



# **Udzungwa Landscape Strategy Impact Report 2025**

# Shaping a Resilient Udzungwa Landscape

In southern Tanzania, the forests of the Udzungwa Mountains rise above the surrounding plains like islands of life. These forests shelter extraordinary biodiversity—species found nowhere else on Earth—and sustain the livelihoods and cultures of the many communities who live alongside them. Protecting this landscape is not only about conserving nature, but also about supporting the people who depend on it.

The Udzungwa Landscape Strategy (ULS) was created to bring together communities, protected area authorities, researchers, and conservation partners around a shared vision: to safeguard the forests, wildlife, and wellbeing of the Udzungwa landscape through long-term collaboration. A coalition of partners with long-standing engagement in the area came together to develop and oversee the strategy, which was shaped through extensive consultations with stakeholders, particularly the communities and the key protected area staff, throughout 2023. The ULS seeks to establish a long-term, holistic conservation approach, committed to supporting this unique ecosystem and its communities for at least 20 years.

This first impact report marks an important milestone, highlighting the partnerships, actions, and collective efforts that are beginning to shape a resilient future for the Udzungwa landscape.



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The Udzungwa Landscape Strategy (ULS) is a long-term conservation initiative aimed at ensuring the persistence of the exceptional biodiversity of the Udzungwa Mountains in south-central Tanzania. The strategy adopts a landscape-level approach that integrates the protection of forests and ecosystems with the wellbeing of the communities who depend on them.



The ULS focuses on Udzungwa’s three core protected areas — Udzungwa Mountains National Park, Kilombero Nature Forest Reserve, and Uzungwa Scarp Nature Forest Reserve — as well as 71 surrounding villages whose livelihoods and wellbeing are closely linked to Udzungwa’s forests.

The initiative is implemented by a coalition of national and international partners, including conservation NGOs, research institutions, and government agencies such as TANAPA and TFS. It operates through collaborative governance structures and promotes principles of transparency, stakeholder participation, knowledge sharing, and equitable support for both conservation and communities.

The ULS is structured around four Strategic Objectives (SO): strengthening the conservation capacity of protected areas; improving livelihoods and wellbeing for local communities; fostering collaboration and good governance among stakeholders; and implementing a robust Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system to guide adaptive management.

Together, these objectives aim to create a coordinated, long-term framework for conserving biodiversity while supporting sustainable development across the Udzungwa landscape.



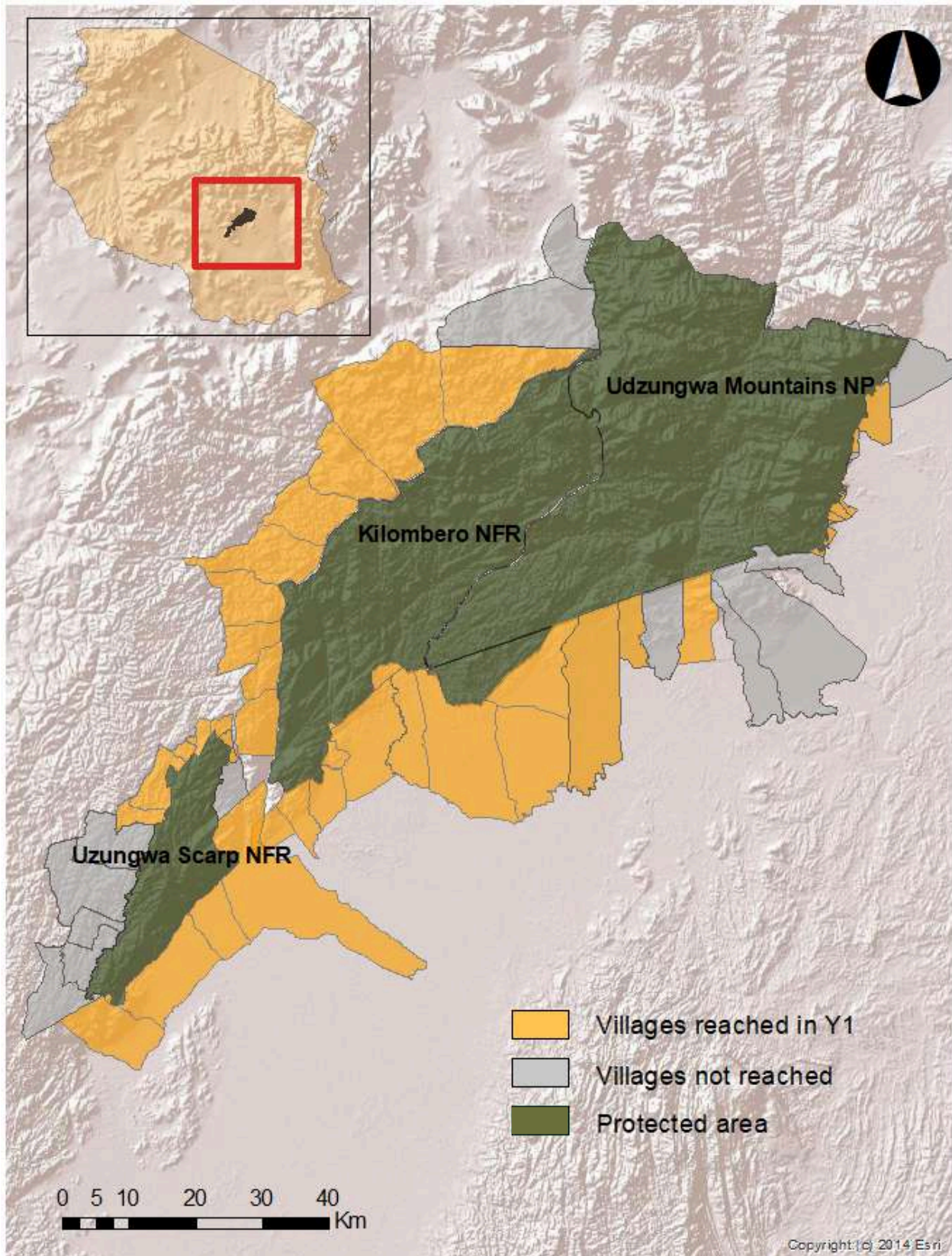
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## ULS Reach

