

EARTH ACTIVISTS TRAINING AND SONGWRITING WORKSHOP

KAREN, NAIROBI, KENYA
18TH -28TH JUNE, 2025



**MUSIC AND VOLUNTEERING
FOR A DECOLONIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENDA**



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INTRODUCTION

Project name	Voices for Change: Music and Volunteering for a Decolonial Environmental and Social Justice
Acronym	Voices for Change
Coordinator	CCIVS (The Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service)

Project Partners



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ATTENDANCE

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Davide Grosso	IMC	Italy
Linus Omondi	IMC	Kenya
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INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Voices of Change Project

Voices for Change

Music and Volunteering for a Decolonial and Environmental and Social Justice Agenda

Voices for Change empowers the International Voluntary Service (IVS) movement through music, storytelling, and advocacy. It connects grassroots activism with institutional advocacy, ensuring that local realities inform global decision-making through a decolonial approach to social and climate justice.

Project Overview

The "Voices for Change" project aims to strengthen the International Voluntary Service (IVS) movement by developing new partnerships, integrating volunteer actions and connecting with the International Music Council to address global environmental and social justice challenges. This project focuses on amplifying marginalised voices, fostering inclusion and diversity, and advocating for policy change through participatory processes. It seeks to revolutionise the perception of IVS, emphasising to young people that it entails more than just participating in a volunteer project - it is also about the life-changing experience of volunteering.

The activities include capacity building, knowledge exchange, hands-on community actions, and advocacy. Voices for Change will culminate in a "Change Capsule" comprising a Song, Videos, Policy Proposals, and an Advocacy Strategy, all underpinned by Impact Measurement. The project underscores the imperative of global solutions to global challenges, rejecting limiting regional approaches and affirming the right of people worldwide to contribute to EU and UN policymaking for a decolonised environmental and social justice agenda.

Earth Artist Training and Songwriting Workshop

Objective: To empower youth participants with skills in songwriting, community engagement, and advocacy for climate justice.

The Earth Artist Training and Songwriting Workshop was a transformative 10-day residential program designed to equip youth participants with tools to advocate for climate justice. Held in Nairobi, Kenya, hosted by KVSOC Kenya, it leveraged the profound impact of music as a vehicle for social change and awareness-raising. Each partner organisation sent at least 1 participant, who joined the Local Actions after the Training, facilitating the sharing of the Song and Hands on actions. The 10-day program was led by experienced trainers, including one person to focus on the environmental training and community engagement, and two people from the International Music Council for the songwriting training. Participants collaborated in the second part of the training to craft and produce a song, taking into account the impact measurement results and building on the results of the first part of the training that included deep listening and reflection-sessions on:

1. Local issues on climate change causes and effects, Green colonialism and what this means for each of the partners, how this affects local reality;
2. Decolonising ecology, decolonising your mind - what does this mean for you?;
3. EU Policy for Social and Climate Justice.

Workshop Introduction and Climate setting

The Earth Artists Training and Songwriting Workshop convened under the auspices of the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) and graciously hosted by the Kenya Voluntary Service Organization (KVSOC), officially commenced at the Contemplative Evangelizers of the Heart of Christ Centre in Karen, Nairobi.

Participants were warmly welcomed by Mr. Linus Omondi, KVSOC's International Coordinator, who expressed gratitude for the diverse representation of participants and emphasized the importance of collective action in driving environmental and social transformation. His opening remarks set the tone for a week of deep reflection, creative expression, and global solidarity.

The venue provided an ideal setting for such a programme—a serene, contemplative environment located within verdant gardens, with cool, refreshing weather that offered respite and clarity. The atmosphere was further enriched by the presence of curious, human-friendly monkeys, who occasionally visited the hostel balconies—an unexpected yet gentle reminder of the harmony between humans and nature, and a fitting symbol of the ecological themes central to the workshop. To foster a sense of inclusion and immediate cultural exchange, participants introduced themselves by stating their name, organization, country of origin, and one Swahili word they had learned or found meaningful. This simple yet intentional format encouraged cross-cultural curiosity and established an early sense of community, diversity, and mutual respect—hallmarks of the Earth Artists spirit.

