries, it would be good to include Rwanda next time.

CONCLUSION:
- All of the discussions and participant feedback from the media trip are informing concrete actions to continue exploring how media can be actively engaged in conservation effort in East Africa.
- As one of the most critical stakeholders who are avenues of sharing factual information and calling other relevant stakeholders to action, the media engagement was a strategic approach
- The opportunity to explore the value of transboundary natural resources and speak to key stakeholders was highly appreciated. Feedback from the trip suggested a need to continue this kind of engagement. It was clear that setting up a structure where regional learning, exchange of ideas, training and collaboration in reporting and storytelling would be well received, particularly with a regional or landscape focus.
- The CONNECT project implementing partners (IUCN-ESARO, WWF and TRAFFIC), together with the East African Community (EAC), Environmental Incentives, Internews and the USAID Kenya and East Africa Environment Office Communications team will collaborate on next steps and a joint plan to support the network of journalists.
- Transboundary conservation measures must be innovative in using technologies and ensuring all stakeholders are playing their part seamlessly. This includes being innovative in how we continuously engage media and how we package the messaging.