In 2025, the ULS worked in 3 protected areas and 43 villages.





# 01.

## Strategic Objective 1: Protected Areas

Strategic Objective 1 (SO1) aims to enhance the capacity and efficacy of the three core protected areas within the Udzungwa landscape, building on our long-standing forest protection projects in the area. In 2025, STEP, TFS and TANAPA strengthened protection of Udzungwa's three core PAs (3,663 km<sup>2</sup>) by recruiting 24 new rangers (25% women)

**– representing a 55% increase in patrol workforce –**

and providing fuel, equipment, training, allowances, and technical support to enable patrols.



**3,663 km<sup>2</sup>**

**Udzungwa's three core PAs**



**24**  
**NEW RANGERS**

**25%**  
**WOMEN**

## Patrol support:

The ULS enabled **70 long-distance patrols in 2025 compared to 33 in 2024** such that 50.5% of the three core protected areas was reached by patrols

### Strategic patrol planning

**100% of patrols**

were **strategically planned and tracklogged** using handheld GPS units.

### Joint patrol operations

**100% of patrols**

were conducted jointly with **TFS and TANAPA** rangers and **village game scouts** from neighbouring villages.

### Patrol distance

Patrol distance increased significantly from

**1,393 km in 2024 to 6,110 km in 2025.**

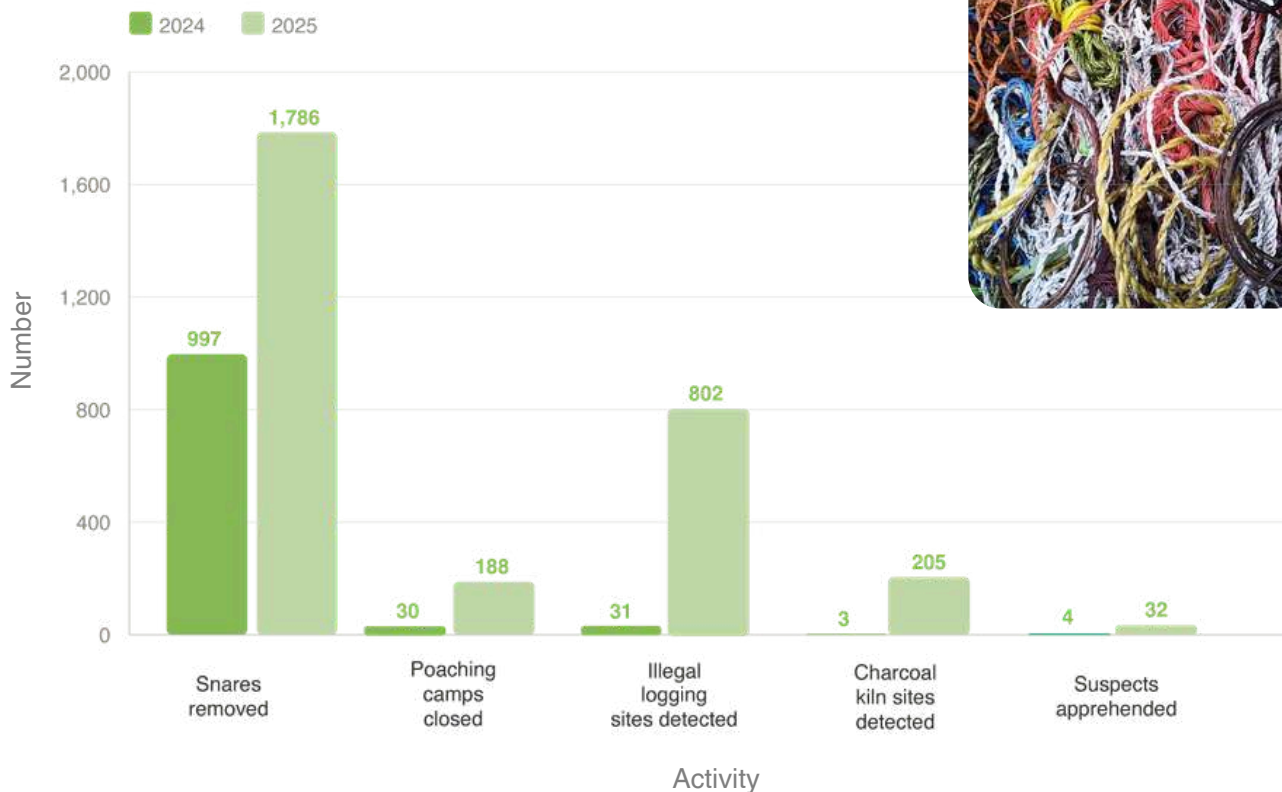
### Patrol effort

The number of person-patrol days increased from

**403 days in 2024 to 1,816 days in 2025**

reflecting a substantial increase in patrol effort.

## Patrol activities in 2025, compared to 2024, resulted in the following:



## Ranger and VGS training:

### Ranger training

**24 rangers  
(25% women)**

were trained in patrol conduct, wildlife identification, data collection, human rights, social safeguards, mental health, and field readiness.

### Human rights commitment

**100% of rangers**

voluntarily signed human rights agreements to ensure professional conduct and accountability.

### Village game scouts training

**30 village game scouts  
(30% women)**

