

COALITION WILD 

23-24

BI-ANNUAL REPORT





FOREWORD

GREETINGS!

I am Zacharia Mutinda Muteti, a passionate conservationist trained in Wildlife Management and Environmental Studies. Deeply concerned about the future of human-wildlife interactions and the restoration of degraded landscapes that support local livelihoods with ecosystem goods and services, **my journey with CoalitionWILD has been transformative**, shaping both my personal and professional development in ways I could have never imagined three years ago.

Joining this incredible network of passionate youthful individuals has provided me with invaluable opportunities to learn, network, grow, and make a tangible impact on my community and the environment. From the very beginning, **CoalitionWILD has offered unwavering support, connecting me with mentors, resources, and peers within a global community of like-minded conservationists**. Through the EXCEerator program, EXCEerator_Intensive, various workshops, webinars, and collaborative projects, I have gained new skills, insights, and the confidence to pursue ambitious conservation initiatives.

Some of the most profound aspects of my experience with CoalitionWILD has been the sense of belonging, empowerment, and mentorship it has fostered. Being part of a global movement of young professionals dedicated to environmental stewardship has reinforced my commitment to conservation and inspired me to strive for greater heights in achieving planet-earth optimism. The connections I've made and the experiences I've shared with fellow participants have been instrumental in driving forward my work with the Eco Jipe Program and other conservation efforts.

CoalitionWILD's emphasis on youth leadership and innovation has been particularly impactful. It has shown me that young people have the power to create meaningful change and that our voices and actions are vital in shaping the future of our planet.

This realization has fuelled my determination to continue advocating for sustainable practices and engaging communities in conservation efforts. Through these experiences, I have honed my project management skills.

As I reflect on my journey, I am immensely grateful for the opportunities and support CoalitionWILD has provided through the Keystone Species Alliance and the WILD Foundation. **It is an honour to be part of such a dynamic and inspiring network**, and I look forward to continuing this journey of growth and positive impact alongside CoalitionWILD cohort fellows and steering committee members. Through CoalitionWILD, we've been able to engage hundreds of Jipe community members in conservation education. This led us to realize the community's strengths, weaknesses, current struggles, prevailing challenges, and identification of opportunities, developing a complex matrix of possible intervention strategies to address the pressing issues.

This exercise has not come easy; we've faced enormous challenges that have shaped my resilience, and adaptability, and honed my skills in navigating difficulties. One key feature that played out exceptionally well is my engagement with my mentor.

Providing varying perspectives through the CoalitionWILD mentorship program helped us overcome obstacles that would have been otherwise stumbling blocks. This aspect alone has led to the realisation of two milestones: bringing the community together in a legally registered community-based organization and the registration of my NGO. These milestones have yielded great success over two years.

Lastly, through CoalitionWILD, we have established a strong stakeholder management strategy and garnered technical, financial, and expert support at varying capacities.

Although still young, our determination remains steadfast in the realization of our objectives guided by the Global Biodiversity Framework and the 23 targets. We are thinking globally while acting within Jipe.

All thanks to the generosity of the WILD Foundation, Jipe community, Keystone Species Alliance, KU Leuven University, and the Rufford Foundation, all in the spirit of CoalitionWILD Director, Yen Parico.

Thank you, CoalitionWILD, for believing in my dreams, ideas, and ambitions, and for empowering fellow youth like me to make a difference.

With gratitude,



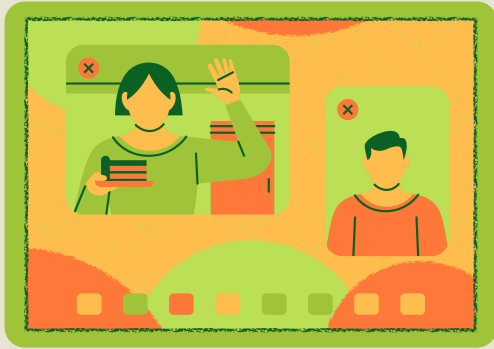
Zacharia Mutinda Muteti

2021 EXCEerator Graduate and Eco-Lab Fellow



EXCELERATOR PROGRAM

The EXCEerator Program empowers young conservation leaders (35 and under) through a free, six-month virtual experience designed to turn ideas into impactful action. Participants strengthen their skills in project planning, fundraising, storytelling, and leadership while benefiting from mentorship and a global peer network.



EXCELERATOR PROGRAM

2022-2023 ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Thina Arrifin: A Young Conservationist's Mission to Protect Brunei's Sun Bears

In the lush, verdant forests of **Brunei Darussalam**, a lesser-known but critically important species roams free - the sun bear. As one of the world's smallest bear species, sun bears play a vital role in maintaining the delicate balance of Borneo's tropical ecosystems. Yet, their populations have been steadily declining due to habitat loss and poaching.

Enter EXCEerator 2022 alumna Thina Ariffin, a young environmental analyst and youth engagement coordinator from Brunei who is on a mission to change the fate of these remarkable creatures. Through her work with the non-profit organization Borneo Futures Sdn Bhd and as a **focal point for the IUCN's sun bear international action plan**, Thina is spearheading a groundbreaking initiative to establish a comprehensive baseline study on sun bear populations in her home country.



