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Ecosystem stewardship to balance sustainability and growth in Tanzania

SUSTAIN Eco Annual Report 2025

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Ecosystem stewardship to balance sustainability and growth in Tanzania

SUSTAIN Eco Annual Report 2025

May 2026

About the SUSTAIN Eco Partnership

SUSTAIN Eco is being implemented by a consortium of partners involving IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). The CEO Roundtable of Tanzania (CEOrt) was added as an implementing partner in 2025, due to the need to strengthen business engagement capacity for delivery on the outcome related to catalysing investment. IUCN serves as consortium lead, implementing and executing project management tasks but also providing strategic guidance and technical assistance to the partners across both Kilombero and Sumbawanga landscapes. IUCN's expertise in ILM approaches and environmental sustainability adds value to the implementation process. AWF is active in the Kilombero landscape, focusing on integrating conservation enterprise solutions and enhancing community livelihood through sustainable Natural Resources Management (NRM). SNV is active in the Sumbawanga landscape, leveraging its longstanding presence to foster inclusive growth through sustainable agricultural practices and renewable energy solutions. CEOrt is a CEO-led organisation focused on ethical leadership for growth and prosperity in Tanzania and operates at national and sub-national level to strengthen sustainability in business. Together, these organisations deliver the SUSTAIN Eco programme, aiming to ensure ecosystem stewardship and sustainable growth in the agricultural sector in Tanzania through collaborative and strategic landscape-level interventions.

IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organisations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,400 Member organisations and the input of more than 17,000 experts. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. In Tanzania, IUCN brings over 20 years' experience, focusing on conservation, forest restoration, natural resource governance, and sustainable agriculture. Our work has been instrumental in integrating environmental and social sustainability into local policies, particularly through engagement with SAGCOT. IUCN's ability to convene diverse stakeholders and provide scientific insights and conservation tools makes IUCN a key player in landscape-level interventions.

AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

AWF has been a pivotal conservation leader in Africa for over 60 years, emphasising practical solutions to natural resource management challenges. In Tanzania, AWF's presence since its inception in 1961 has focused on land management, poverty alleviation, and sustainable resource use. Their work in the Kilombero landscape involves implementing integrated landscape management programmes that promote conservation enterprises, enhancing both natural resource protection and community engagement.

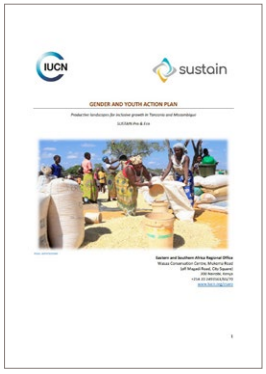
SNV has operated in Tanzania for 50 years, aiming to achieve inclusive growth and sustainable development. Their approach in the Sumbawanga landscape combines local impact solutions with a focus on agriculture, energy, and climate resilience. SNV's established relationships with local and national authorities, as well as with private sector actors, enable them to deliver sustainable solutions across various sectors, enhancing local communities' livelihoods and environmental stewardship.

CEOrt is a private-sector leadership platform founded in 2000 to promote ethical leadership, constructive public–private dialogue, and a more enabling environment for investment and economic growth. Bringing together chief executives from more than 200 leading companies across Tanzania, CEOrt works closely with government, development partners and other stakeholders to help shape policies that support sustainable growth, investment, and national development. In the context of SUSTAIN, CEOrt brings strong convening power, policy influence, and links to major private-sector actors, helping connect landscape-level experience with wider business engagement, green finance, and long-term investment pathways.

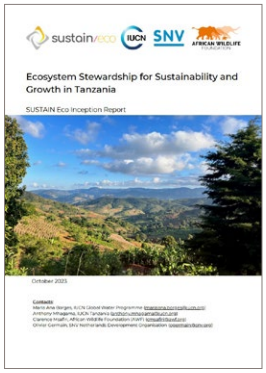
Previous reports and landscape background



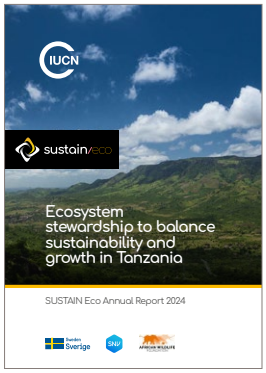
Gender and youth assessment (April 2023): the assessment provides the analytical foundation for SUSTAIN Eco's work on inclusion. Drawing on stakeholder consultations and literature review, it identified persistent barriers facing women and young people in natural resource governance, land access, and agricultural livelihoods across the programme landscapes.



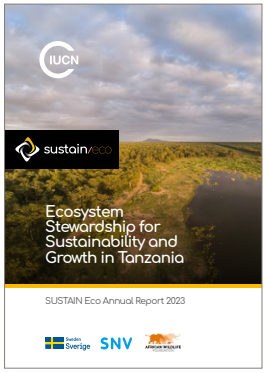
Gender and youth action plan (April 2023): the action plan developed in response to the assessment findings. It guides the integration of more inclusive approaches across project activities, with particular emphasis on participation, leadership, equitable access to resources, and targeted support for women and youth.



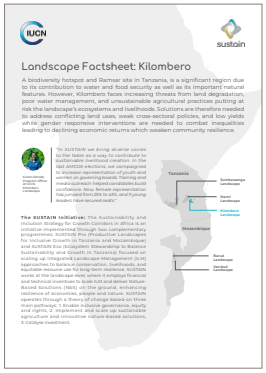
SUSTAIN Eco Inception Phase Report (October 2023): the report provides the starting point for the programme and documents the period from January to July 2023, when the operational framework for implementation was established. It sets out the programme design, governance arrangements, stakeholder engagement process, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework, and the final selection of landscapes and wards.



SUSTAIN Eco 2024 Annual Report (May 2025): the report presents the second year of implementation and documents the programme's expansion and consolidation across both landscapes. It captures progress in natural resource governance, restoration, climate-smart agriculture, land and water management, and multi-stakeholder coordination, while also introducing several of the approaches and partnerships that continued to evolve during 2025.



SUSTAIN Eco 2023 Annual Report (May 2024): the report covers the first year of implementation across the Sumbawanga and Kilombero landscapes. It describes how the programme moved from inception into field delivery, with a focus on sustainable ecosystem management, inclusive growth, local governance, community engagement, and early investments in climate resilience and sustainable agriculture.



Landscape factsheets: the factsheets provide concise background on the Kilombero and Sumbawanga landscapes, including their geographical focus, ecological significance, key natural resource challenges, and the rationale for programme engagement in each area. *(note: reported figures will be updated at the end of SUSTAIN Eco programme, as part of the final reporting).*

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Abbreviations

AMCOS	Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Society
AWF	African Wildlife Foundation
AWS	Alliance for Water Stewardship
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CBFMPs	Community-Based Forest Management Plans
CCRO	Certificate of Customary Right of Occupancy
CCT	Compassionate Carbon Tanzania
CEOrt	CEO Roundtable of Tanzania
COCOBAs	Community Conservation Banks
CSA	Climate-Smart Agriculture
FFS	Farmer Field School
IGG	Inclusive Green Growth
IKLMSP*	Integrated Kilombero Landscape Multi-Stakeholder Platform
ILM	Integrated Landscape Management
ILUMA WMA	ILUMA Wildlife Management Area
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JNRMPs	Joint Natural Resource Management Plans
KINAPA	Mount Kilimanjaro National Park
KSC	Kilombero Sugar Company
KNCC	Kilombero Network of Conservation Champions
LGA	Local Government Authority
LRI**	Landscape Resilience Index
LRBWB	Lake Rukwa Basin Water Board
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MSP*	Multi-Stakeholder Partnership
MUST	Mbeya University of Science and Technology
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NRMC	Natural Resource Management Committee
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
RBWB	Rufiji Basin Water Board

SAGCOT	Southern Agriculture Growth Corridor of Tanzania
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SUSTAIN-Africa	Sustainability and Inclusion Strategy for Growth Corridors in Africa
SUSTAIN Eco	SUSTAIN Ecosystem stewardship to balance sustainability and growth in Tanzania
SUSTAIN Pro	SUSTAIN Productive Landscapes for Inclusive Growth in Tanzania and Mozambique
TANAPA	Tanzania National Parks
TARI	Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute
TFS	Tanzania Forest Services Agency
VGS	Village Game Scouts
VLUM	Village Land Use Management
VLUP	Village Land Use Plan
VNRCs	Village Natural Resources Committees
VPO	Vice President's Office
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WUA	Water Users Association

