



YOUTH
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DOROBO
SAFARIS

nomad

Action
For Ocean

liasili
PEOPLE FOR NATURE

Youth4Nature Conference Report

2026

Our mission is to
empower **young**
people to become the
leaders, innovators, and
changemakers driving
a sustainable future for
people and nature.

What is inside!

Forewords & Overview

Executive Summary	11
Conference at a Glance	12
Four Conference Themes	14
A Platform for the Next Generation	15

The Conference

Introduction	18
Conference Objectives	20
Conference Themes	22
Opening Ceremony	28
Conference Sessions	34
Conference Outcomes	42
Participant Reflections	44
Media Coverage	48
Financial Support	50
Acknowledgements	54
Looking Ahead	56

Welcome

Welcome to the report of the 2026 Youth4Nature Conference.

This report captures the story of two inspiring days in Arusha, where young conservation leaders, professionals, policymakers, researchers, development partners, and community representatives came together to celebrate ideas, build partnerships, and shape the future of conservation in Tanzania.

The report highlights the conference journey—from its objectives and programme to the key outcomes, participant reflections, and partnerships that made the event possible.

It showcases how Youth4Nature continues to create opportunities for young people to learn, connect, innovate, and lead conservation action across the country.

While this report reflects on the achievements of the 2026 conference, it also marks another milestone in the growing Youth4Nature movement.

Building on the success of the inaugural conference in 2022 and the second edition in 2024, the conference continues to strengthen a national network of young conservation champions who are contributing to a more sustainable future for Tanzania and beyond.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Maliasili
INVESTING IN PEOPLE FOR NATURE





YOUTH 4 NATURE

YOUTH 4 NATURE
Name: Calvin Akyoo
Organization: Carbon Tanzania

Winfrida Mngongolwa

Lawrence Colinas



Forewords & Overview

Executive Summary

The 2026 Youth4Nature Conference, held on 13–14 June 2026 in Arusha, Tanzania, brought together young conservation leaders, government representatives, conservation practitioners, academics, development partners, the private sector, and community organizations to advance youth participation in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

Building on the success of previous editions, the conference provided a dynamic platform for learning, networking, innovation, and collaboration.

Through keynote presentations, panel discussions, Kitimoto Talks, technical workshops and networking sessions, participants explored practical solutions to today's conservation challenges while strengthening partnerships for future action.

The conference reaffirmed that young people are not only the future of conservation but active leaders shaping solutions today. Participants left with new knowledge, expanded professional networks, practical skills, and renewed commitment to safeguarding Tanzania's natural heritage.

"Young people are not the future of conservation – they are active leaders shaping solutions today."

Conference at a Glance

The **2026 Youth4Nature Conference** was held on **13–14 June 2026** at the **United World College (UWC), Arusha, Tanzania**. Building on the success of the previous editions in 2022 and 2024, the conference brought together young conservation leaders, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, development partners, community organizations, and private sector representatives to exchange knowledge, strengthen partnerships, and inspire the next generation of environmental leaders.

Over two days, participants explored innovative ideas, practical conservation solutions, emerging technologies, and career opportunities through a diverse programme of interactive sessions and networking activities.

350+

Participants from across Tanzania — 62% male, 38% female — plus more than 10 from Kenya, South Africa & the UK.



69

Speakers (40 male, 29 female) selected from 136 applicants, including presenters from across the region.



62

Sessions delivered out of 65 planned, roughly 42.45 hours of speaker-led content over two days.



20+

Media stories produced by national television, print, and digital outlets.



Programme Breakdown

The conference programme was designed to encourage learning, dialogue, collaboration, and practical engagement through a variety of interactive session formats.

34

Campfire Sessions

10

Ignite Talks

4

Panel Discussions

4

Wild Vision Sessions

4

Keynote Addresses

2

Kitimoto Talks

2

Kijiweni Talks

2

Introduction Sessions

Four Conference Themes

The 2026 conference programme was organized around four interconnected themes that reflected current priorities in biodiversity conservation and youth engagement:

Building a Future in Conservation

Exploring conservation careers, leadership journeys, and opportunities for professional growth.

Conservation in Practice (Land & Marine)

Showcasing practical conservation solutions, community-led initiatives, habitat restoration, and marine conservation.

Next-Generation Technology in Conservation

Demonstrating the role of artificial intelligence, satellite monitoring, data analytics, and other emerging technologies in conservation.