Thina's passion for environmental conservation was first sparked during her university studies in environmental science and technology. ***"I started to work at New Futures, which does a lot of conservation work. My boss was a pioneer of sun bear research, and when he was approached to become the focal point for Brunei, he thought it would be better to have a local in the position. That's how it landed in my lap, and I just took it and ran with it,"*** she recalls.

Despite having little prior experience in conservation, Thina embraced the challenge with enthusiasm and determination. ***"It was a steep learning curve, but I don't regret it at all. My boss guided me, but a lot of it was also learning on my own - creating the proposal, securing the funding, and figuring out the execution. Looking back, I wish I had joined the CoalitionWILD EXCEerator program from the start, as it could have provided me with a more comprehensive overview of what to expect."***



The EXCEerator program proved to be a game-changer for Thina's project. ***"The program helped me manage my project more effectively. It gave me the tools I needed to set clear goals, create timelines, and stay focused, especially when working on a project that encompasses an entire country. The CoalitionWILD team was also invaluable in helping me refocus and stay on track."***

With the support of the EXCEerator program, Thina set out to conduct a baseline study on sun bears in Brunei. This ambitious undertaking involved a comprehensive interview-based survey to gather data on where sun bears have been sighted across the country. ***"We wanted to visualize this information on a map to understand the current situation and identify areas where conservation action is most urgent,"*** Thina explains.

The results of the study, recently published in the "**Baseline Study of Sun Bears in Brunei Darussalam**" report, have been nothing short of eye-opening. ***"Unlike in many other parts of the sun bear's range, we found that the species is widespread in Brunei and occurs even close to urban areas and human-dominated landscapes. This likely indicates a relatively low hunting pressure, but it also highlights the need for targeted conservation efforts to ensure these bears can continue to thrive."***

One of the key findings of the report is the prevalence of sun bears in areas with high human activity. ***"This was a surprise to us,"*** Thina admits. ***"It suggests that sun bears in Brunei may have adapted to coexist with humans to a greater extent than in other parts of their range. However, this also means that we need to be vigilant about potential conflicts and ensure that the bears' habitat is protected."***

The report also emphasizes the urgent need for more comprehensive research and monitoring of sun bear populations in Brunei. ***"We have a good baseline now, but we need to build on this knowledge and continue tracking the trends over time. This will help us develop effective conservation strategies and ensure the long-term survival of sun bears in the country."***

Thina's work has not gone unnoticed. Her dedication and leadership have earned her recognition within the conservation community, both locally and globally. Looking to the future, Thina is eager to build on the momentum she has created. *"I hope to see better awareness of sun bear conservation in Brunei, and for people to take more active steps to protect these amazing animals and the wider biodiversity of our country. Brunei is so biodiverse, and we need to do more to understand and safeguard it."*

To that end, Thina is already planning her next steps. *"I'm working on a proposal for additional conservation work, both within Brunei and potentially beyond. Sun bears may be the focus, but I want to explore how we can protect other species as well. It's a keystone species, but we can't just focus on one – we need to take a more holistic approach to conservation."*

As Thina looks ahead, she is filled with a sense of optimism and purpose. *"I **believe capacity-building programs like the EXCEerator are crucial for empowering the next generation of conservationists**. They provide the tools and support we need to turn our passion into tangible action. I'm grateful to have had that opportunity, and I'm excited to see what the future holds."*

With her unwavering dedication, boundless energy, and deep-rooted love for the natural world, Thina Ariffin is a true inspiration. Her work to protect Brunei's sun bears is not just about saving a single species – it's about preserving the delicate balance of an entire ecosystem, and paving the way for a future where humans and nature can coexist in harmony.

Prativa Kaspal: A Pangolin Protector in Nepal



In the lush, mountainous landscapes of Nepal, a quiet revolution is unfolding, spearheaded by a passionate conservation champion named Prativa Kaspal. As an alumna of the EXCEerator program, Prativa has embarked on a remarkable journey to safeguard one of the world's most endangered species – the pangolin.

Prativa's project, **"Habitat Ecology and Community Conservation for Pangolin spp. in Nepal,"** is a testament to the transformative power of the EXCEerator program. Through this initiative, she has not only mobilized a diverse coalition of stakeholders but has also pioneered innovative strategies to raise awareness, empower local communities, and inspire the next generation of pangolin protectors.

One of Prativa's efforts is the creation of a **pangolin conservation calendar**. This publication blends the artistic talents of local students with a wealth of educational information. The calendar features artworks that capture the essence of the pangolin, from their intricate scales to their unique behaviors. Importantly, it also serves as a platform to convey critical information about these elusive creatures, including fascinating facts about their ecology and the legal protections in place to safeguard them.



Prativa's decision to incorporate student artwork was a strategic one, rooted in her understanding of the power of youth engagement. By tapping into the creativity and enthusiasm of the next generation, she has not only nurtured a sense of ownership and pride within the local community but has also laid the groundwork for long-term conservation efforts.

"The calendar has become a source of inspiration and empowerment for the students," Prativa explains. "They take immense pride in seeing their work showcased, and it has ignited a newfound passion for pangolin conservation within their hearts and minds."

To date, Prativa has overseen the production and distribution of **2,000 copies of the pangolin conservation calendar**, ensuring that the message of protection reaches far and wide. The calendar's bilingual design, featuring both English and Nepali, further enhances its accessibility and inclusivity, catering to a diverse audience.