After a mouth-watering session of introductions, the group transitioned to a vibrant and energizing ice-breaking session led by the musical ensemble, the Red Acapella, held in a separate room. The ensemble performed engaging musical pieces that brought participants to their feet, dancing and moving in rhythm, particularly to African music. Different dance moves were explored, each corresponding rhythmically with each piece of music sang. The musical interlude was an ice-breaker in the truest sense—loosening formalities and cultivating a relaxed, interactive atmosphere. At the conclusion of the performance, Red Acapella introduced themselves, after which participants reconvened in the main conference room. Late arrivals were also given the opportunity to introduce themselves.





OPENING REMARKS



Mr. Isaac Oneka—Executive Director, Kenya Voluntary Development Association (KVDA)

Mr Oneka officially welcomed participants to Kenya and provided a historical overview of KVDA, founded in 1962. He emphasised the importance of International Voluntary Service (IVS) and noted the richness of Kenya's natural heritage. He encouraged participants to explore Kenya during their stay, noting that volunteering is complementary—not competitive—and contributes meaningfully to global understanding and environmental responsibility.



Stephen Chesa—Kenya Forest Services (KFS)

Mr. Chesa contextualized the training within the broader history of human interaction with nature. He spoke on the co-existence between humanity and the environment, and noted that the abuse of nature has spurred global restoration initiatives, such as those discussed at the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan. He referenced President Ruto's ambitious national target of planting 15 billion trees by 2032 and the 'Kazi kwa Vijana' youth employment programme promoting tree-planting.

He also outlined KFS programmes focusing on forest conservation and community engagement. Finally, Mr. Chesa called upon the gathering to advocate for environmental and cultural conservation, stressing the need for collaborative synergy.



By Kate Curtis

Kate led participants through a series of dynamic and reflective outdoor activities designed to foster familiarity, collaboration, and a deeper connection with nature and one another. The “Vitamin D” session provided a refreshing opportunity to engage with the natural environment while also encouraging interpersonal bonding.

The activities began with name games, where each participant introduced themselves by saying their name accompanied by a unique action, which the rest of the group would then repeat. This was followed by an energizing exercise where participants exchanged places with someone after learning their name, reinforcing memory through movement and repetition. To deepen the personal connections, participants were asked to say their name and then mention a lake, river, sea, or mountain from the place where they came from. This added an element of geographical and emotional storytelling, linking individual identities to natural landscapes.



In another reflective task, participants were encouraged to casually walk around the space while taking deep breaths and tuning in to their surroundings. Upon hearing the sound of a bell, they would pause wherever they were, approach the nearest person, and in pairs complete the sentence “one thing I love about the world today is ...” “one thing that concerns me about the world today is...” “A person who greatly inspires me is...”

The session progressed into deeper reflections as participants were encouraged to practice deep listening. In pairs, participants shared their thoughts as prompted by the facilitator, particularly focusing on what they love about the world—its beauty, diversity, flora, fauna, and unique features from places that they love. The pairs then joined into groups of four, where each participant summarized what they had learnt from their one-on-one interactions, creating a multi-layered web of shared experiences.

To close the session, participants revisited a variation of the earlier name game. This time, when a participant’s name was called out, they would vacate their position and move to take the place of the person who had named them, forming an ever-changing circle of movement and excitement. The game continued for several rounds and became a lively, laughter-filled highlight of the morning.

Cultural Briefing: The Maasai community

By Johnson and Dominic

Representatives Johnson and Dominic from the Maasai community provided a rich introduction to their traditions and conservation efforts. Johnson spoke about the importance of localized solutions to climate change, highlighting the role of traditional ecological knowledge passed down through generations. He also introduced his project to develop a cultural village that honours Maasai heritage.