**SUSTAIN Eco applies the concept of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) in line with Wageningen University & Research guidance. For operational purposes, implementing partners in Tanzania and Mozambique may also refer to MSPs as platforms, particularly where these coordination mechanisms are still maturing. In this context, the two terms should be understood as referring to the same collaborative process, while acknowledging different stages of institutional development.*

*** The former Land Health Monitoring Index (LHMI) was renamed the Landscape Resilience Index (LRI) in 2025. This change reflects both the expansion of the framework to Sumbawanga, Barué and Vanduzi landscapes and a revision of the indicators to make them more general and better suited to assessing water, resilience, and climate-related risks and hazards across different landscapes.*



A green field near the mountains, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania © Og Mpango

About SUSTAIN Eco

sustain
Sustainability and Inclusion Strategy for Growth Corridors in Africa

SUSTAIN-Africa was an IUCN-led initiative implemented from 2014 to 2020 in SAGCOT and the Zambezi Valley in Mozambique. Conceived as a multi-year initiative, SUSTAIN-Africa focused on catalysing climate-resilient development that balances economic growth with ecosystem stewardship and social prosperity. The first phase established a solid foundation of partnerships among businesses, government agencies, local communities, farmer groups, and others in the landscape to deliver on this vision. Building on these networks and the achievements of the initial phase, IUCN initiated a second phase of SUSTAIN-Africa through two complementary programmes: SUSTAIN Eco and SUSTAIN Pro—both underpinned by equity and inclusion and both striving to accelerate a shift from business-as-usual to development paradigms that build resilience in economies, people, and nature. While SUSTAIN Eco emphasises the need to protect and restore ecosystems to secure the services needed for sustainable livelihoods, including agricultural production, SUSTAIN Pro focuses on making agriculture more sustainable.

sustain/eco

SUSTAIN Eco aims to enable healthy ecosystems and prosperous communities in Tanzania by improving governance and rights, strengthening sustainable management practices and catalysing investment in the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems. The programme has been designed as a 10-year initiative with an operational plan from 2022 to 2026 but will conclude in August 2026 due to the Swedish Government decision to phase out the bilateral strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with Tanzania. The delivery strategy encompasses: (i) strengthening coordination amongst governance structures for sustainable and inclusive management of natural resources; (ii) integrating landscape management to improve ecosystem health and generating inclusive business and livelihood opportunities and (iii) investing in the protection and restoration of ecosystems and their services to strengthen climate resilience for people and ecosystems. The programme is being implemented in two landscapes in Tanzania, Sumbawanga and Kilombero. Sumbawanga landscape covers Tanganyika District, Mpimbwe District, Sumbawanga District, Nkasi District, Mpanda district, and Kilombero landscape covers Kilosa District, Mlimba district, Ifakara and part of Kilolo district.

sustain/pro

SUSTAIN Pro a sister programme to SUSTAIN Eco, aims to support sustainable food systems and healthy productive landscapes in Mozambique and Tanzania. The programme has been designed as a 10-year initiative with an operational plan for the first four years from 2022 to 2025. The programme was extended to the end of 2026 and will conclude then following Norwegian shifts in priority areas for Overseas Development Assistance. The delivery strategy encompasses: (i) upscaling solutions for sustainable agricultural production; (ii) restoring land health through multi-stakeholder partnerships, and (iii) investing in sustainable and inclusive value chains to drive systemic change. The programme will be implemented in SAGCOT and the Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor in Mozambique.

Together, SUSTAIN Eco and Pro form the continuation of SUSTAIN-Africa, building on its successes and learning from the challenges that were encountered during the first five years of the programme. The geographical footprint and partnerships established in the first phase of SUSTAIN make up the lion's share of interventions in these two complementary programmes, ensuring continuity and aiming at long-term sustainability.



Traditional hand-hoes © SUSTAIN initiative

Executive Summary

In 2025 across both landscapes, SUSTAIN Eco strengthened the link between governance, restoration, climate-smart production, and conservation-linked livelihoods, with a clearer shift from project-led delivery towards stronger local ownership by community institutions, local government actors, and landscape-level platforms. At the same time, the programme expanded its contribution beyond the landscapes through national policy engagement, strategic communications, youth innovation, and partnerships on green finance and resilience.

Under **Outcome 1**, SUSTAIN Eco strengthened local governance systems for more inclusive and coordinated natural resource management. In *Sumbawanga landscape,* 26 of 29 targeted natural resource management committees (NRMCs) were strengthened, 21 committees now include women, youth, and vulnerable groups in leadership roles, and 65 certificates of customary right of occupancy (CCROs) were secured to strengthen tenure security and more equitable land governance. Community based forest management plans (CBFMPs) placed 41,741 ha under structured management, while multi-stakeholder dialogues improved coordination between village, ward, and district levels. In *Kilombero landscape*, the programme strengthened 39 committees during 2025, bringing the total strengthened since project start to 42 of 48 targeted committees, where women's and youth representation in targeted governance structures reached 40%. Follow-up with trained stakeholders pointed to practical gains in transparency, conflict resolution, and joint management. Across both landscapes, IUCN secured these governance gains through stakeholder engagement, exchange visits, and support to landscape platforms, including the Rukwa–Katavi multi-stakeholder partnership (MSP).

Under **Outcome 2**, the programme supported integrated landscape management (ILM) by linking environmental compliance, restoration, and sustainable production. In *Sumbawanga landscape*, community awareness and compliance work supported riparian protection, local enforcement, and stronger water user associations (WUAs) performance, while 1,839 farmers were reached through farmer field days and demonstration activities on good agricultural practices (GAP). Work also advanced on climate adaptation planning, pasture demonstration plots, and preparatory work for cattle troughs and water audits. In *Kilombero landscape* 70,731 ha remained under community-based forest management plans (CBFMPs) across 37 villages, supported by stronger compliance, coordinated enforcement, and biodiversity-integrated planning. A joint natural resource management plan (JNRMP) and 10-year agreement for Vidunda, Chonwe, and Udung'hu strengthened cross-village coordination, while follow-up support to farmers showed strong uptake of climate-smart agricultural (CSA) practices, including agroforestry, crop rotation, terrace farming, and cocoa agroforestry. Across both landscapes, these interventions showed that integrated landscape management (ILM) is most effective where governance, livelihoods, and restoration are managed together.

Under **Outcome 3**, SUSTAIN Eco continued to link ecosystem restoration with biodiversity monitoring, climate-resilient livelihoods, and emerging financing pathways. In *Sumbawanga landscape,* participatory river health monitoring was strengthened through TARISSfupi- and MiniSASS-based training, while around 64 ha of degraded riparian land were protected or restored through beacon installation, buffer-zone protection, and tree planting. Water user associations (WUAs) also independently restored an additional 17 ha and planted 1,604 trees along key riverbanks. In *Kilombero landscape*, participatory monitoring by 3 water user associations (WUAs) and ILUMA wildlife management area (ILUMA WMA) helped guide local action, while 36 anti-poaching patrols contributed to a 63% reduction in cattle encroachment. Community-led restoration along the Ikwambi River rehabilitated 0.7 km of riparian zone and planted 17,331 native trees and grasses. Cocoa-based agroforestry expanded further, with 558,430 seedlings transplanted, 1,187 ha restored, and 3,449 farmers engaged. The year also saw concrete progress on financing mechanisms, including follow-up on payment of ecosystem services (PES) scheme in Vidunda, Kilombero Sugarcane Limited (KSCL) support for riparian restoration, a new community forest carbon initiative with Compassionate Carbon Tanzania (CCT), strengthened community conservation banks (COCOBAs) groups in Sumbawanga, and continued support to conservation business planning in Kilombero.