Recognizing the importance of empowering the next generation of conservation leaders, Prativa has spearheaded an innovative two-day program targeted at graduate students. This comprehensive initiative, developed in collaboration with Khwopa College, provides a dynamic platform for young minds to delve deep into the intricacies of pangolin conservation.

The program's curriculum is a rich tapestry, woven with insights from a diverse team of experts. From botanists exploring the importance of biodiversity to national athletes sharing strategies for self-defense, the sessions equip participants with a well-rounded skill set to become effective advocates for pangolin protection.

One of the standout features of the program is the inclusion of hands-on training and field experiences. Participants are taken on demonstration trips to the nearby Community-based Pangolin Conservation Area, where they can observe the majestic creatures in their natural habitat and learn from seasoned conservation professionals.

EXCELERATOR PROGRAM

Expanding Reach, Empowering Global Environmental Leaders



In its sixth year, the EXCEerator program continued to empower emerging environmental leaders worldwide. To expand access and meet different learning needs, the program introduced two tracks for participants:

- **EXCEerator LIVE:** Combined 15 live workshops and 14 recorded sessions, allowing participants to engage directly with experts and peers in real time.
- **EXCEerator FLEX:** Offered a fully self-paced option with recorded sessions, discussion forums, and standalone webinars for those needing greater flexibility.

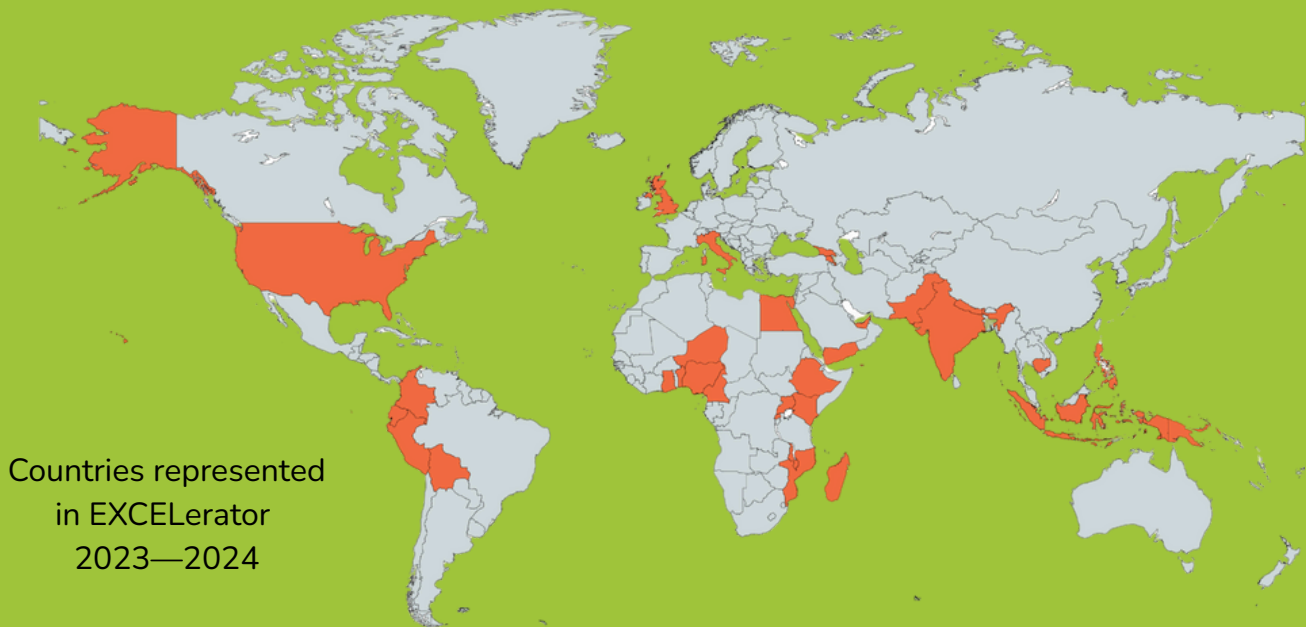
This blended approach ensured participants could choose a format that best fit their schedules and learning styles while equipping them to implement projects tackling challenges like waste management, coral restoration, and human-wildlife coexistence.

EXCEerator 2023 in numbers

- **EXCEerator LIVE:** 54 participants, 26 countries represented, 23 graduates (42% graduation rate)
- **EXCEerator FLEX:** 45 participants, 27 countries represented, 24 graduates (53% graduation rate — a program record)

The program's emphasis on the "3 Ps" — Project Development, Personal Growth, and Professional Network — has been key to its success. Through practical workshops, mentorship, and global connections, participants refined their projects, built leadership skills, and expanded their networks. Notably, participants directly engaged over 50,000 people, hosted 200+ workshops, planted thousands of trees, and removed tons of waste, creating real environmental impact and empowering local communities.

As the EXCEerator program continues to evolve, the CoalitionWILD team remains committed to providing emerging environmental leaders with the tools and support they need to drive positive change. The expansion of the program to include the LIVE and FLEX variants has been a crucial step in this direction, ensuring that the EXCEerator's reach and impact continue to grow in the years to come.