Digital Voices for Nature

Highlighting how storytelling, photography, documentaries, content creation, and social media are transforming conservation communication.

A Platform for the Next Generation

The 2026 Youth4Nature Conference served as more than a learning event—it was a platform for collaboration, mentorship, innovation, and professional networking.

By bringing together young conservationists and experienced practitioners from across different sectors, the conference strengthened partnerships, expanded knowledge, and empowered participants to become active leaders in protecting Tanzania's biodiversity and advancing sustainable conservation efforts.





The Conference

Introduction

Young people are increasingly at the forefront of addressing today's environmental and conservation challenges. As biodiversity loss, climate change, wildlife crime, and ecosystem degradation continue to threaten ecosystems, livelihoods, and natural resources, investing in the next generation of conservation leaders has never been more important.

The Youth4Nature (Y4N) Conference was established to create a national platform where young people can learn, connect, and contribute meaningfully to biodiversity conservation. Through knowledge sharing, networking, mentorship, and collaboration, the conference empowers youth with the skills, confidence, and opportunities needed to become active leaders within the conservation sector.

The conference traces its origins to the **African Protected Area Congress (APAC)** held in Kigali, Rwanda, in July 2022. Inspired by the passion and commitment

of Tanzanian conservationists who participated in APAC, Youth4Nature was envisioned as a space where diverse young minds could exchange ideas, share experiences, develop practical skills, and explore career pathways in conservation.

Since the inaugural conference in **2022**, followed by the successful second edition in **2024**, Youth4Nature has continued to grow as one of Tanzania's leading platforms for youth engagement in conservation. The **2026 conference** marked the third edition, further strengthening a growing network of young conservation champions from across Tanzania and beyond.

More than a conference, Youth4Nature has become a movement that connects emerging conservation leaders with experienced practitioners, researchers, policymakers, development partners, and community organizations, creating opportunities for lasting partnerships and collective action.



Conference Objectives

The Youth4Nature Conference was organized to inspire and empower young people to actively participate in biodiversity conservation by strengthening their knowledge, leadership capacity, professional networks, and practical skills.

Specifically, the conference aimed to:

- ✎ Inspire young people to pursue careers and leadership opportunities within the conservation sector.
- ✎ Increase awareness of career pathways, funding opportunities, research, entrepreneurship, and emerging technologies supporting conservation.
- ✎ Create opportunities for meaningful engagement between young conservationists and experienced professionals from government institutions, conservation organizations, academia, development partners, and the private sector.
- ✎ Strengthen participants' capacity through knowledge sharing, mentorship, and practical learning experiences.
- ✎ Promote collaboration, innovation, and partnerships that contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.
- ✎ Showcase youth-led conservation initiatives while encouraging participants to become active contributors to environmental protection within their communities.

Through these objectives, the conference sought to strengthen youth participation in conservation while building a community of future leaders capable of addressing Tanzania's environmental challenges through collaboration, innovation, and shared learning.



Conference Themes

The 2026 Youth4Nature Conference programme was built around four thematic areas that reflected current priorities in conservation while responding to the interests, aspirations, and professional development needs of young conservation leaders.

Together, these themes created opportunities for participants to explore conservation from multiple perspectives, combining technical knowledge, practical experience, innovation, leadership, and communication.

When youth lead with purpose, communities thrive, ecosystems recover, and sustainable futures become possible for everyone.

Building a Future in Conservation

This theme focused on career development by connecting participants with experienced conservation leaders, CEOs, and professionals. Through inspiring discussions, they explored career pathways, strengthened professional networks, and gained practical insights to build meaningful careers that contribute to biodiversity conservation and a sustainable future.

13
Sessions

Conservation in Practice (Land & Marine)

This theme showcased practical conservation initiatives across Tanzania through real-world case studies and field experiences. Participants explored community-led conservation, habitat restoration, biodiversity monitoring, marine protection, and human-wildlife coexistence, learning how partnerships between communities, conservation organizations, researchers, and government create lasting conservation impact.

25
Sessions



Next-Generation Technology in Conservation

Participants explored how emerging technologies are transforming conservation through artificial intelligence, drones, satellite monitoring, GIS, remote sensing, digital mapping, and data analytics. Sessions highlighted how innovation supports biodiversity protection while emphasizing the ethical, responsible, and inclusive use of technology for sustainable conservation outcomes.

