# Strengthening Kenya's Environmental Governance through Inclusive Nature-Based Solutions, Climate Services and Indigenous and Local Knowledge

POLICY BRIEF

January 2026

## Purpose

This policy brief presents a consolidated synthesis of the major insights and strategic recommendations emerging from the Multi-Level Policy Analysis conducted as part of the ALBATROSS Horizon Europe project across five Sub-Saharan African countries: Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, and Tanzania. Of the 252 documents analyzed, 53 were from Kenya. This policy brief highlights Kenya's progress, gaps, and opportunities in integrating Nature-based Solutions (NbS), climate services, gender-responsive approaches, and Indigenous and local knowledge, into environmental and climate frameworks. It is intended to inform and guide national and county-level policymakers, development planners, and practitioners in the design of evidence-based policies to address environmental and climatic challenges.

## Executive Summary

Kenya has made notable and sustained progress in strengthening its environmental and climate policy landscape, demonstrating a growing commitment to sustainable development, green growth, and climate resilience. The country continues to refine policy instruments, integrate global frameworks, and advance coordinated actions that address emerging environmental challenges and long-term climate risks.

Findings from the study show that Kenya's environmental and climate policies strongly align with SDG 15 (77%), SDG 6 (74%), and SDG 13 (57%). However, gender equality (SDG 5) (32%) and education (SDG 4) (19%) remain underrepresented. Drought (64%) and flooding (68%) remain the most prominently addressed hazards across Kenya's policy landscape. While 75% of policies reference Nature-based Solutions (NbS), only 30% reflect strong and comprehensive integration. Climate services are included in 60% of policies; however, nearly half lack systematic or consistent application. Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge (IKLK) is acknowledged in 50% of documents, yet its incorporation into policy frameworks remains uneven and insufficiently embedded.

To close these gaps, Kenya must strengthen legislative anchoring, innovative financing, and cross-sectoral coordination, while mainstreaming gender equity and IKLK.



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# Key Findings

## Policy alignment with SDG

- Kenya's environmental and climate policies strongly align with several SDGs: 77% with SDG 15 (Life on Land), 74% with SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 57% with SDG 13 (Climate Action) and 53% with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

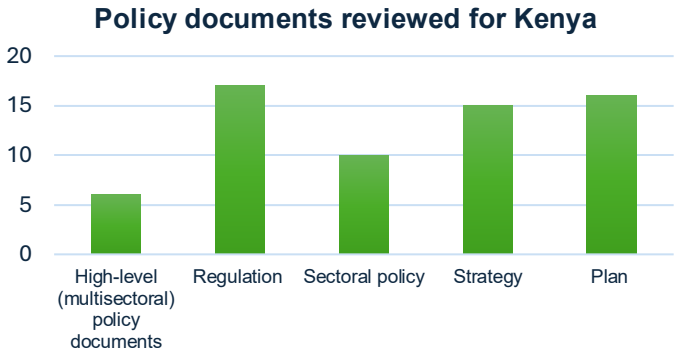


*Figure 1. Types of policy instruments reviewed for Kenya*

- Gender Equality (SDG 5) and Quality Education (SDG 4) remain significantly underrepresented, appearing in only 32% and 19% of policy documents, respectively.

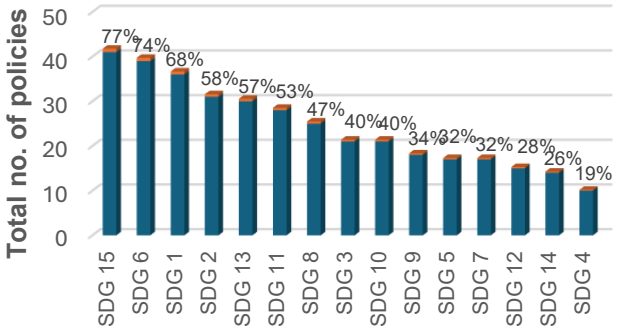


*Figure 2: Distribution of SDG themes in the studied policy documents of Kenya. (Source ALBATROSS multi-level policy analysis report -D6.1, August 2025)*