Countries represented
in EXCEerator
2023—2024

Tom Odeyo of EXCEerator LIVE: Rallying Support for the Conservation of Reptiles



In the heart of the Shimba Hills Ecosystem in Southern Kenya, Tom Odeyo is leading a community-driven initiative to raise awareness and rally support for the conservation of reptiles. As a participant in the 2023 EXCEerator program, Tom has harnessed the power of this transformative experience to amplify his environmental advocacy efforts.

Enhancing Personal and Professional Growth

Tom reflects on the profound impact of the EXCEerator program on his personal and professional development. *"The pitching training sessions and the constructive feedback from reviewers have been instrumental in helping me organize my ideas clearly and concisely,"* he says. *"This experience has made me more confident in articulating my points effectively in professional settings and public forums."*

Implementing an Impactful Environmental Project

Tom's project, which is still in progress, aims to foster community awareness and conservation support for reptiles in the Shimba Hills Ecosystem. *"With guidance from the CoalitionWILD program, I developed a comprehensive situation model and an effective implementation plan,"* he explains. *"So far, I have successfully monitored the project's progress and identified key strategies for communicating the importance of reptile conservation to the general public."*

Implementing a project of this scale was not without its challenges. Tom recalls, *"One of the major challenges I faced was logistical planning, mainly underestimating the scope of work and balancing the budget."* However, he adopted a more detailed and flexible planning approach, allowing for adjustments as needed. *"This involved constant monitoring of expenses and aligning them with the project's financial outline, ensuring that resources were utilized efficiently."*

Empowered as an Environmental Leader

The EXCEerator experience has profoundly influenced Tom's continued work as an environmental leader in his community and region. *"The program has greatly refined my communication and community engagement skills,"* he shares. *"I have learned effective strategies for bringing together diverse stakeholders and fostering collaborative efforts toward common environmental goals. This has empowered me to take a more proactive role in leading conservation initiatives within my community."*

Drawing on his own transformative journey, Tom offers valuable advice for future EXCEerator participants. *"I would advise them to approach the program with an open mind and a willingness to learn,"* he says. *"Embrace every opportunity for growth, actively engage with mentors and peers, and be prepared to adapt your strategies based on feedback and new insight."*

As Tom continues his mission to protect the reptiles of the Shimba Hills Ecosystem, his story stands as a testament to the power of programs like CoalitionWILD's EXCEerator to nurture and empower the next generation of environmental leaders.



I firmly believe that the EXCEerator LIVE program was exceptionally well-structured to cater to my project and learning needs, with detailed organization and a combination of pre-recorded and live sessions that allowed me to absorb content at my own pace, come prepared with questions, and feel more confident and engaged; the live sessions facilitated interaction and collaboration through breakout rooms, providing a fantastic opportunity to connect with other conservationists facing similar challenges, which enriched my learning experience and fostered a sense of community and support, making the program highly effective, informative, interactive, and collaborative.

Cyndi Karel Ngnah

2023-2024 EXCEerator LIVE program alumna

Hannah Mathenge of EXCEerator FLEX: Transformative Growth, Inside and Out

In the heart of Kenya's coastal region, a young environmental leader is spearheading a remarkable project that is transforming her community and protecting the delicate marine ecosystems. This is the story of Hannah Mathenge.

Transformative Growth, Inside and Out

For Hannah, the EXCEerator program has been a game-changer, catalyzing both her personal and professional development. *"Participating in the program has equipped me with essential project management and leadership skills,"* she explains. *"The insights I gained into budget planning and fundraising strategies have significantly improved my ability to structure and finance my projects effectively."*



Hannah's newfound expertise has not only strengthened her conservation efforts but also deepened her commitment to environmental protection. *"This experience has broadened my understanding of social entrepreneurship and reinforced my dedication to making a positive impact on the environment,"* she says.

Tackling Plastic Pollution, Protecting Turtles

At the heart of Hannah's project is the pressing issue of marine litter and its impact on sensitive turtle nesting grounds. Titled **"Plastic-Turtle Conflicts"**, her initiative focuses on mitigating plastic pollution along the Msambweni beaches.

"Through organized beach cleanups, we aim to reduce plastic waste and promote sustainable waste management practices," Hannah explains. *"The project encourages behavioral change, advocating for a shift from a linear use of resources to a circular approach that includes reuse, recycling, and upcycling."*

By involving the local community, Hannah's project not only addresses environmental concerns but also empowers residents by generating revenue from upcycled marine litter. *"We have observed a significant reduction in the amount of plastic waste dumped along our beaches, thanks to regular weekly cleanups,"* she says proudly.

Overcoming Challenges by Fostering Collaboration

While Hannah's project has yielded impressive results, it has not been without its challenges. *"One of the biggest hurdles was the rise in sea tides, which washed plastic and debris far from our reach,"* she recalls. *"Additionally, we encountered hostility from some community members who believed in the spiritual benefits of consuming sea turtles."*

To overcome these obstacles, Hannah and her team conducted extensive awareness campaigns and engaged with local leaders to promote the benefits of their project. *"Segmenting the community members to work on specific areas also helped mitigate conflicts and improve project efficiency,"* she explains.

Inspiring Future Environmental Leaders

The EXCEerator program has not only transformed Hannah's work but also influenced her approach to leadership and community engagement. *"The program has taught me how to manage conflicts and foster positive relationships within the community, which has been crucial in sustaining the momentum of our conservation efforts,"* she shares.