CCIVS Presentation by Raksha V Shenoy K And Ian Tawanda Mugowa and the Voices for Change Project by Kate Curtis

Kate facilitated an insightful session on the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS), a global network established in 1948 under the aegis of UNESCO. She began by emphasizing CCIVS's commitment to action-oriented approaches, particularly in the field of environmental conservation, and the importance of building global partnerships across different regions.

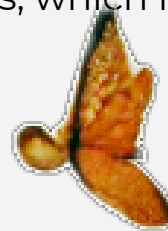


She noted that the training would involve the creation of songs and videos, which would later be shared with a wider audience, serving as tools for advocacy, awareness, and cross-cultural storytelling about socio-ecological challenges and solutions and to promote volunteering at the international at workcamps.



Kate presented an overview of CCIVS's core functions, which include:

- Capacity building and training
- Advocacy and networking
- Research and knowledge sharing



She explained that CCIVS is dedicated to fostering a culture of peace, regenerative community culture, and intercultural understanding through International Voluntary Service (IVS). The organization brings together a global network of member organizations committed to collaborative and transformative grassroots action.



Historical Background and UNESCO Affiliation

Raksha and Ian then traced the roots of CCIVS to 1947, when the first meetings were held within the framework of UNESCO. In 1948, the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Workcamps (CoCo) was officially formed, with UNESCO offering both financial support and coordination for volunteer projects. This collaboration also contributed to the eventual creation of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme.

In 1965, the committee's name evolved to its current form, the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS). As of 2025, CCIVS retains its associate status with UNESCO, and its Secretariat remains hosted at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

Kate reiterated that CCIVS supports its Members through:

- Capacity building and training
- Advocacy and networking
- A dedicated research hub



She added that CCIVS currently has 174 member organizations in 79 countries worldwide, reflecting its expansive reach and diversity. To give participants a better understanding of the organisational structure, Raksha shared a visual presentation featuring the CCIVS Secretariat and Executive Committee, complete with photographs and titles of each officer.

The session also included an introduction to the “Voices for Change” project—a key initiative of CCIVS. This project leverages music, storytelling, and video production to champion environmental and social justice from a decolonial perspective. Kate emphasised that the project is grounded in grassroots participation and seeks to influence global discourse by ensuring that local realities are represented and amplified.

To conclude the session, Raksha and Ian provided insights into the work of the CCIVS Youth Committee (YC) and its contribution to the organisation's strategic goals



CCIVS Youth Committee (YC)

By Raksha V Shenoy K and Ian Tawanda Mugowa

The CCIVS Youth Committee (YC) representatives, introduced their role and work within CCIVS. Key engagements included:

- Advocacy Lab (Brussels)
- Visual Storytelling Workshop (Vienna)
- Tool Fair and Trainer Training (Sofia)
- IVCO 2024 (Newcastle)
- NGO Conference (Paris)
- Study Session (Budapest)
- GRM (Versailles)

YC's projects and campaigns:

- Living Earth (LIVE) Campaign
- LIVE-EX
- ICON
- IVS Advocacy
- Taith Pathway
- M.I.L.E Project
- Archives and Memory
- Solidarity with Palestine
- Voices for Change



The Youth Committee underscores the use of music to bridge grassroots activism and policy, making visible the voices and realities of local communities.



International Music Council (IMC) Presentation *By Davide Grosso*

The International Music Council (IMC) is the world's largest network of music organisations advocating for universal access to music. With a reach of over 600 individuals globally, IMC collaborates closely with UNESCO and covers various facets of the music ecosystem. Davide emphasised music's power in promoting essential rights, inclusivity, and cultural expression. He further observed that IMC stands for a world where everyone can enjoy access to music, where they can learn, experience, create, perform and express themselves through music, and which artists of every kind are recognised and fairly remunerated.

He described IMC's activities and gave a few examples of projects and advocacy actions IMC is involved in. He emphasised why IMC decided to join the VFC project and expressed his enthusiasm for the days to come.