At the programme-wide level, SUSTAIN strengthened the bridge between landscape practice, knowledge generation, policy dialogue, and investment pathways. The landscape resilience index (LRI) was expanded to 17 indicators, with baseline assessments completed for Sumbawanga, Kilombero, and Mozambique. The green finance campaign, implemented with the CEOrt under SUSTAIN Pro, reached over 83,000 people, produced three toolkits, and helped connect landscape experience with wider private-sector engagement in green and climate finance. SUSTAIN also ran a broader media campaign through a dedicated landing page, feature stories, photo stories, op-eds, and landscape factsheets, while the SUSTAIN Champions Awards supported 11 youth champions in Tanzania and Mozambique with small-scale awards and training in integrated landscape management (ILM), entrepreneurship, and communication for sustainability. In parallel, the programme strengthened its monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system through updated indicators, outcome harvesting, agroforestry assessment, and a new capacity assessment of local governance boards. As SUSTAIN Eco enters its final year, the emphasis will be on consolidating local ownership, strengthening institutional anchoring, and advancing the financing and partnership pathways needed to sustain results beyond project closure.



Lessons learned in 2025

Lesson 1. Better coordination leads to better local action: Results were strongest where village structures, local government, basin authorities, and landscape platforms optimised coordination, putting in place clearer roles and emphasising follow-up.





Lesson 2. Inclusion must be designed, not assumed: Women's and youth participation improved where activities were intentionally tailored for inclusion of diverse voices and experiences, especially around leadership, access, timing, and relevance. However, persistent barriers linked to land rights, institutional representation and social norms remained, indicating that more inclusive participation requires continuous effort over time.

Lesson 3. Restoration is more durable when communities lead it: Across both landscapes, securing local ownership of restoration interventions through WUAs, community groups, producer organisations, and local committees was critical in turning restoration from a project activity into ongoing stewardship.



Lesson 4. Nature-based Solutions work best when linked to livelihoods: Agroforestry, beekeeping, cocoa, aquaculture, and other conservation-linked enterprises helped make restoration more relevant to households and strengthened long-term uptake.

Lesson 5. Sustainability depends on institutions, evidence, and finance: The year showed that successful models need not only technical results, but also stronger local institutions, credible evidence, and viable financing pathways such as grants, PES, carbon initiatives, and private-sector engagement.



2025 Progress Highlights

SUSTAIN Eco: Scaling inclusive ecosystem stewardship in Tanzania

(1) Strengthening local governance and landscape resilience in Sumbawanga

In 2025, the SUSTAIN Eco programme in Sumbawanga focused on institutionalising local natural resource management (NRM) and embedding inclusive approaches within village institutions, land governance, and catchment planning. The programme significantly strengthened local governance, with 26 of the 29 targeted NRM committees (89%) now capacitated[1] to enforce environmental regulations and by-laws. Coordination across village, ward, and district levels was facilitated through four multi-stakeholder dialogues involving 226 participants (83 women and 143 men). These efforts have supported more inclusive decision-making, as 21 of the 29 committees (72%) now feature women, youth, and vulnerable groups in leadership roles (e.g., compared with the baseline, the share of committees with fewer than one-third women reduced from 68% to 20%, showing a clear shift towards more representative governance)[1].

Working to strengthen existing governance framework provides the necessary institutional stability to advance sensitive issues of land rights, resulting in the attainment of 65 Certificates of Customary Rights of Occupancy (CCROs)—comprising 13 for women, 9 for men, 39 joint titles, and 4 for institutions. Additionally, 363 land parcels were measured (147 for women, 103 for men, 98 joint, and 15 for institutions) in Kilembo, Kachele, and Kafukoka.

Through securing land rights and physical boundaries, SUSTAIN Eco created a stable environment for farmers to adopt long-term, sustainable agricultural practices, aligning economic resilience with conservation goals, 1,839 farmers (429 women and 1,410 men) received training in climate-smart agriculture (CSA) approaches, such as conservation tillage and drought-resilient cropping. Follow-up assessments indicate that 24% of these farmers have already adopted agroforestry practices. Furthermore, 126 beekeepers (50 women and 56 men) were equipped with improved hives and trained in sustainable methods to provide sustainable income.

While these livelihood interventions helped reduce pressure on terrestrial resources, the programme simultaneously addressed the critical management of the region's natural resources systems. On the one hand SUSTAIN Eco focused on large-scale restoration activities, including: development of a Community-Based Forest Management plan (CBFMP) covering 7,187.46 hectares of village forest; installation of 210 riparian and forest boundary beacons to protect sensitive areas; planting 40,000 water-friendly trees in the Lake Kwela buffer zone, and establishing 22 pasture demonstration plots and two farmer centres of excellence to address soil degradation. On the other hand, water management was

1 Throughout this report, terms such as "supported", "capacitated", and "strengthened" refer to a structured process of institutional development, not only participation in training. Local governance bodies engaged by SUSTAIN Eco (e.g., WUAs, VNRCs, AMCOS, etc) are assessed against recognised criteria such as leadership structure, clarity of roles, reporting, financial transparency, record-keeping, inclusiveness, and overall functionality. Support combines training, mentoring, planning and follow-up. For example, some producer organisations improved from baseline scores of 3–4 to 7–9 across 12 governance criteria, while NRMCs are assessed against 6 criteria related to structure, accountability and performance. These terms therefore indicate measurable improvement in the ability of institutions to carry out their official mandates more effectively and inclusively.

advanced through the strengthening of three Water User Associations (WUAs) and the validation of sub-catchment management plans for the Msaginya and Katuma rivers. To improve monitoring, 66 stakeholders (21 women and 45 men) were trained in river health assessment using the MiniSASS/TARISSfupi tool. This technical capacity was further supported by the distribution of 16 citizen science toolkits to local schools and institutions[2].

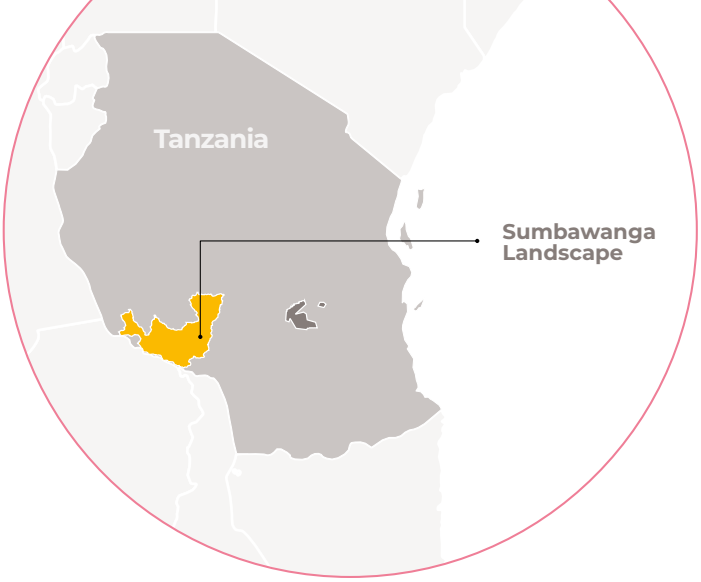
The focus on NRM was mirrored by a broader investment in community stewardship and the encouragement of future environmental leaders. The programme invested in future ecosystem stewardship by establishing six school environmental clubs involving 192 participants (180 students [90 female, 90 male] and 12 teachers [6 female, 6 male]). General community outreach in Chisenga reached 305 members (133 women and 172 men) via village assemblies. Leadership capacity was specifically targeted through the training of 55 women and youth champions (49 women and 6 men) in conflict resolution and natural resource management. Furthermore, knowledge exchange was prioritised through a learning visit to Tanga for 26 stakeholders (11 women and 15 men) and broad public outreach that engaged over 700 visitors at the NaneNane exhibition.



Beekeeper in protective gear © SUSTAIN initiative

2 River health assessment and water-quality monitoring are used as part of SUSTAIN Eco's broader water stewardship approach, not as stand-alone activities. Tools such as TARISSfupi/MiniSASS help WUAs and the Lake Rukwa Basin Water Board generate evidence on river condition and ecological change, which is then used in local planning, restoration, monitoring and enforcement. The data also contribute to the Landscape Resilience Index (LRI), strengthening understanding of water systems and climate resilience at landscape level. Because these tools are embedded within existing institutional mandates, they support both practical decision-making and longer-term continuity beyond the project period.