from 15 villages were trained and equipped in patrol techniques, participatory forest management, human-wildlife conflict management, first aid, mental health, and leadership.

### Community engagement

These scouts now join

**TANAPA and TFS**

rangers on patrols, strengthening community engagement and landscape protection.

### Patrol leadership training

**10 patrol leaders**

were trained in strategic patrol planning, database management, patrol mapping, and reporting.

### Drone monitoring capacity

**5 drone pilots**

were trained to use drones for monitoring and as an early warning system.



## Equipment provided to strengthen protection efforts:

Item	Description	Quantity
Vehicles	Toyota Landcruiser double-cabin vehicles (one for each protected area)	3
Uniforms & Camping Gear	Equipment for rangers and scouts	24 rangers + 30 scouts
First Aid Kits	Medical kits for field operations	6
GPS Units	Handheld GPS devices	4
Drones	Drones for monitoring and early threat detection	5



# 02.

## Strategic Objective 2: Communities

Strategic Objective 2 aims **to improve the wellbeing and livelihoods of communities in ways that reinforce their stewardship of forests**, through participatory interventions that were requested by the communities themselves during the development phase of the ULS. **In 2025, STEP and MACCO engaged with 43 villages in three districts (Kilombero, Kilolo and Mlimba).**



### VSLAs

**30 new VSLAs were established with 888 members (57% women, 38% youth).**

- Prior to joining VSLAs, half of members relied on loans from informal loan groups that faced theft and accountability challenges, while one-third had no access to loans from any source.
- **28 Livelihood Monitors (41% women)** - community residents in each village - were trained and equipped to monitor and provide technical support to VSLAs.
- **725 VSLA members (60% women) received financial literacy training** covering budgeting, loan management, saving, and investing - helping them maximize the impact of VSLA loans.