For future EXCEerator participants, Hannah's advice is clear: *"Embrace the learning opportunities and take the time to absorb the valuable knowledge and skills offered. Approach the program with an open mind and a commitment to making a positive impact on your community and the environment."*

As Hannah continues her journey, her story serves as an inspiration to aspiring environmental leaders, showcasing the power of innovation, collaboration, and unwavering dedication to creating a more sustainable future.

The EXCEerator FLEX program was meticulously structured to align with the requirements of my conservation project and learning objectives, systematically addressing every crucial aspect for crafting a structured project. It provided comprehensive guidance on fundamental elements, from identifying key ideas to conducting thorough analyses, equipping me with the tools for a well-rounded project plan.

As a project leader, it clarified roles and responsibilities in project management, emphasized clear and persuasive communication with stakeholders, and focused on proven fundraising methodologies to secure vital support. By covering these aspects, the program provided the knowledge and skills required to execute projects with excellence, ensuring I was equipped to navigate every stage with precision and confidence


Miriabelle Sossah

2023-2024 EXCEerator FLEX program alumna




The background is a dark green textured surface. It is decorated with various abstract shapes: a large white plus sign on the right, a smaller white plus sign on the left, and several white circles of different sizes. There are also organic, wavy shapes in light green and orange at the top and bottom edges.

ECO-LAB PROGRAM

A large white plus sign is located on the left side of the text block.

Through the Eco-Lab program, young changemakers access seed funding, grant writing, communications, and fundraising support through a holistic, capacity-building approach. Projects are developed in cohorts with training in project management, empowering participants to pilot on-the-ground work created through our EXCEerator program.

A white circle is located on the right side of the text block.



Eco Jipe Program Drives Positive Impact on Lake Jipe Ecosystem in Kenya

In the picturesque Lake Jipe region of southeastern Kenya, the Eco Jipe Program (EJP) has been making remarkable strides towards restoring the ecological integrity of this important RAMSAR wetland site. Led by Zacharia Mutinda, an EXCEerator alumnus supported by CoalitionWILD, the EJP has achieved several key milestones over the past year.

2023/24 Impact Report

By Zacharia Mutinda

Since March 2023, the Eco Jipe Program (EJP) has seen significant strides in its development, growth, and impacts at various levels. Our foundation began with two parties and now is at six with five young persons involved in our management and operations impacting more than **800 individuals**.

Our efforts initially focused on three villages of Jipe have expanded to reach five villages, one in Tanzania and four in Kenya. The communities we work with have proven to be receptive from the baseline surveys and acknowledged the need to engage with them in the education and awareness programs regarding the conservation of the Jipe ecosystem.



It has been a fascinating journey to listen to Jipe community members highlight their interconnectedness with the environment generally. Interestingly was the acceptance of their contribution to the degradation of both fish populations in the lake as well as vegetation clearance and overstocking in the area. **What really moved me was the community's desire to take part in restoring the degraded area. Their commitment to contributing to natural resource conservation and sustainable use was our biggest highlight during the baseline surveys.** As an outcome, the community came together to register a community-based organisation that comprised of more than 80 community members at inception; Jipe Conservation C.B.O was formed, and the Eco Jipe Program assisted the community in obtaining legal registration from the national government.

Although Lake Jipe remains an important dry-season refuge for elephants, we have witnessed seasonal and temporal dynamics in the number of elephants visiting the area. In December 2023-January 2024, we recorded the lowest number of elephants number 3. This reflects our research findings that the elephants leave the park when there is a scarcity of forage and water. The period recorded above-average rains; farmers harvested their crops with only three reported incidences of crop damage. This proves that crop production is one important livelihood that the Jipe community desires to do but is not only limited by elephant damage but also the influence of rainfall availability considering the semi-arid nature of the Jipe area.



In February we presented our baseline survey results to the Jipe community, and this attracted more community members to our work. During the ten-day expedition, **we recorded more than 350 members attending our meetings**, evaluating community-proposed projects. We supported one women's group with their proposed catering services project, which since has recorded a growth in their monthly income from service delivery as well as an increase in their assets. They bought extra chairs for hire and now earn more money than they made before our intervention.

Some projects were highly supported, some showing mixed reactions while others elucidated outright rejection. During this window, we noted community realisation of some in-depth understanding of proposed projects, while some members and groups changed their project ideas, we noted that there was a general understanding of the interconnectedness with nature. For instance, one women's group that wanted to run a laundry cleaning service dropped the idea and wanted to adopt tent-renting services. This came because of their understanding of current land tenure issues, scarcity of clean water during the rainy season and their need to serve the general community. March-May rains did well but farmers did not plant crops because elephant numbers increased. This alone pushed more community members into the lake for a livelihood. **The dry season kicked in by mid-June and elephant numbers have increased to around 74 as of July.**



The responsibility bore by the Jipe community members for the status of the Jipe ecosystem and their willingness to act in improving the situation boosted our inspiration to keep doing so. We have witnessed women's contribution in restoration efforts, planting trees and watering them over the past 4 months. Restructuring of Kachero Beach Management Unit to streamline their activities in protecting the lake and importantly their commitment to revenue generation from the local resources have been an important indicator of our efforts through sensitization and awareness creation through education workshops.