Sumbawanga in numbers



Land placed under sustainable management through CBNRM initiatives (2023-2025)	**41,741 ha**
Villages with integrated NRM	**26 (21 practicing inclusive NRM)**
CCROs issued	**65 (13W, 9M, 39 Joint, 4 Institution)** **363 land parcels mapped for issuance**
Vertical and horizontal dialogues conducted to improve multi-level coordination	**4 dialogues (83W, 143M)**
Demarcated areas for protection	**2,724 ha using 210 beacons**
Nurseries and demonstration farms established	**2 sites, 40,000 water-friendly seedlings covering 41 ha**
FFS demo plots on CSA and pasture established	**22 plots engaging 1,839 farmers (429W, 1,410M)** **24% of trained farmers actively implement agroforestry**
WUAs strengthened	**3** **(21W, 45M) trained on river health assessment**
Beekeepers supported	**126 (50W, 56M)**
Members of school environmental clubs established	**192 (180 students [90W,90 M] and 12 teachers [6W, 6M]).**
Women and youth champions trained	**55 (49F, 6M)**
Awareness campaigns, exchange visits and Nanenane	**1031 participants**

(2) Community-led conservation and climate resilience in Kilombero

In 2025, the SUSTAIN Eco programme in Kilombero shifted from establishing governance structures to enhancing their functional integration. The year was characterised by improved coordination across sectors, the expansion of inclusive leadership, and the strengthening of links between ecosystem restoration and local enterprise. Capacity building focused on landscape governance engaged 27 participants (9 Women and 18 Men) across government, civil society, and the private sector, resulting in measurable improvements in transparency and dispute resolution. For example, in Minepa village, closer collaboration between authorities and the ILUMA WMA led to a 60% reduction in farmer-livestock conflicts. Furthermore, the Integrated Kilombero Landscape Multi-Stakeholder Platform (IKLMSP) convened 50 members (14 women and 36 men) to align landscape priorities with district budgeting. Inclusive leadership was also prioritised, with 39 NRMCs achieving 40% participation from women and youth. This enhanced institutional coordination provided the necessary framework for managing substantial areas of the landscape under unified conservation agreements.

A total of 70,731 hectares across 37 villages are now maintained under community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). This is supported by a 10-year joint agreement between Vidunda, Chonwe, and Udung'hu villages to formalise cross-village biodiversity protection. Protection and restoration efforts included: 36 patrols in ILUMA WMA (including nine joint patrols with Nyerere National Park) contributed to a 63% reduction in illegal grazing, 249 community members (115 women and 144 men) rehabilitated 0.7 km of the Ikwambi River, planting 17,331 native trees and vetiver grass, 48 NRMC (3 WUAs, 1 WMA, 22 VNRCs, and 22 VLUMs) across 22 villages were capacitated to improve role clarity and inclusive decision-making[1].

The programme created a stable environment for sustainable production and nature-based livelihoods. Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) saw widespread adoption, with 96% of trained farmers implementing agroforestry and soil management techniques. Cocoa-based agroforestry emerged as a primary economic driver, restoring 1,187 hectares and engaging 3,449 farmers (1,276 women and 2,173 men)[3]. Overall, nature-based enterprises generated 343 jobs (169 for women and 174 for men), including 201 roles for young people. Additionally, beekeeping and aquaculture was expanded by the community, with 229 farmers (92 women and 137 men) establishing 67 fishponds using their own resources and producing 384 kg of honey and benefiting 160 members.

To ensure these economic gains are rooted in ecosystem stewardship, the programme embedded rigorous monitoring and innovative financing mechanisms. Freshwater biodiversity monitoring was decentralised through training 75 members (16 women and 59 men) of three Water User Associations in the use of TARISSfupi ecological tools[2]. Awareness campaigns reached 3,007 community members (1,610 women and 1,397 men), while conservation activities in schools engaged 1,810 students (958 female and 852 male). Efforts to advance long-term sustainability include: the designation of TARI Ifakara as the National Centre of Excellence for Cocoa Research, two members of the KNCC received grants totalling USD 18,000 to advance locally led conservation, ILUMA WMA continued to strengthen its conservation enterprise model, generating approximately USD 65,000 annually from tourism-related activities to support biodiversity protection and community development[4].

3 SUSTAIN Eco's support to cocoa is based on its status as a strategic crop in Tanzania and on the availability of a research-led pathway through TARI Ifakara, now designated as the National Centre of Excellence for Cocoa Research. The programme promotes cocoa primarily through agroforestry, research, extension and improved farmer practices, while recognising and seeking to reduce environmental risks linked to pesticide use and crop expansion in sensitive landscapes. This includes stronger extension support, lower-input approaches such as organic fertilisers and biopesticides, and engagement with private-sector actors under IUCN's due diligence and safeguards framework.

4 The 2025 grants build on the competitive grant mechanism launched in 2024 under the Kilombero Conservation Champions Network. In 2024, four CBOs were awarded grants; in 2025, two additional CBOs were selected through the same open and competitive process. Proposals were assessed against predefined criteria including relevance, organisational capacity, community alignment, and potential for impact. All awarded CBOs are subject to due diligence checks on governance and financial management, and their progress continues to be monitored through regular narrative and financial reporting, technical backstopping, and field monitoring visits

Kilombero in numbers



Land placed under sustainable management through CBNRM initiatives (2023-2025)	**70,731 ha**
NRMC strengthened	**48 (39 practicing inclusive NRM with 40% women and youth in leadership roles)** **1 Joint NRM agreement signed covering Vidunda, Chonwe and Udung'hu villages**
River riparian zone rehabilitated	**0.7km of Ikwambi River** **249 (115W, 144M)** **17,331 native trees and vetiver grass planted**
Vertical and horizontal dialogues conducted to improve multi-level coordination	**15 dialogues** **713 (244W, 469M)**
FFS demo plots on CSA established	**458 plots ~ 484 ha engaging 458 farmers (165W, 293M); 96% of trained farmers actively implement agroforestry**
WUAs strengthened	**3** **75 (16W, 59M) trained on river health assessment**
Jobs generated through conservation enterprises	**343 (169W, 174M), including 201 youth**
School environmental clubs established	**5 schools reaching 1,810 students (958W, 852M)**
Awareness campaigns, exchange visits and Nanenane	**3,007 (1,610W, 1,397M)**
KNCC grants awarded	**USD 18,000 to 2 network members**

(3) Bridging landscapes and scaling impact

Throughout 2025, the SUSTAIN Eco programme prioritised the integration of the Sumbawanga and Kilombero landscapes, translating field-level practice into broader institutional learning while establishing the financing and policy pathways required for future scale up in collaboration with SUSTAIN Pro. In Kilombero, conservation campaigns across 15 villages and sports-based outreach engaged approximately 2,000 people on the importance of biodiversity protection. Practical restoration actions advanced through capacity building for the Mngeta Village Natural Resource Committee, resulting in the planting of 750 trees to rehabilitate the Iwungi Forest. The landscape's strategic importance was further highlighted by a visit from the Vice President's Office, which aimed to extract policy lessons from the programme's interventions for national application.

In Sumbawanga, the programme strengthened governance capacity and community-led conservation finance. Water stewardship training reached 21 district agriculture and livestock officers, while capacity building for the Lwiche Water User Association engaged 43 participants, including 12 women. Preparatory work followed the training for water audits in the Katuma, Msaginya and Mpanda sub-catchments, building towards more transparent and accountable water-use monitoring. To link livelihoods with conservation, the programme provided grants of USD 3,500 each to the Asali ni Mali and Ushirika COCOBA groups to expand their beekeeping enterprises. Additionally, a learning exchange for 26 stakeholders to UWAMAKIZI facilitated the adoption of proven water and forest conservation models.

As the programme enters its final phase, these achievements in governance, tenure, and capacity-building serve as the essential pillars for ensuring that local institutions can sustain these gains independently.