**VSLAs provided 1,418 loans with a total value of TZS 408,523,000 (\$159,600)**

for members to invest in income-generating activities, primarily small businesses (49% of loans) and agriculture (46% of loans).

- **VSLAs also provided 1,960 interest-free social fund loans with a total value of TZS 61,044,000 (\$23,800) to cover unexpected and emergency expenses** such as health and medical costs, children’s school fees and funeral costs. These social fund loans play an important role, as prior to joining VSLAs, only 13% of members had savings to manage emergency expenses, with many resorting to selling assets to cope with financial shocks.



## Sustainable and energy efficient cooking technologies

- 95 community members (41% women) in 25 villages were trained to build energy efficient stoves.

**4,617 energy-efficient stoves installed**

**Benefiting 20,000+ household members**

- A **feasibility study** on the use of agricultural residues for producing and promoting alternative charcoal in 5 villages was completed.
- **1 alternative charcoal factory** was constructed in Ching'anda village, with production planned to commence in 2026.
- **4 community members (25% women)** were recruited and **trained in alternative charcoal production**.



## Agroforestry

- **6 new tree nurseries** were established in Mlimba with local farmers.

Local farmer nurseries produced

**>120,000 seedlings**

With the sale of

**>30,000 seedlings**

Earning farmers

**TZS 4,005,700 (\$1,560)**

- **170 model agroforestry farms** were established as learning hubs in Mlimba and Kilombero districts.

- **3 existing tree nurseries** in Kilombero district supplied tree seedlings to >300 farmers (43% women).
- **>200 farmers (29% women)** in Mlimba district received training in the use of organic pesticides, cocoa production, and advice for access financial services from banks.





## Environmental outreach and awareness-raising

The inaugural **Misitu Cup** football tournament was held, involving **16 teams from 11 villages** bordering Udzungwa’s three core protected areas.

**11,796 community members (18% women and 42% children) attended Misitu Cup matches**

Pitch-side outreach focused on the importance and biodiversity of the Udzungwas and sustainable and energy-efficient cooking technologies.

**9 night-time film screenings on forest conservation and renewable energy reached 1,302 community members (27% women, 24% children)**

**Environmental education was associated with higher perceived benefits of conservation**

Monitoring conducted during the Misitu Cup found that **72% of people** with prior access to conservation education strongly perceived Udzungwa’s protected areas as beneficial to the community, compared to 56% among those with no prior access to conservation education.

Environmental clubs were established in **28 schools** (24 primary and 4 secondary) in Mlimba, Kilolo and Kilombero districts, reaching **>500 students (50% girls)** and **20 supervising teachers (15% women)**. Students received hands-on training in tree nursery establishment and tree planting, energy-efficient stoves, and recycling and reuse practices.

**An environmental education program in Kilombero District**



**engaged >3000 students (38% girls) from 18 primary schools**

Environmental awareness events held during Misitu Cup reached a further **3,508 students (50% girls)** from 9 schools.

**363 students (57% girls)** from 6 schools were supported to visit Udzungwa Mountains National Park, where they learned about and gained appreciation for the importance and beauty of Udzungwa’s forests.



# 03.

## Strategic Objective 3: Collaboration and Governance

Strategic Objective 3 seeks to strengthen collaborations among stakeholders across the Udzungwa Landscape. This includes governing core ULS initiatives, convening a broad range of stakeholders through workshops, and enhancing community participation in natural resource governance and management.

### ULS Governance

The **ULS governance structure**—comprising the Steering Committee, Secretariat, and Working Groups—was established to provide strategic oversight.

**Working Groups**, representing key partners from STEP, MACCO, Protected Areas, and district authorities, actively develop and implement detailed action plans to achieve the ULS’s Strategic Objectives.

The **ULS Secretariat**, a joint body of STEP and MACCO staff, coordinates communications and provides essential administrative and logistical support.



**Strategic guidance is provided by the Steering Committee, which includes representatives and experts from TFS, STEP, TANAPA, UNIFI, NHMD, local government, UEMC/MACCO and MJUMITA.**

More than 15 ULS coordination meetings were held in 2025 to enhance collaborative decision-making and strategy implementation.



## Udzungwa Landscape Conservation Workshop

**The first Udzungwa Landscape Conservation Workshop, co-hosted with Reforest Africa, was held in January 2025, attended by over 100 participants**

from the private sector, government agencies, international and local NGOs, policymakers, and local communities.