Kenya Voluntary Organization (KVSO)

By Linus Omondi, ZamZam Bonaya and Kelvin Mutinda

The session on Kenya Voluntary Service Organization (KVSO) began with Linus Omondi providing a contextual introduction. He reflected on the deep connection between African cultures and music, noting that traditionally, Africans sing while performing daily activities—illustrating how music is not only cultural but also functional, thus underscoring its value in community life and volunteer work.

Linus then invited ZamZam Bonaya to provide a comprehensive overview of KVSO. She described KVSO as a non-profit organization based in Nairobi, Kenya, which promotes International Voluntary Service (IVS) and intercultural understanding, with a strong partnership under the umbrella of UNESCO.

Vision and Mission

Vision: To create a platform for young people to promote, preserve, and protect their tangible and intangible cultural heritage through voluntary service.

Mission: To promote and preserve the environment and cultures by fostering peace and intercultural exchange through volunteerism.

KVSO Focus Areas and Project Scope

KVSO runs a wide range of projects with the aim of empowering young people as peace agents and changemakers in their communities. These projects span across:

- Wildlife conservation
- Environmental preservation
- Education
- Farming
- Building and construction
- Music and arts
- Health and hospital services
- Peace-building initiatives



The organization carries out its work in several key sites across East Africa, including:

- Maasai Mara Game Reserve
- Thimlich Ohinga Archaeological Site
- Kakamega Rain Forest
- Rwenzori Mountains
- Bwindi National Park
- Imani Children's Home
- Sigomore Physically Challenged Children's Home
- Hope Link Community



Projects Highlights by Site



1. Maasai Mara Game Reserve

The goal of Maasai Mara Game Reserve project is conservation, protection, and rehabilitation of the Maasai Mara ecosystem.

Focus Areas:

- Promotion of Maasai intangible cultural heritage, including rites of passage
- Empowerment of local communities through skills development
- Combatting poaching and mitigating human-wildlife conflict

Key Achievements:

- Involvement of both international and local volunteers
- Promotion of cultural exchange and heritage preservation
- Strengthening community ownership of natural resources
- Raising awareness on biodiversity challenges in the Mara

2. Kakamega Rain Forest



The goal is conservation of the Kakamega Forest and preservation of the Isukuti culture.

Activities:

- Forest walks and biodiversity monitoring
- Tree nursery maintenance and planting
- Community engagement through cultural preservation
- Volunteer-led environmental education and hands-on conservation

Impact:

- Conservation of unique flora and fauna
- Promotion of sustainable environmental practices
- Strengthening local ecological and cultural awareness



3. Thimlich Ohinga Archaeological Site

Goal: Preservation and promotion of this UNESCO-listed cultural heritage site.

Activities:

- Conservation of dry-stone walls
- Local community engagement and heritage education
- Rehabilitation of historical structures
- Promoting inclusive and cross-cultural learning



4. Rwenzori Mountains

Goal: Conservation and cultural heritage promotion in the Rwenzori region.

Activities:

- Support for sustainable ecological practices and eco-tourism
- Awareness campaigns on climate change
- Cultural exchange programmes
- Tree planting and deforestation mitigation efforts

Impact:

- Community resilience building through culture and ecology
- Growth of eco-tourism supporting local livelihoods
- Increased awareness on sustainable environmental practices

To conclude the presentation, KVSO screened a short documentary showcasing its 2024 volunteer project in the Maasai Mara. The video offered an evocative visual narrative of the organization's thematic impact and provided a compelling illustration of its ongoing commitment to community development and heritage conservation.

Final Remarks by ZamZam Bonaya

In her concluding remarks, Ms Bonaya underscored the long-term impact of KVSO's projects in conservation, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. She emphasised the crucial role of volunteers as agents of change, advocating for sustainable development and peace. She encouraged more young people to join KVSO and make a positive difference, both locally and globally.