Although we have had yielding success stories from our initial stages, this has not come without challenges. We faced a significant challenge of land ownership when the local politician and a few elders presented a case in court over land ownership. This slowed our project speed and cost us time in analysing the situation at hand. We did not stop at that; however, we have continued our efforts in collaborative research and education ensuring that we are reaching the community members at the challenging time. Important to note is the willingness of the Jipe community to live with elephants despite the challenges they face, we noted a few encouraging statements as *"We love elephants, we see them every day, but we do not grow weary of seeing them. They hinder school attendance, damage property, and obstruct our travelling but we want to see them here every day!"* This said by a young man from Kachero highlights the community's willingness to coexist with wildlife.

We, the Eco Jipe Program and CoalitionWILD are committed to ensuring the coexistence prevails by supporting possible avenues of income for the Jipe community. We are working on alternatively sustainable livelihoods that would reduce overfishing and charcoal burning so that the lake can be restored eventually. We have received heartwarming feedback from various members of the Jipe community and we strive to do better by the day. Our next steps include delving into conservation education through climate adaptive agriculture that will involve learners in Jipe primary school and two community members to realise alternative crop production compared to conventional agricultural practices.

This work and impact would not have been realised without the non-ending support of CoalitionWILD, the WILD Foundation, Keystone Species Alliance, and the Rufford Foundation.



Tom and Zak Knowledge Exchange for CoalitionWILD

In August 2024, the Eco Jipe program I founded earlier this year was **the best thing that happened to me** after completing the EXCEerator program of CoalitionWILD two years back. In partnership with two Alumni of the Program from Kenya, Elvis and Kanana, we held lengthy discussions to work together on the conservation space. Upon registration, our next field activity was to run a week of workshops engaging the Jipe community in a series of participatory mapping discussions. During the planning phase, I chatted with the Director of CoalitionWILD, Yen, and she mentioned “Tom Odeyo” in one of our weekly engagements. I remembered him instantly although we had not talked despite having exchanged contacts four years before. Later I had the chance to talk to Thomas Odeyo, an old friend I had met in 2019 but never engaged on any prospects of working together due to different lines of interest.

It turned out that Tom had been through the EXCEerator program and now we had so much to catch up about. We had a couple of calls and reached a consensus to join the Eco-Jipe Program in the field of participatory mapping. As an amphibian, reptile and fish expert, there was more to be discussed on human-wildlife coexistence, such as snake bites and negative myths about reptiles. It was an unexpected but invaluable learning exchange, as the eight-hour drive from Nairobi to Lake Jipe gave us time to explore how our respective fields could align. Based at the National Museums of Kenya, Tom has a powerful network that allows him access to several key biodiversity areas. However, he had never been to Lake Jipe. During our week in the field, Tom observed that there was an avenue for us to collaborate. He mentioned that there is a Samaki Working Group at the Museums, one of the 16 working groups under Nature Kenya—the East Africa Natural History Society (EANHS), that focuses on the community conservation of fish in Kenya. Mind you, fishing is the primary livelihood of the Jipe community. We finished the participatory mapping exercise and that led to a vibrant exchange of ideas and information.

In September 2024, we collaborated with the **Samaki Working Group**. More than 50 community members were engaged in a three-day workshop at Lake Jipe with experts from the National Museums of Kenya in partnership with Nature Kenya, and plans were laid to continue collaborating in the conservation of the Jipe tilapia, an endangered fish species endemic to the Jipe ecosystem. We have already written a proposal together with Tom, and the activity we had in Jipe has laid the foundation for more collaboration. End of this month, we shall be having a virtual talk on the work we did together in Jipe and presenting to Nature Kenya members. We aim to reach a bigger audience and raise awareness of how vital the community and the lake are to each other. The goal now is to bring in partners that can sponsor projects encouraging the Jipe community to be stewards of their landscape and wetland, not just on the fish but on the whole ecosystem, including elephants and birds.



GLOBAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



Through the Global Mentorship Program, emerging environmental leaders are paired with experienced conservation professionals to build their skills, expand their networks, and strengthen their impact. This program bridges generations, fostering intergenerational dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration.



GLOBAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM 2023

Fostering a New Generation of Conservation Leaders



The 2023 Global Mentorship Program proved to be a transformative force in shaping the future of conservation leadership. The program connected emerging conservationists with experienced mentors, offering invaluable guidance, networks, and industry insights to address global environmental challenges.

52

mentees

52

mentors

42

countries represented

To build strong foundations, the program included dedicated training sessions for mentors and mentees, plus monthly conversation fiches with prompts, exercises, and resources to guide dialogue.

“The program was invaluable. I found it at a time when I truly needed guidance. I’m grateful for the space it created and the incredible work behind it.” — Winnie Atieno Agai, Mentee

“This program allowed me to connect with professionals who shared my interests, guiding me and evaluating my conservation skills. My mentor’s feedback was crucial for my career.” — Peter Mwangangi Njeru, Mentee

“My mentor was exceptional, guiding me through the complexities of the environmental field and helping me define my professional identity. Her insights and support were instrumental in crafting my professional pitch.” — Joana Lagunes Arauz, Mentee

The program fostered cross-cultural exchange and collaborative problem-solving, creating a lasting ripple effect that strengthens conservation efforts globally. CoalitionWILD remains dedicated to growing this work and empowering young leaders to drive sustainable change.



GLOBAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM 2024

Building Bridges Across Generations

The conclusion of the 2024 Global Mentorship Program marks another milestone in CoalitionWILD's mission to nurture future conservation leaders. This year's program expanded its reach and impact, bringing together an even broader community of passionate changemakers.

43

mentorship pairs

78

participants

40

countries represented

Over six months, mentorship pairs engaged in structured, cross-generational learning—developing project management skills, effective communication strategies, and actionable conservation plans that address pressing environmental challenges.

Workshops and networking sessions enriched the program, helping mentees build confidence and leadership skills. Standout moments included the peer-learning sessions, where participants shared key learnings and experiences in navigating their respective mentorship relationships while working towards achieving their personal and professional development goals. These sessions also created opportunities to celebrate participants' achievements which hugely inspired the wider CoalitionWILD community


The connections formed and knowledge shared will continue to strengthen a growing network of global advocates committed to protecting our planet. The success of the 2024 program underscores the vital role of mentorship in shaping conservation leadership for the future. CoalitionWILD extends heartfelt thanks to all mentors, mentees, and supporters for making this year's program a resounding success.

There is a renewed optimism about the future of conservation leadership. The relationships forged and knowledge exchanged will continue to strengthen a growing network of advocates committed to safeguarding our planet.






COALITIONWILD AT WILD 12



The 12th World Wilderness Congress (WILD12) is the world's foremost gathering dedicated to the conservation of wilderness. It provides civil society, including youth conservation leaders, with an opportunity to influence the wilderness conservation agenda at larger, inter-governmental fora.



COALITIONWILD AT THE WORLD WILDERNESS CONGRESS (WILD12)

The World Wilderness Congress (WILD12) took place in Rapid City, South Dakota, United States from **August 25-31, 2024**. The congress was an opportunity to reinterpret wilderness “through the lens of traditional cultures, rooting Indigenous principles and lifeways at the center of the movement to keep Earth wild.” Between 500-600 people attended the event, which featured two days of plenary sessions and two days of concurrent sessions. The congress is also unique among civil society environmental forums as it provides the public with a direct and concrete instrument for setting the global environmental agenda through resolutions.

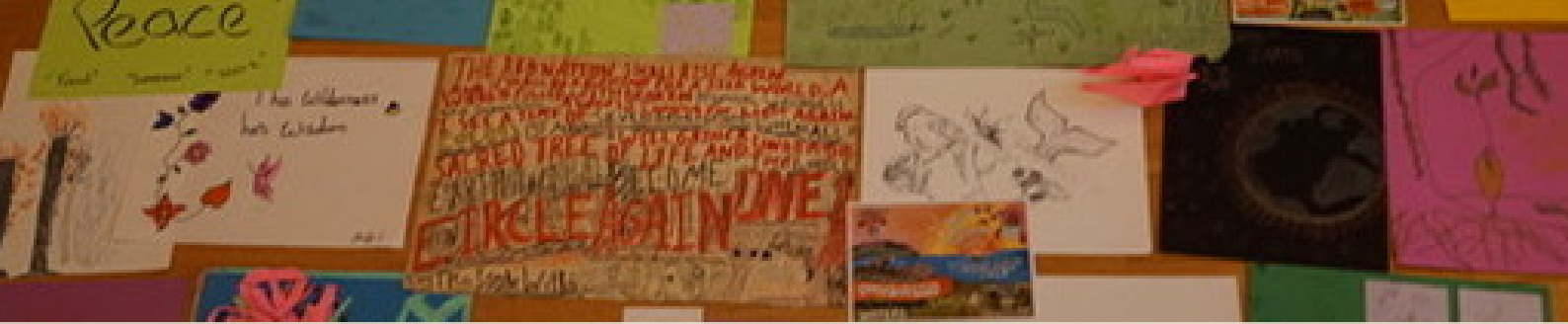
The following is an overview of the contributions of CoalitionWILD at WILD12:



CoalitionWILD’s Director, Yen Parico, was appointed to WILD12’s Executive Planning Committee, playing a pivotal role in ensuring young wilderness professionals were prominently represented at the congress. Her leadership facilitated the establishment of the WILD12 Youth Task Force, a collaborative effort to mainstream youth and young professionals into the 12th World Wilderness Congress. This taskforce not only ensured dedicated spaces for youth but also integrated their voices into the broader structure of the event, enabling young leaders to actively participate in plenary sessions, contribute to critical discussions, and influence decision-making processes.

Storytelling for Wilderness served as a central theme for youth engagement within the congress, recognizing the power of storytelling to connect people to nature, foster empathy, and inspire action. By leveraging compelling narratives, the Task Force explored ways to shape and influence policy, communicate effectively with decision-makers, and amplify messages of conservation. This approach aimed to build capacity among young professionals to craft and share their stories of inspiration, while instilling a sense of responsibility in younger generations to protect, restore, and conserve nature through the art of storytelling.

CoalitionWILD took the lead in organizing and hosting the Pre-Congress Youth Gathering, a one-day event specifically designed for youth and young wilderness professionals aged 35 and under. This event was held in partnership with the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), the National Geographic Society, the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC), and #NatureForAll. Scheduled for Sunday, August 25, from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM, the gathering welcomed approximately 50 young professionals.