Acacia tree and bikers, Tanzania © Moses Londo

Collaboration with SUSTAIN Pro

At the national and programme-wide level, SUSTAIN Eco advanced evidence-based tools, strategic communications, youth innovation, and private-sector partnerships to support Tanzania's green transition. The Landscape Resilience Index (LRI) was expanded to 17 indicators, with baseline assessments completed for Sumbawanga, Kilombero and Mozambique, providing a more standardised framework for resilience planning and future institutional uptake. At the same time, the Green Finance Campaign reached over 83,000 people and achieved a 98% implementation success rate through the delivery of three toolkits, high-level convenings, and targeted outreach on sustainable finance. These efforts were complemented by a broader SUSTAIN media campaign, which used a dedicated landing page, feature stories, photo stories and op-eds to increase visibility of landscape results and strengthen links between local action, national policy and public engagement. The programme also launched the SUSTAIN Champions Awards[5], supporting 11 youth champions — 7 in Tanzania and 4 in Mozambique — with small-scale awards and training in integrated landscape management, entrepreneurship and communication for sustainability, helping turn local ideas into practical initiatives on themes such as riparian restoration, environmental school clubs, organic composting and hydroponic farming. Together, these initiatives are helping ensure that landscape-level results continue to inform national policy and practice, including Tanzania's NDCs and wider sustainable development goals.



Malachite Kingfisher bird captured during LRI bird survey, Tanzania© Will Ovenden

5 The SUSTAIN Champions Awards were rolled out in two stages. A first call was launched in 2025 in Tanzania only, through which 3 champions were selected. This was followed by a second call in 2026 that expanded the initiative to Mozambique, resulting in the selection of 8 additional champions — 4 in Tanzania and 4 in Mozambique. Further information on their progress and results will be documented through the Champions impact stories in the 2026 reporting cycle.



Serengeti Acacia trees © Geneezy

Progress against outcomes and outputs

Outcome 1 – Coordination strengthened amongst governance structures for sustainable and inclusive management of natural resources

Outcome 1 summary: This outcome focuses on strengthening the integration between governance structures and institutions responsible for natural resource planning and management. It also continues to engage with local governance processes, such as WUAs and VLUCs. By delivering this outcome, SUSTAIN Eco invests in MSPs to facilitate dialogue and collaboration among different stakeholders and across sectors. One key goal of Outcome 1 is to strengthen the connection between dialogue and action, ensuring that discussions lead to concrete steps and solutions. Moreover, the goal is to create partnerships that are inclusive, ensuring that all relevant parties have a voice in decision-making processes. To ensure the sustainability of actions taken, Outcome 1 emphasises ongoing engagement with and influence over relevant governance structures at different levels to embed learning and sustainable practices into these institutions and networks for long-term change.

Output		Summary Deliverables
1.1	Integration fostered between local governance structures for natural resources (water, land, forests)	• In Sumbawanga, CBFMPs in four village forests placed 7,187.46 ha under structured management *(total of 41,741 ha since 2023).* • Four horizontal and vertical dialogues (226 participants) strengthened coordination across village, ward and district levels. • In Kilombero, natural resource governance structures such as IKLMSP were further integrated and strengthened, showing improvements in transparency, leadership and conflict resolution.
1.2	Equitable and balanced participation and leadership by women and men in public and private natural resource governing bodies	• In Sumbawanga, 55 women and youth champions were trained in leadership, strategic planning and conflict resolution. • 65 CCROs were secured in Kachele and Kafukoka strengthening tenure security. • In Kilombero, a gender mainstreaming strategy helped raise women's and youth participation in leadership to 40% across NRMCs. • Conservation activities engaged 1,810 students (958 girls, 852 boys) across five schools, while women- and youth-led enterprises generated 343 jobs, including 201 for youth.

1.3	Coordination across multiple levels of governance ensures coherent natural resource planning and management as well as equitable sharing of benefits	• In Sumbawanga, the first Rukwa Regional Environmental Management Plan was developed and endorsed by the Sumbawanga–Katavi MSP. • The Kilombero, fifteen horizontal and vertical dialogues were conducted to strengthen coordination between village authorities, district councils, and relevant ministries. • The KNCC was formally registered and offered training for 47 members, and USD 18,000 in grants to two members.

In Sumbawanga landscape, Outcome 1 focused on strengthening coordination, inclusion and accountability across institutions responsible for land, water and forest management. SUSTAIN Eco supported six school environmental clubs, reaching 192 students and teachers, and creating an important link between youth engagement, social cohesion and intergenerational continuity in conservation. Community-Based Forest Management planning in four village forests placed 7,187.46 hectares under structured management and strengthened local governance through resource assessments, by-law development and village-level planning. Four horizontal and vertical dialogues, involving 226 participants, helped connect neighbouring villages with ward and district authorities, while also drawing strong participation from young people. Horizontal dialogues promoted peer learning through the exchange of by-laws, monitoring practices and restoration experience, while vertical dialogues clarified mandates, strengthened joint planning and improved accountability. These processes also led to immediate follow-up action, including firebreak



Banana trees, Arusha region, Tanzania © Blue Ox Studio

creation, public meetings and joint weeding of restored areas. Inclusion was further strengthened through leadership and conflict-resolution training for 55 women and youth champions, several of whom are now participating more actively in planning and governance processes; notably, two trained women collected nomination forms to contest ward councillor positions in the 2025 elections. At a regional level, the programme contributed to the development of the first Rukwa Regional Environmental Management Plan and to operationalising the Sumbawanga–Katavi Multi-Stakeholder Partnership, helping reinforce coordination across local, district and regional institutions.

In Kilombero landscape, Outcome 1 focused on strengthening coordination, inclusion and action across governance structures responsible for land, water, forests and wildlife. In 2025, SUSTAIN Eco strengthened 39 natural resource management committees, bringing the total strengthened since the start of the project to 42 out of 48 targeted committees. A follow-up assessment with 27 trained stakeholders (9 Women, 18 Men) found that participants were applying skills gained in natural resource governance, leadership, financial management and sustainable landscape management, with reported improvements in transparency, use of by-laws for conflict resolution, and leadership within local institutions. These changes were reflected in practical outcomes: water-use conflict between upstream and downstream users in Vidunda was reported to have ceased, coordination problems between WUA, VNRC and VLUM structures in Mngeta were reduced, and conflicts between livestock keepers and farmers in Minepa fell by 60%, from five to two cases per month. At landscape level, the IKLMSP adopted a revised 2025 plan with clearer targets and stronger links to district



Signing of the JNRMP covering villages of Vidunda, Chonwe, and Udung'hu © AWF



Food market stand © Godiva Omoruyi

and regional planning. Inclusion also deepened through implementation of the gender strategy, which supported women- and youth-led conservation and nature-based enterprises in agroforestry, beekeeping and fish farming, generating 343 jobs (169 Women, 174 Men), including 201 youth. In parallel, 15 horizontal and vertical dialogues strengthened coordination across governance levels, while the KNCC expanded its role as a platform for advocacy and learning: the network launched its website, remained active, and awarded two new competitive grants worth USD 18,000, bringing the total number of CBOs supported between 2024 and 2025 to six.

At a broader level, IUCN through SUSTAIN Eco supported Outcome 1 by strengthening coordination, accountability and shared learning across both landscapes. In Sumbawanga, this included participatory governance meetings, stakeholder learning exchanges, and joint work with SNV to strengthen Water User Association capacity and advance the Rukwa–Katavi MSP, including development of its framework, workplan and draft Memorandum of Understanding. In Kilombero, IUCN worked with AWF and ILUMA WMA to strengthen community awareness across 15 villages and support local restoration leadership in Mngeta. Together, these efforts helped connect institutions across levels and laid stronger foundations for coordinated and inclusive natural resource governance.

Outcome 2 – Integrated landscape management improves ecosystem health and generates inclusive business and livelihood opportunities, especially for women, youth, and vulnerable groups

Outcome 2 summary: This outcome focuses on contributing to a long-term transition towards a climate-resilient economy by altering behaviours within the landscapes where the SUSTAIN initiative operates and amongst key stakeholders who have the power to influence land and water management decisions. The key objective is to enhance the capacity of these stakeholders by improving their knowledge, practices, and access to technologies, thereby promoting sustainable land, water, and business management practices. The adoption of Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) approaches and the deployment of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are central elements of SUSTAIN's vision, engaging both the Pro and Eco programmes to achieve scale and impact.