14
Sessions

Digital Voices for Nature

This theme explored how storytelling and digital media can inspire conservation action. Through photography, documentaries, podcasts, journalism, graphic design, and social media, participants learned how creative communication strengthens advocacy, engages communities, raises environmental awareness, and amplifies conservation messages to wider audiences.

9
Sessions





Opening Ceremony

The 3rd Youth4Nature Conference officially commenced on 13 June 2026 at the United World College (UWC), Arusha, bringing together young conservation leaders, practitioners, researchers, policymakers, development partners, community representatives, and private sector actors from across Tanzania and neighboring countries.



The opening ceremony marked the beginning of two days of learning, dialogue, innovation, and collaboration. It established the conference's vision by encouraging participants to actively engage throughout the programme, build meaningful professional networks, and take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the diverse range of sessions and speakers.

The opening session was facilitated by **Ellen Mndima from Maliasili**, who welcomed participants and provided an overview of the conference programme, objectives, and expectations for the two-day event. Participants were introduced to the structure of the conference, session formats, and the various opportunities available for learning, networking, and collaboration.

This was followed by an interactive session led by **Jestina Kimbesa**, who shared practical guidance on how participants could maximize their conference experience. Her session encouraged delegates to actively participate in discussions, engage with speakers, connect with fellow participants, and build professional relationships that would extend beyond the conference.



The conference's first keynote presentation was delivered by **Sam Shaba, Chief Executive Officer** of Honeyguide Foundation, who opened the technical programme with a presentation titled "Reimagining Conservation Through Emerging Technology." His presentation explored how technological innovation is reshaping conservation practice, highlighting the opportunities presented by digital tools while emphasizing the importance of responsible and ethical application of emerging technologies to achieve meaningful conservation outcomes.

The opening programme concluded with a panel discussion on Conservation Leadership Journeys, moderated by **Dr. Thabang Teffo**. The discussion brought together distinguished conservation leaders representing different organizations and experiences within the sector.



The panel featured:

- ✧ **Mohammed Kamuna** – Community Wildlife Management Areas Consortium (CWMAC)
- ✧ **Ololotu Munka** – KopeLion
- ✧ **Mary Birdi** – Oikos East Africa



Drawing from their personal leadership experiences, the panelists reflected on the challenges, opportunities, and lessons they have encountered throughout their conservation careers. They encouraged participants to embrace continuous learning, remain resilient in the face of challenges, and pursue leadership grounded in collaboration, innovation, and community engagement.

The opening ceremony successfully set the tone for the conference by inspiring participants to think beyond traditional approaches to conservation while reinforcing the important role that young people play in shaping the future of biodiversity conservation in Tanzania and across the region.



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10:45 am - 12:30 pm - Plenary Hall

How Technology Is Transforming Conservation Efforts

Francis Mwangi
CEO, Conservation International

Conservation International

Sam Shamba
CEO, Conservation International

Conservation International

Mathewale Lanyaka
Executive Director, Conservation International

Conservation International

Dr. Bernard Muthaka
Head of Research & Learning, Conservation International

Conservation International

A panel discussion is taking place on a stage. Four individuals are seated on a raised platform: a man on the left in a plaid shirt holding a microphone, a man in a yellow shirt, a woman in a patterned scarf, and a man in a blue blazer. Behind them is a large screen displaying the event title and speaker bios. The audience, seen from behind, is seated in blue chairs in the foreground.

Conference Sessions

The conference programme was carefully designed to provide participants with a dynamic and interactive learning experience. Through a combination of keynote presentations, panel discussions, technical workshops, Campfire Sessions, Kitimoto Talks, Ignite Talks, Kijiweni Talks, networking activities, and exhibitions, participants were exposed to diverse perspectives, practical experiences, and innovative ideas that reflected the evolving landscape of biodiversity conservation.

Rather than focusing solely on presentations, the conference encouraged dialogue, peer learning, collaboration, and active participation.

Each session format was intentionally developed to create different learning experiences while allowing participants to interact directly with speakers, conservation practitioners, and fellow delegates.

Over the course of two days, the conference successfully delivered 62 sessions, providing approximately 42.45 hours of speaker-led discussions, practical learning, and knowledge exchange across the four conference themes.

Keynote Addresses

Keynote sessions featured distinguished conservation leaders who shared strategic insights on biodiversity, innovation, youth leadership, and conservation careers. Drawing from extensive experience, speakers encouraged participants to embrace collaboration, adaptive leadership, and bold thinking while recognizing young people as active contributors to shaping the future of conservation.