The event featured a dynamic agenda that included workshops and presentations aimed at inspiring and equipping participants with tools for effective conservation. Highlights included Impactful Conservation Stories with ArcGIS StoryMaps, a workshop delivered in partnership with ESRI, and Unlocking The Explorer Within, a workshop delivered in partnership with the National Geographic Society. Additionally, a powerful speech by the International Indigenous Youth Council-Oglala Lakota Chapter amplified Indigenous voices.

The gathering provided an invaluable platform for skill-building, storytelling, and fostering a sense of community and collaboration among emerging wilderness leaders attending the congress.

CoalitionWILD partnered with #NatureForAll and two commissions of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)—the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and the Commission on Education and Communication (CEC)—as well as the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) to organize the Youth Oasis Pavilion. This dedicated physical space focused on youth engagement, serving as a hub for disseminating information and fostering connections among congress participants.

The Youth Oasis Pavilion was highly attended by both young and not-so-young participants. It provided a relaxed environment for informal meetings, a workspace for last-minute presentation preparations during breaks, and a much-needed space to unwind from the busyness of the congress. Above all, it became a central gathering point, fostering connection and collaboration among young attendees.

During the congress, Storytelling Challenge was hosted, encouraging youth delegates to cover the events and create content for publication across various platforms targeting influential multilateral institutions with voices on policy matters. As a result of the challenge, nine #LoveNature stories were produced.

During the congress, two intergenerational “Couch Chats” were hosted in the Youth Oasis Pavilion, fostering meaningful dialogue between generations. In these sessions, a senior wilderness professional interviewed a young wilderness advocate, creating a platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences. The chats were livestreamed on CoalitionWILD’s Instagram, featuring Nadine Spence, Vice President of Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage at Parks Canada, and Jo Roberts, CEO of the Wilderness Foundation UK.

The Youth Oasis Pavilion provided the **backdrop for two interviews** conducted by Deceleration News. These featured Hinano Murphy, a member of the Association Te Pu Atitia and Cultural Director of the Tetiaroa Society, and Britt Gondolfi, Rights of Nature Project Coordinator at Bioneers.

CoalitionWILD supported the attendance of **two young wilderness professionals, Aiiita Joshua Apamaku, an EXCEerator program alumnus from Uganda, and Esteban Barriga Abril, an EXCEerator program alumnus from Ecuador.** Their participation ensured the representation of young wilderness professionals at the congress, bringing diverse perspectives from different countries, continents, and wilderness contexts.

Aiiita delivered a short talk titled ***African Sacred Sites as a Category of Protected Areas: Youth Perspective on Wilderness Looking Forward on the main stage of the congress.*** He also contributed to the concurrent session *Storytelling, Mentorship, and Youth Voices*, where he was a speaker in *Passing the Torch of Our Stories: How to Elevate Intergenerational Stories and Mentor Emerging Leadership in Conservation* and participated in *Elevating Youth Voices | Insights from National Geographic Youth Leaders* dialogues. Esteban was a speaker in two concurrent sessions: ***Values, Meanings, and Relevance of Wilderness*** and ***Campaigning for Cultural, Social, and Ecological Landscapes.*** Their involvement underscored the critical role of youth in wilderness conservation efforts and highlighted the importance of integrating diverse voices into global wilderness dialogue.



The CoalitionWILD team organized and led the concurrent session **“Passing the Torch of Our Stories: How to Elevate Intergenerational Stories and Mentor Emerging Leadership in Conservation”** in collaboration with Crowd Conservation and #NatureForAll. During this session, CoalitionWILD’s Program Coordinator, Fátima D. Gigante, shared her experience as a mentee in CoalitionWILD’s Global Mentorship Program and emphasized the importance of mentoring young professionals and investing in their development.

CoalitionWILD drafted and successfully advocated for **Resolution #4: Mainstreaming Mentorship of Young Ecological Stewards**, emphasizing the critical role of mentorship in ensuring the long-term sustainability of restoration, protection, and conservation efforts. This motion received strong support and was approved by attendees at WILD12.



Looking ahead...

- 2025 is a big year for CoalitionWILD as we continue to unite innovative minds and passionate hearts and redefine conservation. Our programs are crafted to spark bold, systemic change, empowering youth with the support they need to lead.
- Through our programs, we believe we are creating opportunities that support the next generations of young conservation leaders and ecological stewards—arming them with the tools and confidence needed to build a future where our natural world is truly celebrated and safeguarded.
- At CoalitionWILD, we're on a mission to build a world where young conservationists are celebrated, empowered, and given the tools to lead transformative change. We remain committed to creating resources that are readily accessible to our communities and continuously collaborate with experts to ensure our content remains innovative and impactful.
- We are excited to explore partnerships with regional organizations to tailor our programs to the unique needs of local communities—capturing every nuance and turning challenges into opportunities for growth. Our Eco-Lab program stands as a vibrant creative haven, where young changemakers receive the support they need—through funding, grant writing assistance, and strategic guidance—to transform early-stage ideas into powerful actions that protect our planet.
- Our Global Mentorship Program is all about building bridges—linking seasoned conservationists with emerging leaders, where every voice is heard and valued. Alongside this, we are launching a campaign in bigger international forums to inspire the broader conservation community to embrace the transformative power of mentorship—continuing the legacy of impactful conservation projects for generations to come.

CoalitionWILD is a project of the WILD Foundation.

View WILD Foundation's financials on: wild.org/who-we-are/finances/