Output		Summary Deliverables
2.1	Implementation, enforcement and compliance with land use, biodiversity and environmental-related laws and regulations	• In Sumbawanga, 305 participants (133 Women, 172 Men) were trained in environmental laws and village by-laws, strengthening enforcement structures that now oversee nearly 2,724 ha of riparian zones along the Kapondwe River. • In Kilombero, 70,731 ha were maintained under community-based natural resource management, supported by strengthened compliance, joint patrols and biodiversity-integrated planning across 37 villages.
2.2	Capacity and awareness of farmers and rural communities, especially women and youth, strengthened for sustainable land, water and business management	• In Sumbawanga, 1,839 farmers (429 Women, 1,410 Men) were trained through Farmer Field Days and demonstration activities on CSA, with 24% of previously trained farmers actively implement agroforestry. • A landscape-level climate adaptation framework and spatial maps were developed for 20 villages across six districts to guide climate-resilient land and water management. • In Kilombero, refresher training and follow up activities engaged 1,132 farmers (424 Women, 708 Men), amongst the trained farmers: 96% actively implement agroforestry practices with 1,034 ha under crop rotation and 483.6 ha under cocoa agroforestry and terrace farming, showing sustained uptake of climate-smart practices.
2.3	Environmental and social management standards and practices adopted by businesses and their associations	• In Sumbawanga, landscape water audits in the Katuma, Msaginya and Mpanda were prepared, including a database and budget to strengthen transparency and accountability in water use. • In Kilombero, Monitoring of 17 Kizimba agrochemical waste collection centres found 8 in proper use, showing progress but also highlighting the need for stronger awareness, oversight and follow-up.

In Sumbawanga landscape, Outcome 2 focused on translating governance gains into more practical landscape management, with particular emphasis on riparian protection, sustainable grazing, climate-smart agriculture and water stewardship. Community awareness and compliance work in Chisenga reached 305 participants and supported action against farming, brick making and other activities degrading riparian zones (i.e., activities taking place within the 60m buffer), contributing to beacon installation and stronger local protection of sensitive areas. Water User Associations were further strengthened through training in planning, reporting and compliance monitoring, and began taking a more active role

in riverbank restoration and local oversight. At the same time, consultations with pastoralists helped identify sites for cattle troughs outside riparian zones and initiated demonstration work on improved pasture management to reduce livestock pressure on forests and water sources. Climate-smart agriculture remained a major area of delivery: 1,839 farmers participated in Farmer Field Days and demonstration activities on Good Agricultural Practices, and follow-up monitoring found that 24% of previously trained farmers were applying sustainable practices on their farms. To support longer-term planning, the project also developed a landscape-level climate adaptation framework and spatial maps for 20 villages across six districts, providing an evidence base for more coordinated and climate-resilient land and water management.

In Kilombero landscape, Outcome 2 focused on consolidating integrated landscape management across land, water, forest and wildlife systems while strengthening conservation-compatible livelihoods. Across ILUMA WMA and the Vidunda, Ruipa and Mngeta sub-catchments, 70,731 hectares were maintained under community-based natural resource management through stronger compliance, coordinated enforcement and improved accountability across 37 villages. A major step was the adoption of a Joint Natural Resource Management Plan and 10-year agreement for Vidunda, Chonwe and Udung'hu, which strengthened biodiversity integration in land-use planning and clarified roles across village institutions. In parallel, 42 governance committees were capacitated and integrated to support joint patrols,



Herd of cattle grazing by a riverside © Rakibul Alam Khan

harmonised reporting and coordinated action, contributing to practical enforcement gains such as reclaiming degraded riparian areas, removing encroachers and reducing illegal activities. Farmer follow-up and mentoring also reinforced sustained uptake of climate-smart practices: 1,132 previously trained farmers received extension support, with 96% actively implementing agroforestry and farmers independently expanding crop rotation, cocoa agroforestry and terrace farming on their own land. At the same time, monitoring of 17 Kizimba agrochemical waste collection centres showed encouraging progress in safer disposal practices, while also underlining the need for stronger local oversight and continued behaviour change to fully embed environmental standards in agribusiness systems.



Serengeti national park scenic landscape © Ross Green

Spotlight: From compliance to community stewardship

In Kilombero, SUSTAIN Eco strengthened collaboration between WUAs, VNRCs, VLUMs, and village governments, enabling joint patrols, shared reporting and coordinated enforcement across riparian zones and other sensitive areas. In Ruipa and Vidunda sub-catchments, committees conducted patrols, removed encroachers, and supported the reclamation of 39 ha affected by sand extraction, brick making, grazing, farming, waste dumping and construction. Joint action also helped prevent illegal river diversion for irrigation and cultivation in protected riparian areas, while signboards were installed to demarcate river boundaries and strengthen compliance. These efforts contributed to a shift in community attitudes where in some cases, individuals voluntarily stopped harmful activities and began supporting protection efforts, showing that stronger enforcement, when combined with dialogue and local ownership, can help turn users into stewards of the landscape.



Cocoa nursery in Kilombero, Tanzania © AWF

At a broader level, IUCN through SUSTAIN Eco supported Outcome 2 by strengthening shared learning, environmental practices and the uptake of more sustainable approaches across institutions and value chains. In Sumbawanga, IUCN and SNV supported a peer-learning visit to UWAMAKIZI for community governance structures (e.g., VNRCs, WUAs, and VLUMs) And local authorities, helping participants draw practical lessons on riparian protection, terracing, tree nurseries and community-led conservation. In parallel, IUCN strengthened uptake of Inclusive Green Growth and water stewardship tools (i.e., IGG tool, AWS standard) through targeted engagement with AMCOS, local government officers and district technical staff in Rukwa, helping identify water risks and improve understanding of how environmental and social standards can be integrated into

local production systems. In Kilombero, IUCN also facilitated cross-landscape exchange between the Sumbawanga and Kilombero SUSTAIN Eco teams, while a learning visit by the VPO to Kilombero helped showcase interventions such as the kizimba agrochemical waste model and cocoa agroforestry as scalable approaches for inclusive green growth. Together, these efforts helped strengthen the knowledge, coordination and practical tools needed to support more resilient landscapes and livelihoods.



A herd of wildebeest on a green field, Arusha region, Tanzania © Maasai Magic

Outcome 3 – Investment in the protection and restoration of ecosystems and their services strengthens climate resilience for people and ecosystems

Outcome 3 summary: This outcome focuses on the shift from traditional development approaches to climate-resilient ones by emphasising greener and more inclusive investments. The programme aims to strengthen the connection between biodiversity data, Nature-based Solutions (NbS), and decision-making processes. Its goal is to make a compelling case for investing in ecosystems and attract innovative financing to support their protection and restoration.

Output		Summary Deliverables
3.1	Improved biodiversity data drives decisions for conservation management and contributes to ecosystem connectivity	• In Sumbawanga and Kilombero, 122 WUA members were trained in river health assessments using citizen science tools (TARISSfupi and MiniSASS) across the Katuma and Msaginya sub-catchments, helping improve river condition from heavily impacted classes (E/D) in February to C and B status by December. • In Kilombero, 36 anti-poaching patrols including 9 joint patrols helped reduce cattle encroachment by 63% on WMAs. • The LRI was piloted and validated in Sumbawanga, linking local land restoration actions to national and global environmental commitments.
3.2	Nature-based solutions (including restoration) deployed to enhance ecosystem functioning and climate-resilient livelihoods	• In Sumbawanga, around 64 ha of degraded riparian land were protected or restored through beacon installation, tree planting and buffer-zone protection (e.g., 40,000 water-friendly trees were planted along the Lake Kwela buffer zone), with WUAs independently restoring 17 ha and planting 1,604 trees along the Msaginya and Katuma rivers. • Livelihood-focused restoration support trained 104 beekeepers (49 Women, 55 Men) and 353 farmers (167 Women, 176 Men) on beekeeping and agroforestry practices linked to forest and landscape restoration. • In Kilombero, community-led restoration along the Ikwambi River rehabilitated 0.7 km of riparian zone and planted 17,331 native trees and grasses. • Cocoa-based agroforestry raised 600,459 seedlings, of which 558,430 were transplanted, restoring 1,187 ha and engaging 3,449 farmers, while creating 343 green jobs.
3.3	Innovative financing streams available for conservation and restoration of ecosystems and their services	• In Kilombero, PES feasibility follow-up engagement translated this into concrete next steps, including KSCL support for riparian restoration in Vidunda and the launch of a community forest carbon initiative in Vidunda, Chonwe and Udung'hu with CCT. • In Sumbawanga, 2 COCOBA groups were strengthened through due diligence, training and business planning, and each received an initial grant instalment to support beekeeping enterprises. • IUCN contributed to the revision of Tanzania's NDC 3.0, helping to align national climate commitments with practical lessons from the programme. • Through the Green Finance Campaign, implemented with the CEOrt under SUSTAIN Pro, the programme helped advance private-sector engagement in green and climate finance, creating stronger links between restoration, inclusive value chains, and future investment opportunities. • Through the SUSTAIN Champions Awards, 11 youth champions (7 in Tanzania, 4 in Mozambique) received small-scale support and training in ILM, entrepreneurship and communication to advance local innovation.