## Climate Hazards Addressed

- Drought and flooding are the most frequently addressed hazards (64% and 68% of policies).
- Other risks include soil erosion (45%) coastal erosion (23%), landslides (28%), and wildfires (19%)

## Nature based Solutions (NbS)

**Key insights**

- 75% of policy documents reference NbS measures, though only 30% demonstrate strong and comprehensive integration.
- The most targeted ecosystems include freshwater systems (65%), forests (60%), coastal and marine areas (34%), agricultural landscapes (32%), while urban environments and grasslands receive comparatively limited attention.
- Examples are the Kenya National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2019) and the Environmental Policy (2013).
- Across these policies, typical NbS interventions include reforestation, watershed restoration, agroforestry, mangrove rehabilitation, and various erosion-control efforts.

**Policy recommendations**

- Embed NbS into national and county development planning, e.g. Vision 2030, Medium Term Plans, and CIDPs, while expanding their application in land use, infrastructure, and urban frameworks.
- Strengthen sectoral and legislative frameworks by updating key laws such as EMCA, the Water Act, and the Land Act to mandate NbS, and enhance strategies like Wildlife Strategy and Climate Smart Agriculture with ecosystem-based adaptation measures.



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- Position NbS as a central pillar of climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction by integrating natural infrastructure (wetlands, forests, mangroves etc.) into national and county resilience strategies such as The National Disaster Risk Management Policy (2017)
- Integrate NbS into urban planning, by amending Urban Areas and Cities Act, Physical Planning Act, National Spatial Plan (2015-2045) to require urban green infrastructure, and nature-based stormwater management.
- Mobilize innovative nature financing mechanisms and instruments for large scale NbS that will incentivize private sector investments (*e.g. biodiversity credits, blended finance models, thematic green bonds, payment for ecosystem services, carbon markets),* by establishing NbS-specific funding streams within climate finance policies. For example, The Climate Change, Carbon Markets Regulations (2024) is weak in wetlands, coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation frameworks that integrate NbS-specific indicators and reporting mechanisms, to track progress and co-benefits.

## Climate Services (CS)

**Key insights**

- 60% of policies documents reference climate services, with Kenya National Framework for Climate Services (2023), Medium-Term Plan IV (2023–2027), and the Meteorology Bill (2023) demonstrating high level of integration.
- Key components emphasized include climate observation and monitoring, early warning systems, hydro-meteorological data, and climate risk assessments.
- Sectors commonly addressed are disaster risk reduction (36%), water resources management (32%), and agriculture and food security (23%).
- Overall, 32% of policies show a high level of integration, 25% moderate integration, 4% limited integration, while 45% do not mention climate services.

**Policy Recommendations**

- Enhance the integration of climate services into national and county level policy frameworks to support evidence-based decision-making. For example, the National Adaptation Plan (2015-2030) could further strengthen the role of climate services across sectoral adaptation strategies.
- Improve the availability and accessibility of gender-responsive and socially inclusive climate data.
- Mainstream early warning systems in various sectors – agriculture, water, infrastructure planning etc. – to enable proactive risk reduction. For example, the National Water Master Plan (2015-2030) could integrate climate projections into flood and drought risk planning.
- Build and enhance institutional capacity for climate modelling, forecasting, and long-term climate projections.

## Social and Gender Inclusion

**Key insights**

- Most reviewed policy documents include social inclusion considerations. However, many do not comprehensively address all relevant needs.
- 36 % of documents include specific gender-responsive measures.
- 32 % acknowledge gender inequality but lack concrete actions.
- Another 32% (one-third) has limited or no consideration of gender inclusion.
- Stronger examples are in Kenya Vision 2030, Fourth Medium-term Plan 2023–2027.
- Sectoral environmental policies demonstrate weaker gender inclusion.
- Community-driven restoration and biodiversity efforts involving women and marginalized groups are underutilized.