Panel Discussions

Panel discussions brought together experts from government, conservation organizations, academia, communities, and the private sector to explore today's conservation challenges. Through diverse perspectives and interactive dialogue, participants gained deeper understanding of biodiversity issues while contributing questions, experiences, and ideas throughout each engaging discussion.

Campfire Sessions

Campfire Sessions created informal, highly interactive learning spaces where participants engaged directly with speakers through open discussions and practical knowledge sharing. The conversational format encouraged questions, collaboration, and deeper exploration of conservation topics while building meaningful connections and lasting relationships among participants and facilitators.



Wild Vision Sessions

Wild Vision Sessions showcased forward-thinking conservation approaches, innovative technologies, and practical solutions addressing biodiversity challenges. Through real-world examples and case studies, participants explored how collaboration, innovation, and evidence-based decision-making are shaping more effective conservation outcomes and inspiring future environmental action.



Ignite Talks

Ignite Talks featured short, energetic presentations showcasing innovative ideas, emerging research, and inspiring conservation stories. The fast-paced format challenged speakers to communicate clearly and concisely while exposing participants to diverse perspectives, fresh solutions, and experiences that sparked further conversations throughout the conference.



Kitimoto Talks

Known as “The Hot Seat,” Kitimoto Talks encouraged honest, thought-provoking conversations on important conservation issues. Participants and speakers explored different viewpoints through respectful debate, promoting critical thinking, open dialogue, and a deeper understanding of complex environmental challenges facing conservation today.

Kijiweni Talks

Inspired by community conversations, Kijiweni Talks offered a relaxed space for participants to exchange experiences, share stories, and discuss ideas beyond the formal programme. The sessions encouraged peer learning, strengthened professional relationships, and inspired continued collaboration among young conservation leaders after the conference.



Networking Opportunities

Networking remained a defining feature of the conference, creating opportunities for participants to build professional relationships, exchange ideas, and connect with organizations offering mentorship, internships, research, scholarships, and employment. These interactions fostered lasting partnerships that extended well beyond the conference itself.



Technical Sessions

Technical workshops provided hands-on learning experiences across conservation leadership, communication, fundraising, technology, research, project development, and community engagement. Participants gained practical skills and knowledge that strengthened their ability to apply innovative approaches within their organizations, institutions, and communities.





Conference Outcomes

The 3rd Youth4Nature Conference successfully achieved its objective of empowering young people to become active contributors to biodiversity conservation by creating an inclusive platform for learning, collaboration, and professional development. Through two days of interactive discussions, practical learning, and networking, participants strengthened their knowledge, expanded their professional networks, and explored innovative approaches to addressing contemporary conservation challenges.

The conference also reinforced the importance of investing in youth leadership as a critical component of achieving sustainable conservation outcomes. By bringing together participants from diverse backgrounds and sectors, the event fostered meaningful dialogue and strengthened collaboration across the conservation community.



The key outcomes of the conference are highlighted below.

- Increased Knowledge and Technical Capacity**
Participants gained practical conservation knowledge, skills, and confidence through diverse learning.
- Strengthened Collaboration and Professional Networks**
Participants built valuable partnerships, expanding networks across Tanzania's conservation community.
- Increased Awareness of Career and Funding Opportunities**
Participants discovered careers, scholarships, mentorships, internships, and conservation funding opportunities.
- Enhanced Leadership Capacity**
Participants strengthened leadership skills, confidence, and commitment to conservation action nationwide.
- Greater Visibility of Youth-Led Conservation Initiatives**
Youth showcased innovative conservation initiatives, inspiring collaboration and wider environmental impact.
- Strengthened Commitment to Conservation Action**
Participants renewed commitment to protecting nature through collaboration and sustainable conservation efforts.



Participant Reflections

The 2026 Youth4Nature Conference received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with participants describing the experience as inspiring, engaging, and professionally enriching. They appreciated learning directly from experienced conservation leaders, researchers, and practitioners through keynote sessions, workshops, Campfire Sessions, and networking activities. The interactive programme encouraged open dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collaboration, creating an inclusive environment where participants felt empowered to contribute and learn.

Many participants highlighted expanding professional networks, discovering career opportunities, and connecting with peers across Tanzania and neighboring countries. Overall, the conference strengthened participants' knowledge, confidence, and motivation, reinforcing Youth4Nature's role in empowering the next generation of conservation leaders and fostering lasting conservation partnerships.