In Sumbawanga landscape, Outcome 3 focused on strengthening community-led ecosystem restoration while improving the data and local capacity needed to guide conservation decisions. Participatory River Health Assessments in the Katuma and Msaginya rivers established six monitoring committees and strengthened the use of TARISSfupi/MiniSASS by WUAs and partner institutions, giving communities a more active role in assessing river condition and informing catchment management. Restoration efforts then translated this evidence into action. Around 64 hectares of degraded riparian land were protected or restored through beacon installation, buffer-zone protection and tree planting, while Msaginya and Katuma WUAs independently mobilised communities, held village assemblies, and planted 1,604 trees to rehabilitate 17 hectares along key riverbanks. These efforts point to a gradual shift from SUSTAIN Eco facilitated restoration towards stronger local stewardship of water sources and riparian ecosystems. At the same time, SUSTAIN Eco linked restoration to livelihoods by training 104 beekeepers and 353 farmers in beekeeping and agroforestry practices that support both income generation and more sustainable land use. The project also advanced planning for the rehabilitation of the Uruwira irrigation scheme and identified additional restoration sites in Kabwaga, Kampuni, Kakese and Uruwira, creating a stronger basis for continued implementation in 2026.

Spotlight: Restoring the Lake Kwela buffer zone

In Sumbawanga, SUSTAIN Eco continued to support community-led restoration around Lake Kwela, combining physical demarcation, tree planting and local stewardship to protect this important water body. A total of 40,000 water-friendly trees were planted along the buffer zone, while beacons and awareness activities helped reinforce protection of sensitive riparian areas. The restoration effort was closely linked to local governance and community engagement, with village leaders, WUAs and local committees helping to maintain the site and protect young trees from fire and encroachment. Together, these actions are helping to stabilise the shoreline, reduce runoff and sedimentation, and restore the ecological functions of the Lake Kwela landscape.



Lake Kwela before the resoration activities in Jan 2025 © SNV



Lake Kwela after the restoration activities Feb 2026 © SNV

In Kilombero landscape, Outcome 3 focused on strengthening the links between biodiversity monitoring, restoration, climate-resilient livelihoods and conservation finance. Participatory monitoring expanded through support to ILUMA WMA and three WUAs, with 75 WUA members trained and equipped to use TARISSfupi for river health assessment. The results were used to identify sources of degradation, engage communities in corrective action and improve river condition over the course of 2025, from more heavily impacted classes in February to lower modification and near-natural conditions by December. In parallel, support to ILUMA WMA strengthened law enforcement and boundary monitoring through CyberTracker-enabled patrols, contributing to a 63% reduction in cattle encroachment and improved habitat conditions for wildlife recovery.

Restoration and livelihood interventions also progressed. Along the Ikwambi River, community members rehabilitated 0.7 km of riparian zone through re-channelling and planting native trees and grasses, while cocoa-based agroforestry scaled up further through TARI Ifakara, engaging 3,449 farmers and restoring 1,187 hectares. Beekeeping and aquaculture also expanded as part of the project's nature-based enterprise approach, helping diversify incomes while reinforcing sustainable land and water management. At the same time, SUSTAIN Eco began to open longer-term financing pathways, building on the 2024 PES feasibility: (i) Follow-up engagement with KSCL, included KSCL donating 400 native tree seedlings for riparian restoration along the Great Ruaha River, (ii) a new community forest carbon initiative in Vidunda, Chonwe and Udung'hu with Compassionate Carbon Tanzania (CCT), using the Joint Natural Resource Management Plan and village committees to support mapping, verification and community stewardship as the pilot is being set up.


Degraded Ikwambi river before restoration © AWF


Ikwambi river rechannelled © AWF


Ikwambi river rechannelled © AWF

At a broader level, IUCN through SUSTAIN Eco supported Outcome 3 by strengthening the evidence, partnerships and financing pathways needed to sustain ecosystem restoration and climate-resilient livelihoods beyond the project period. This included joint support to river health monitoring in Sumbawanga through TARISSfupi-based training and committee formation, helping embed community-led biodiversity monitoring within catchment management. IUCN also strengthened community financing mechanisms in Sumbawanga by supporting COCOBA groups with due diligence, training and initial grants for beekeeping enterprises, linking conservation with locally managed income opportunities. Through the SUSTAIN Champions Awards, the programme also supported 11 youth champions — 7 in Tanzania and 4 in Mozambique — with small-scale awards and training in integrated landscape management, entrepreneurship and communication for sustainability. Their ideas ranged from organic composting and hydroponic farming to riparian restoration and environmental school clubs, highlighting the role of youth-led innovation in advancing restoration, resilient livelihoods and environmental stewardship.

Beyond landscape implementation, IUCN worked with SUSTAIN Pro to update and expand the LRI to include Sumbawanga and Mozambique, with baseline assessments now completed across the landscapes and follow-up knowledge products under preparation, including an e-book, policy brief and peer-reviewed paper. This work is already attracting interest from partners such as SAGCOT and the CEOrt, with institutionalisation planned as a priority for 2026. IUCN also contributed to national policy dialogue through engagement in the revision of Tanzania's NDC 3.0, drawing on SUSTAIN experience in climate-smart agriculture, water management, and local governance. At the same time, the programme continued to show how emerging value chains such as agroforestry, beekeeping and aquaculture can support restoration while creating more resilient livelihoods. These efforts also linked to the Green Finance Campaign led with the CEOrt under SUSTAIN Pro, which is helping connect practical landscape investments with wider private-sector interest in green and climate finance.



Vidunda branded products sold in Nanenane © AWF

Gender and Youth

In 2025, SUSTAIN Eco continued strive for increased gender and youth inclusion across implementation in both landscapes, though this remains a challenge due to existing cultural norms and the slow shift towards more balanced structures and processes. In Sumbawanga, this was reflected in targeted support to women and youth champions, stronger attention to women's participation in training, and continued awareness raising on equitable land rights through CCROs. In Kilombero, AWF applied gender-responsive approaches across governance, climate-smart agriculture and conservation enterprises, with stronger results where women and youth were directly targeted, including through girls' participation in conservation activities and support to women- and youth-led livelihood initiatives. At programme level, IUCN continued to promote more inclusive participation in activities such as COCOBA support, local governance engagement and river health monitoring, while also supporting the SUSTAIN Champions Awards, which backed 11 youth champions in Tanzania and Mozambique (7 are women) with training in integrated landscape management, entrepreneurship, gender responsiveness and communication for sustainability. Overall, 2025 confirmed that inclusion is strongest where it is designed intentionally from the outset, and strengthening women's and youth leadership will remain a priority in 2026.



Farmer in the field during a training session on water quality analysis, Sumbawanga, Tanzania © IUCN

Knowledge Management, Policy & Communications

In 2025, SUSTAIN Eco continued to strengthen knowledge generation, policy engagement and communications across both landscapes, with greater emphasis on documenting field experience, increasing programme visibility, and translating lessons into products that can inform practice beyond the project period.

In Sumbawanga landscape, SNV documented a series of field-based stories and visual products on forest governance, land tenure and ecosystem restoration, including stories on Samazi forest sustainability, changing norms around land ownership, and community-led restoration around Lake Kwela. These were complemented by documentaries, posters and leaflets developed with local groups and technical partners, and by direct outreach through the Nanenane Agricultural Exhibition, where the project engaged more than 700 visitors. ***In Kilombero landscape***, AWF used radio, television and digital platforms to expand public outreach, with media campaigns reaching an estimated 618 rural community members. Technical products completed during the year included the PES feasibility assessment for Vidunda and the Integrated Natural Resources Management training manual, both of which now support ongoing implementation.