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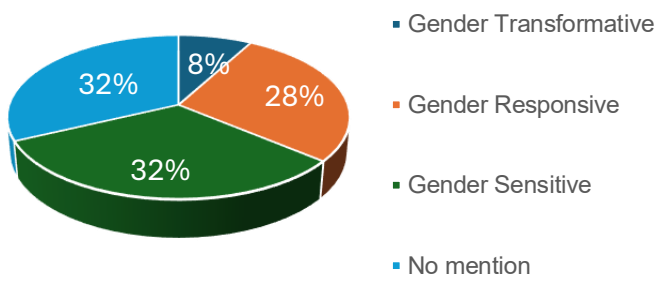
**Policy recommendations**

- Strengthen gender-responsive NbS and CS into policies and sectoral strategies both at national and subnational level. For example, the National Environmental Policy (2013), the National Spatial Plan (2015-2045), and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, contain limited gender inclusion measures.
- Promote gender responsive climate services and DRR/DRM; e.g., National Disaster Risk Management Policy (2017) and National Framework for Climate Services (2023) cite gender as a principle but omit tailored strategies for women and marginalized groups.
- Equally, Turkana County Climate Change Action Plan (2023–2027) and Turkana Emergency and Disaster Management Act (2016) could better integrate gender-responsive early warning systems.
- Link economic opportunities and livelihoods to NbS approaches. For example, the National Adaptation Plan (2015-2030) and the National Climate Change Action Plan III (2023-2027), both include gender inclusion measures but consider their linkages to climate-resilient livelihood opportunities to a limited extent.
- Ensure gender-disaggregated data and indicators in climate services and NbS monitoring frameworks.
- Support capacity building for women-led climate initiatives at national and county levels.

**Social and Gender Inclusion in Reviewed Kenya Policy Documents**




## Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge (IKLK)

**Key insights**

- 50% of the reviewed policy documents contains concrete provisions for integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge (IKLK) either comprehensively or partially.
- IKLK is referenced in several strategic frameworks, but lacks systemic integration.
- Indigenous knowledge offers insights for sustainable land use, water management, climate adaptation, and disaster preparedness.

**Policy recommendations**

- Integrate IKLK into national policy and regulatory frameworks to ensure formal recognition and legal enforceability. For example, EMCA 1999; and the Climate Change Act 2016/2023 recognize diverse knowledge systems but currently lack enforceable mechanisms for applying IKLK.
- The Land Act 2012, Water Act 2016, Water Resources Regulations 2021, and Wildlife Act 2013 entirely omit IKLK-based approaches.
- Recognize IKLK as an essential input in environmental, climate and natural resource management processes – for example, by embedding it in the Climate Change and Forestry Strategic Plan (2023-2027), and the Forest and Landscape Restoration Plan (2023-2027).
- Promote the co-development of NbS and climate services by combining scientific knowledge with Indigenous knowledge.
- Strengthen participatory research and establish knowledge-sharing platforms that elevate community-driven insights.
- Incorporate IKLK in education systems, extension services, and community-based monitoring to enhance locally informed decision-making and sustainable practices.



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## Conclusion and Next Steps

Kenya has laid a solid foundation for integrating Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and climate services into its environmental governance. To fully unlock their potential, legislative frameworks must be made more inclusive, cross-sectoral coordination enhanced, and innovative financing more strategically targeted. By embedding gender equity and Indigenous knowledge into these efforts, Kenya can accelerate its transition toward resilient and sustainable development outcomes.

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**Source:** This brief is based on ALBATROSS Horizon Europe Deliverable D6.1: *Multi-level policy analysis* (Nyasimi, Almassy, Muhwanga, et al., 2025). For more detailed information and supporting evidence, readers are referred to the full report and country specific summaries.



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