Two key strategies were formally presented and endorsed at the workshop:

- **The Udzungwa Landscape Strategy (ULS):** focuses on protecting the three largest protected areas in the landscape
- **The Greater Udzungwa Restoration Strategy (GURS):** led by Reforest Africa, this targets restoration and connectivity of fragmented forests to the central Udzungwa forest block

Seven conservation priorities for the next 20 years were discussed, including: community-centered conservation, habitat connectivity, sustainable financing, strengthening protection, climate-smart agriculture, research and monitoring, and knowledge sharing.

## Increasing community involvement in natural resource governance and management

- **80 Village Natural Resource Committee (VNRC) members (35% women) and 15 village leaders from 6 villages were trained** in participatory forest management, fire management, human rights and social safeguards, work planning and reporting.
- **6 villages were provided with fire-fighting equipment**, including fire beaters, reflectors, industrial hard hats, First Aid kits, and rakes.

# 04.

## Strategic Objective : MEL

SO4 focuses on tracking the progress and impact of the ULS through robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL).

A dedicated MEL team based at STEP manages and analyses the data from activities across all four SOs. The Udzungwa Ecological Monitoring Centre (UEMC) leads long-term biodiversity monitoring to evaluate the status of biodiversity, document new species, detect significant ecological changes and their drivers, anticipate future trends, and provide guidance for conservation management.



## Biodiversity monitoring

In 2025, UEMC continued its primate monitoring program conducting systematic surveys along four established transects in two forests (UMNP and UNSFR)

with a total of **144** transect walks conducted

This equals nearly 2500 transect walks over the program's >20 year-history.



**Five primate species are consistently observed:** the endangered and endemic Udzungwa red colobus (*Procolobus gordonorum*), Peters' Angola colobus (*Colobus angolensis*), Sykes' monkey (*Cercopithecus mitis monoides*), the endangered and endemic Sanje mangabey (*Cercocebus sanjei*), and the yellow baboon (*Papio cynocephalus*).

Detailed analysis of trends is conducted periodically, however, preliminary qualitative analyses indicate populations remain stable but at very low abundances in USNFR, while abundances are higher in UMNP.



**In 2024, the first census in nearly 10 years of the endangered and endemic Kipunji (*Rungwecebus kipunji*) in KNFR was conducted**

The census confirmed the species' continued persistence, though at low numbers and with a highly restricted distribution. A scientific paper analyzing 20 years of population trend data for the Kipunji was published in early 2026.

UEMC also scaled up **camera trapping for ground-dwelling mammals**, deploying



**111 camera traps in two of Udzungwa's core protected areas (USNFR and KNFR)**

Image annotation of 2025 camera trap data is ongoing, but species detected include leopard, Udzungwa sengi, Abbott's duiker, and Sanje mangabey.

In partnership with the Natural History Museum of Denmark, **invertebrate monitoring** in the Udzungwa Mountains documented arthropod diversity and species distribution across ecological gradients. Sampling was conducted in UMNP and KNFR using pitfall and Malaise traps, with 376 sample bags collected in 2025. Analysis of the samples is ongoing.



**Nine temperature and relative humidity data-loggers set in the three core PAs for climate monitoring**





## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

### Two workshops were held with ULS implementing teams

to develop a **MEL Framework** for the ULS, including a Situation Analysis and Theory of Change aligned with the Conservation Standards.