At programme level, IUCN led a broader SUSTAIN media campaign through a dedicated landing page and a mix of feature stories, photo stories and op-eds. Landscape factsheets and the Theory of Change graphic were finalised and communicated, while the SUSTAIN Champions Awards were also profiled as part of programme outreach. In parallel, the Green Finance Campaign, implemented with the CEOrt, added an important knowledge and communications dimension to the programme. In 2025, the campaign produced three Green Finance toolkits, two thought-leadership articles, a national webinar, an in-person Green Finance Forum, a Nanenane workshop, and the Eye on Tanzania Sustainability – Private Sector & Green Finance insight report, while also reaching over 83,000 people and generating more than 18,500 active interactions through its digital campaign. These products helped translate green finance concepts into practical guidance for businesses and strengthened links between landscape experience, private-sector engagement and future investment pathways. Work is also underway to finalise the LRI e-book and peer-reviewed publication, as well as publications on integrated landscape management and multi-level governance.

Lessons Learned

- **Stronger coordination leads to better local action**: Across both landscapes, governance structures performed best where coordination was strengthened not only within individual committees, but also between village, ward, district and landscape levels. Horizontal and vertical dialogues, joint planning processes, and integrated action between WUAs, VNRCs, VLUMs and other local bodies helped reduce overlaps, clarify mandates and improve accountability. In Kilombero, this contributed to fewer conflicts and more coordinated enforcement; in Sumbawanga, it strengthened alignment between local priorities and district systems.





- **Inclusive governance requires intentional design:** The programme continued to show that women's and youth participation improves where activities are deliberately designed around access, timing, relevance and leadership opportunities. This was evident in women and youth champion training, land tenure awareness, school environmental clubs, and targeted support to women- and youth-led enterprises. At the same time, persistent barriers in land ownership, institutional representation and social norms confirmed that inclusion cannot be achieved through open invitation alone and will require continuous persistence over time.

- **Community ownership is critical for sustaining restoration:** Restoration was most effective where communities and local institutions moved beyond participation to active leadership. In Sumbawanga, WUAs increasingly led riverbank restoration, awareness raising and local planning. In Kilombero, joint patrols, community restoration of riparian zones, and stronger links between governance bodies and villages helped turn enforcement into stewardship.





- **Nature-based Solutions are most effective when linked to livelihoods:** Across both landscapes, uptake was strongest where restoration activities were connected to tangible economic benefits. Beekeeping, agroforestry, cocoa systems, aquaculture and other emerging value chains helped make conservation relevant to households while also reinforcing ecosystem recovery. The programme's experience suggests that NbS gain stronger traction when they are linked to income, local enterprise and practical value-chain opportunities.

- **Repeated support matters more than one-off training:** The year reinforced that capacity building is most effective when followed by mentoring, refresher support and practical application. This was particularly clear in agroforestry, climate-smart agriculture, committee performance and conservation enterprise development. Follow-up assessments showed that where extension support and coaching continued, uptake and performance were stronger.





- **Sustainability depends on financing and institutional anchoring**: By 2025, it became increasingly clear that many local gains are technically strong but still vulnerable without longer-term financing and clearer institutional uptake. This was evident in the challenges facing some governance structures, the need to formalise MSPs and steering mechanisms, and the emphasis placed on PES, carbon pathways, community grants, COCOBAs, KNCC support and the Green Finance Campaign. The lesson is that capacity and coordination alone are not enough; they must be matched by viable financing and stronger integration into district, regional and national systems.

These lessons will guide implementation in the final year, with greater emphasis on consolidating local ownership, strengthening sustainability mechanisms, and translating field-level results into longer-term institutional and financial pathways.

Looking ahead to 2026

As SUSTAIN Eco enters its final year, the focus will be on consolidating results, embedding successful approaches in local institutions, and preparing the strongest interventions for continuation beyond project closure. Across both landscapes, this means moving from implementation at scale towards sustainability: strengthening governance systems, deepening local ownership, maintaining restoration gains, and linking proven approaches to longer-term financing and policy uptake.

Under **Outcome 1**, priority will be given to consolidating governance structures and multi-level coordination. This includes continued support to WUAs, VNRCs, VLUMs and district actors, follow-up on joint planning and accountability, further support to women and youth leadership, and continued formalisation of platforms such as the Sumbawanga–Katavi MSP and the KNCC. Work will also continue on forest gazettement, land tenure, citizen-science monitoring and documentation of lessons on governance, inclusion and equity, so that local experience can better inform wider policy and practice.

Under **Outcome 2**, efforts will focus on strengthening ILM in practice. In Sumbawanga, this will include follow-up on climate-smart agriculture, centres of excellence, water audits, pasture demonstration plots and cattle troughs, alongside continued riparian protection and agroforestry uptake. In Kilombero, attention will centre on implementation of joint natural resource management plans, continued farmer mentoring, restoration of upper catchments, and expansion of practical models such as agrochemical waste management and conservation-compatible production systems. Across both landscapes, the emphasis will remain on linking compliance, restoration and livelihoods in ways that are locally relevant and institutionally anchored.



Farmers in the field during a training sesssion on water quality analysis, Sumbawanga, Tanzania © IUCN

Under **Outcome 3**, the programme will concentrate on sustaining restoration and strengthening the financing and enterprise models that can keep it going. This includes continued support to beekeeping, agroforestry, aquaculture and other nature-based enterprises, follow-up on river health monitoring and restoration, and movement from feasibility to early implementation for mechanisms such as PES and carbon-linked initiatives. In Kilombero, this will also include further work with ILUMA WMA, TARI Ifakara and strategic investors; in Sumbawanga, support will continue for WUA-led restoration, enterprise development and rehabilitation work linked to water irrigation and production systems.

Across the **programme, knowledge, learning and communications** will remain important in the final year. Priority tasks include finalising the LRI e-book and related publications, completing products on integrated landscape management and multi-level governance, documenting gender and youth lessons, and continuing to package stories, visual products and evidence for wider use. The Green Finance Campaign will also continue to connect landscape experience with private-sector interest in restoration, nature-positive enterprise and climate finance, while MEL will focus on qualitative impact, management response to the Mid-Term Review, and evidence needed for closure and future uptake.

Sustainability & exit strategy

In response to the Mid-Term Review recommendations no.8

Work has already begun to identify the most viable institutional pathways for sustaining SUSTAIN Eco outcomes beyond project closure. The programme is using 2026 to clarify responsibilities, build on existing partnerships, and position the strongest interventions for continuation through institutions that are already active in the landscapes. These pathways align broadly with the programme's theory of change.

Under **pathway 1 on inclusive governance, equity and rights**, continuity is expected through institutions that already hold formal mandates: district councils, basin water boards, WUAs, VNRCs, VLUMs, REMSO, the Sumbawanga–Katavi MSP and the Kilombero Conservation Champions Network. This includes concrete follow-up on forest gazettement in Kafukoka, Mshani and Kilembo; continued awareness work by women and youth champions; support to CCRO processing; updating the Lwiche WUA constitution; and sustaining MSP and KNCC coordination through secretariat, steering and fundraising functions.

Under **pathway 2 on sustainable agriculture and innovative Nature-based Solutions**, continuity is expected through extension, research and local management systems: TARI Ifakara's cocoa research and learning site; district extension support for farmer field schools, crop centres of excellence and climate-smart agriculture; TALIRI and Katavi regional support for pasture plots; WUA- and basin-led riparian restoration and river health monitoring; continued beekeeping and agroforestry support through REMSO and LGAs; and follow-up on waste management, restoration and catchment planning through KSCL, AMCOS, RBWB and district authorities.

Under **pathway 3 on catalysing investment**, continuity is expected through financing mechanisms that have already started to emerge: COCOBA groups can continue through district community development support, market linkages and follow-up coaching; KNCC and CBO grants provide a platform for locally led fundraising and proposal development; PES and carbon work in Vidunda can build on the JNRMP, village committees, KSCL engagement and Compassionate Carbon Tanzania; and ILUMA WMA already has active revenue streams and investor partnerships that can continue to support conservation and community benefits.

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