"I believe in the power of networking, mentorship and leadership, youth are paving the way!"

IDA H MURITHI (Mombasa, Kenya)



"Conferences like these are useful as they pave way for new ideas on conservation"

OSCAR BAKER (England)



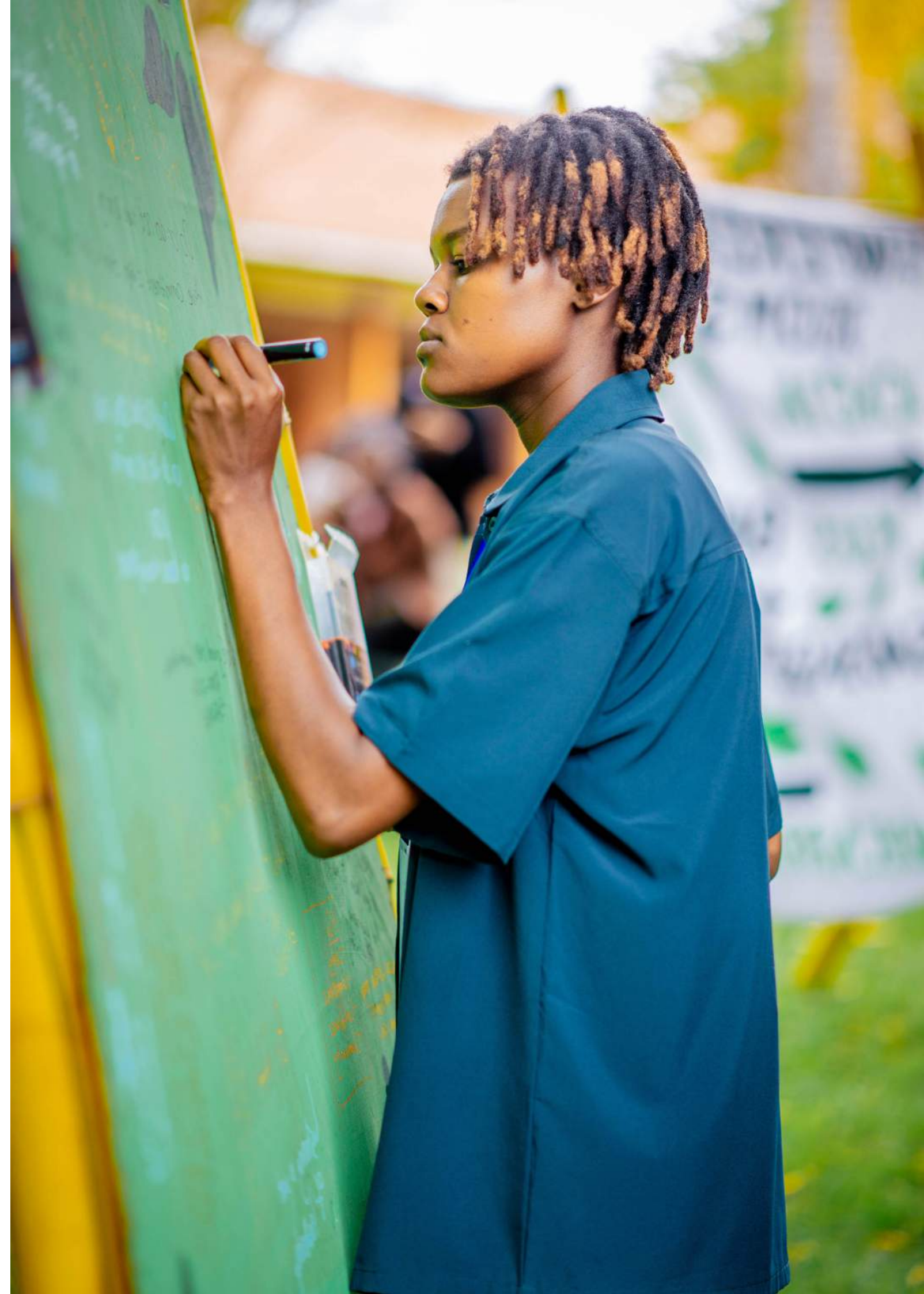


"Conservation of nature including our wildlife resources is not the role of government institutions alone, it is everyone's role"

SABIHISMA MZAVA (Tanga, Tanzania)

"You don't need to study wildlife courses to be part of conservation efforts, wildlife are our resources, we are all responsible despite our professions"

EPHRAIM MUSHI (Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania)



Media Coverage

The 2026 Youth4Nature Conference received extensive media coverage, significantly increasing the visibility of both the event and the broader conversation around youth participation in biodiversity conservation.