Day 1

Thursday 19th June 2025



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AFTERNOON SESSION

An energiser, "I Take the Ball," was conducted to re-ignite group momentum. This led into a preview of songwriting sessions facilitated by Checkmate Mido, who introduced a communal chant exercise for the upcoming workshop.

The first task was assigned as an introduction to creating the group agreements/ learning culture. The group was given 3 tasks and a 15 minute time limit to complete:

1. Group selfie with a tree
2. "Earth" expressed/written in all participants' languages
3. Song choreography

The group then discussed their core values and agreed on certain behaviours such as respect, punctuality, positivity, self-care. Participants then shared their expectations, fears and contributions by writing on 3 different coloured post-its and putting them on a tree poster.



Virtual Session with Adli Daana—PCMRD Palestine



Due to the geopolitical situation experienced in Palestine at the time, one participant was unable to travel and could not attend the training in person. Therefore, a live virtual session was held. Mr Daana engaged participants with a powerful and moving message from Palestine. Each participant briefly introduced themselves before hearing Mr Daana's reflection on resilience and solidarity and the importance to take small steps to make a big change.

Story time and reflection Sessions

Ms Curtis introduced stories from the partner organisations, highlighting local challenges. Participants read and analysed these stories in groups, identifying keywords and key messages. The key words and messages were collected on large posters to be used as an inspiration for the song writing sessions.

All the stories were displayed in a library in the conference hall and participants were encouraged to access and read the ones they hadn't directly interacted with or were interested in at their convenience.

All the stories were displayed in a library in the conference hall and participants were encouraged to access and read the ones they hadn't directly interacted with or were interested in at their convenience.

What went well?

- What could be improved?
- Any requests or suggestions?

Stories were displayed in a 'living library' in the conference hall and participants encouraged to access and read them at their convenience.





Day 2

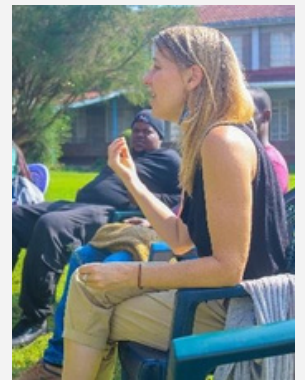
Friday 20th June 2025

Morning Session

The second day of the programme began with a grounding exercise aimed at fostering mindfulness, presence, and self-awareness among participants. The session incorporated guided breathing techniques to help attendees centre themselves and establish a deeper connection with both their immediate environment and fellow participants.



To stimulate introspection and encourage creative expression, the facilitator invited participants to reflect on the question: *"If you were a type of weather, what would you be?"* This metaphorical prompt served as an entry point for personal reflection, setting a thoughtful and open tone for the day's engagements.



Music as a tool for Social Commentary and Awareness Presenter: Davide Grosso

The session led by Mr Grosso began with a *songspiration*—a musical opening designed to engage participants emotionally and intellectually. This introductory activity set the stage for a critical exploration of music as a powerful tool for advocacy and social reflection.

Davide guided participants through a curated analysis of three music videos, each selected for its thematic relevance to contemporary global and political issues. These audiovisual pieces served not only as cultural artifacts but also as springboards for in-depth discussions on activism, identity and resistance.

1. **Pussy Riot** - *“Make America Great Again”*

The first video, by the Russian feminist protest art collective Pussy Riot, generated a strong emotional response among participants. The video, produced during Donald Trump's 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, depicts graphic scenes of violence and authoritarianism. Davide contextualized the piece by referencing the group's controversial history, including their arrests for performing in sacred spaces in Russia. The discussion centred on the song's stark warning against political extremism and its use of provocative imagery to highlight threats to civil liberties. Participants noted the visual honesty of the piece and reflected on how art can serve as both resistance and prophecy.

2. **Gidi Gidi Maji Maji** - *“Unbwogable”*

The second video showcased a politically charged anthem from Kenya, performed in the run-up to a general election. Davide asked participants to explain the song. The term “Unbwogable”, derived from the Luo word “Bwogo” (meaning “to scare”), translates to “unshaken” or “unbeatable.” Participants examined the song's role as a statement of political resilience and defiance in the face of corruption and intimidation. The ensuing discussion underscored how music can unify populations and articulate resistance during critical national moments.