### Training was conducted for 22 STEP and MACCO staff (50% women) on MEL concepts,

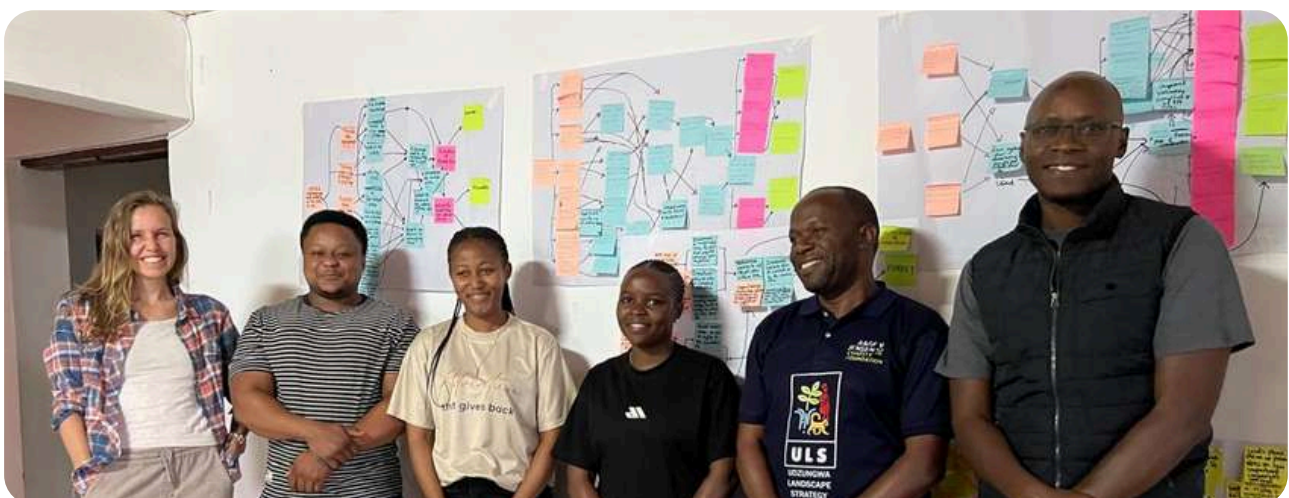
including Theory of Change, SMART objective-setting, and data interpretation.

**Collection of MEL data is integrated into every activity under the ULS. Development of a central ULS MEL dashboard was initiated, using the software Tableau, with support from MEL consultant Hope Beatty.**



In 2025, the ULS and Foundations of Success hosted a workshop to test the **IUCN WCPA Conservation Effectiveness Framework**, a tool for tracking progress toward global 30x30 conservation targets.

The workshop was attended by over **10 participants (24% women) from TANAPA, TFS, STEP, and MACCO**, aiming to test the tool and gather feedback from protected area staff. All PA staff expressed positive support for applying the framework to measure effectiveness in Udzungwa’s three core protected areas.



# Priorities for 2026

## Strategic Objective 1

- **Continue to support rangers and village game scouts** to conduct strategic joint patrols across Udzungwa's core protected areas and the Nyerere-Udzungwa Wildlife Corridor
- **Support advanced training for 30 additional village game scouts**, across 15 key villages
- **Train an additional 10 patrol leaders in patrol planning**, database management, mapping and reporting
- **Build capacity** of village natural resource committees, village game scouts and rangers in fire prevention and management
- Complete a feasibility study for installation of a **landscape-wide radio communications system**
- Implement drone technology to **strengthen early warning systems** and enhance patrol effectiveness

## Strategic Objective 2

- **Form 10 additional VSLAs**, reaching minimum **250** community members
- **Implement new VSLA loan policy** linking access to interest-free loans with commitment to environmental actions
- **Support VSLA members to increase poultry productivity** through training in poultry health and vaccination
- **Train VSLA members in environmentally-friendly farming practices**, including conservation agriculture
- Scale up community participation and benefits from conservation via **participatory conservation agreements** in 6 villages
- Expand adoption of **energy-efficient mud stoves** to 18 villages
- Commence **alternative charcoal** production and distribution
- **Promote adoption of agroforestry** in 10 villages
- **Continue outreach and awareness-raising** through the Misitu Cup tournament and school environmental education programs across 20 villages

# Priorities for 2026

## Strategic Objective 3

- **Ensure effective governance of the ULS** through structured coordination mechanisms
- **Conduct Village Natural Resource Committee and village leader trainings** focusing on participatory forest management, fire management, human rights and social safeguards, work planning and reporting in nine villages
- **Facilitate a stakeholders' workshop** on conflict resolution and building synergies toward ULS goals
- **Continue to map sites of spiritual significance** to communities and enhance community understanding of access rights to spiritual sites

## Strategic Objective 4

- **Maintain** camera trap monitoring of medium to large mammals, primate walking transects, arthropod monitoring, and climate monitoring
- **Establish new surveys** of forest status and disturbance
- **Finalize the MEL framework** for the ULS and launch a publicly-accessible dashboard



# Priorities for 2026

## Cross-cutting

- **Support the development** of new General Management Plans for Udzungwa's core protected areas, with input from all key stakeholders in the landscape
- **Work with partners** to develop a long-term, sustainable financing strategy for the Udzungwa Mountains landscape
- **Conduct Environmental and Social Due Diligence (ESDD)** study, including the development of an Environmental and Social Action Plan (ESAP), in collaboration with the Legacy Landscapes Fund team





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