Throughout the conference, highlights were shared across digital and social media platforms, enabling participants, partners, and the wider public to follow key discussions, speaker presentations, and conference activities in real time. This digital engagement extended the reach of the conference beyond the physical venue and encouraged broader public interest in youth-led conservation initiatives.

“With journalists from
JET, The Guardian,
Azam TV, Clouds TV,
Channel Ten, TBC/Safari
Channel, Afrinews and
others, Youth4Nature
amplified youth voices
and conservation
stories
nationwide.”

The conference also attracted strong interest from national television, print, and digital media. More than 20 media stories were produced by leading media houses, including:



Financial Support

The successful delivery of the 3rd Youth4Nature Conference was made possible through the generous financial and logistical support of conservation partners and development organizations that share a common commitment to empowering young people and advancing biodiversity conservation.

Direct financial contributions were received from:

PARTNER	CONTRIBUTION (USD)
Liz Claiborne Art Ortenberg Foundation	6,000
Tarangire Safari Lodges	2,000
Tusk Trust	2,000
Maliasili	1,500
Nomads	500
African Environment	500
KopeLion	500
Dorobo Fund	500
Nawiri	500

In addition to direct conference sponsorship, financial assistance for participant sponsorship was provided by:

ORGANIZATION	SUPPORT PROVIDED (USD)
WWF Tanzania Country Office	≈ 4,000
Action for Ocean (AFO)	≈ 500
Honeyguide Foundation	≈ 600
Watu, Simba na Mazingira (WASIMA)	≈ 500

These contributions enabled the organizing team to support participants from across Tanzania, particularly students and representatives from Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), by covering registration fees, transportation, and accommodation where necessary. At least 200 participants were supported through sponsors' contributions.

The funding also supported the successful delivery of conference activities by covering key operational costs, including venue logistics, meals, conference materials, printing, transportation, accommodation, and other essential event services.

The generous investment made by these organizations reflects a shared commitment to developing the next generation of conservation leaders and ensuring that opportunities for learning, collaboration, and professional development remain accessible to young people from diverse backgrounds.

The organizing committee extends its sincere appreciation to all partners whose financial support made the conference possible and contributed to its overall success.



Acknowledgements

The success of the 3rd Youth4Nature Conference reflects the dedication, collaboration, and shared commitment of many individuals and organizations working to empower young people and advance biodiversity conservation. We sincerely thank our sponsors and development partners for their generous financial and technical support, which made the conference possible and strengthened opportunities for youth leadership.

We extend our appreciation to the speakers, panelists, facilitators, moderators, and session coordinators whose expertise and mentorship enriched every discussion and inspired participants throughout the conference. Special thanks go to the organizing committee, volunteers, and support staff whose professionalism ensured the event ran smoothly from planning to delivery.

We also acknowledge the invaluable contribution of journalists and media partners for amplifying the conference's impact, and every participant whose enthusiasm, ideas, and commitment made Youth4Nature a vibrant platform for collaboration. Together, your support continues to inspire, connect, and empower the next generation of conservation leaders across Tanzania and beyond.

Hope for nature grows
stronger every time
young people choose
collaboration instead
of competition
and purpose
over comfort.



Looking Ahead

The Youth4Nature Conference continues to grow as Tanzania's leading platform for empowering young people in biodiversity conservation. Building on the success of the 2026 conference, the initiative remains committed to creating opportunities for learning, collaboration, innovation, and leadership while strengthening a national network of emerging conservation professionals.

Looking ahead, Youth4Nature will continue expanding partnerships with conservation organizations, government institutions, academic institutions, development partners, and the private sector to address evolving conservation challenges. Future conferences will strengthen mentorship, increase participation, showcase innovative conservation solutions, and create greater access to career development, research, entrepreneurship, and leadership opportunities for young people.

As environmental challenges continue to evolve, Youth4Nature remains committed to equipping the next generation with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to lead meaningful conservation action. Together, we are building a future where empowered young leaders protect Tanzania's biodiversity through collaboration, innovation, and community-driven solutions for generations to come.

Every step toward
sustainability begins
with one inspired
individual choosing
to care for our
shared planet.





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