3. **Jahboy** - *“The Karma of Butterfly Effect”*

The third video, by Solomon Islands artist Jahboy, opened up conversations about interconnected global realities. The participants reflected on the philosophical and environmental themes embedded in the song, including the idea that small actions can trigger far-reaching consequences. It prompted a broader reflection on individual agency and global justice.

Throughout the session, Mr Grosso emphasized the transformative power of music to awaken consciousness, provoke dialogue, and galvanize action. He reiterated that music, as demonstrated in the selected examples, serves not merely as entertainment but as a medium for resistance, healing, and advocacy across diverse social and political landscapes.



Exploration of Grief and Lamentation

Presenter: Kate Curtis

In this reflective session, Ms Curtis led participants through an exploration of grief and lamentation as powerful emotional and social processes. Drawing from a recent webinar titled “An Ecology of Care,” she introduced an expanded understanding of grief—not solely as sorrow or loss, but as a multifaceted experience encompassing protest, possibility, petition, praise, and admiration.

Central to the presentation was the concept of lamentation, described evocatively as “the sound we make when our hearts are breaking.” Ms Curtis emphasized that lamentation is not just an expression of pain, but a deep act of connection and resistance—a cry that carries truth, memory, and hope.

Participants engaged in an open discussion on the visuals and messages shared during the session. Mr Sait Fehmi Agduk (Turkiye) noted the importance of hope-based communication, highlighting that images and words have the power to inspire change. Mr Hana Jal- Jamalova (Czechia) contributed that while it is essential to represent the world’s harsh realities, it is equally important to present them in a way that encourages meaningful engagement and motivates real action, rather than overwhelming the audience.

Ms Curtis introduced a reimagined framework for the stages of grief, inviting participants to reflect on their relevance within both personal and collective contexts. The stages presented were:

- Protest – challenging injustice or loss
- Possibility/Petition – seeking transformation or change
- Praise – recognizing and honouring what is valuable or sacred

In closing, Ms Curtis facilitated a dialogue on the intersection of music and grief, encouraging participants to consider how music can serve as a medium for both lament and hope. Participants affirmed that music is a powerful communicative tool, capable of conveying deep emotional truths, and emphasized the need to use it responsibly and intentionally. One participant reiterated the value of hope-based messaging in musical expression—striking a balance between acknowledging pain and inspiring action.

Breakaway Sessions: Story Exploration and Media Analysis

Facilitator: Kate Curtis

In a dynamic and participatory session facilitated by Ms Curtis, participants broke out into small groups to engage in a reflective activity centred on local stories of challenge. The stories—collected from diverse communities as part of the project—served as case studies for critical analysis and collective learning.

Each group was assigned a story to read and given approximately 15 minutes to analyze its content. Participants were tasked with identifying and documenting key phrases, words, or sentences that captured the essence of the narratives. These keywords were written on a shared board in the Conference Room, contributing to a growing visual repository of insights. A temporary story library was also created within the same space, allowing participants to browse and revisit the stories at their convenience.

Following a brief tea break, participants reconvened in the plenary to continue the exercise. Each group was allotted 2–3 minutes to present a summary of the story they had engaged with, highlighting the central themes and messages. The session promoted both individual reflection and collective meaning-making, with stories offering a lens into local realities, resilience, and transformation.

Breakaway Session: Media Analysis

Facilitator: Davide Grosso

In a parallel breakout activity facilitated by Mr Grosso, participants were divided into groups of three, based on the colour proximity of their clothing—a creative method to promote spontaneous interaction. Each group was assigned a video clip to watch, analyze, and extract key lessons or issues presented in the media content.

This activity was designed to build participants' critical media literacy, helping them explore how messages are conveyed through visual storytelling. The findings from this session were scheduled for group discussion in the afternoon plenary, following the lunch break.



AFTERNOON

Facilitator: Kate Curtis

The afternoon session commenced with a brief warm-up exercise to re-energize participants and prepare them for the next set of engagements. Participants then reconvened in the main hall to present the outcomes of the story and media analysis tasks assigned before the lunch break. Each group appointed a representative to share insights and key messages drawn from their respective stories or media clips.

An additional group was also formed during the session, with participants assigned new stories for reading and analysis. These were similarly presented through group representatives in a plenary format. To support further engagement, Ms Curtis curated and shared a digital archive—a comprehensive link containing all the videos, photo stories, and interviews generated during the programme thus far. This resource was shared via a WhatsApp group for ease of access by participants.

Decolonizing Ecology

Facilitator: Kate Curtis

In a thought-provoking segment titled "Decolonizing Ecology," Ms Curtis guided participants through a reflective discussion on decolonizing the mind and understanding ecological justice through a decolonial lens. The session began with an interactive "descriptive chat," where Ms Curtis challenged participants to consider the colonial structures embedded in knowledge systems, environmental narratives, and societal practices.

Participants were divided into small groups of three, with each group assigned a specific thematic focus related to decolonization:

- Decolonize your mind
- Practice ethical ecology in inclusive teams
- Decolonize expertise
- Decolonize access
- Know your histories



Each group engaged in rich discussion and later shared their reflections in plenary. The dialogues flowed organically, allowing for multiple perspectives and affirming the diversity of experiences within the room. Participants actively exchanged ideas, demonstrating strong engagement with the content and its relevance to their local and global contexts.

Ms Curtis concluded the session by inviting participants to extend their reflection to broader themes—decolonizing our bodies and the Earth—encouraging a holistic approach to decolonial practice.

The session ended with a regrouping of participants into their original Day One groups for a closing reflection exercise. Groups were asked to respond to the following guiding questions:

- 1.What went well today?
- 2.What could be improved?
- 3.Do you have any requests or suggestions moving forward?





Day 3

Saturday 21th June 2025

Morning Reflection

Facilitator: Kate Curtis

The day began with a gentle and mindful outdoor reflection session, facilitated by Ms Curtis. Participants gathered in a quiet natural setting to engage in a brief "nature-with-nature" moment, focusing on conscious breathing and personal grounding. This exercise offered a peaceful start to the day and encouraged participants to attune themselves to both the environment and each other.

Ms Curtis invited each participant to share a word or phrase describing how they felt at the beginning of the day. This reflective check-in fostered emotional presence and group cohesion, setting a contemplative tone for the morning's sessions. Following the reflection, participants transitioned into the conference hall for the day's first presentation, titled "Green Colonialism," delivered by Patrick Okoyo.



GREEN COLONIALISM

Presenter: Patrick Okoyo, MPRSK

The session on Green Colonialism, delivered by Mr Okoyo, began with a powerful anecdote recalling the arrival of colonial powers in Africa—ostensibly to “civilize,” yet ultimately extracting land, labour, and forests. Drawing a striking parallel to contemporary environmental discourse, Mr. Okoyo described how similar patterns of dominance now re-emerge under the guise of ecological concern. “Today,” he noted, “they come wearing green suits, talking grandly about saving the planet,” through terms such as carbon offsetting, biodiversity conservation, and climate mitigation. This, he argued, represents a 21st-century rebranding of an old injustice.



Mr. Okoyo defined Green Colonialism—also referred to as *eco-colonialism* or *environmental colonialism*—as the imposition of environmental policies, conservation strategies, or climate agendas by powerful nations, corporations, or organizations—often from the Global North—on communities in the Global South. These policies often replicate colonial patterns of resource extraction, land dispossession, and cultural erasure, prioritizing foreign interests over local knowledge, sovereignty, and justice.

Rather than promoting ecological justice or community-led solutions, green colonialism often sidelines indigenous and local voices. It can manifest in various ways:

- Land grabs under the guise of carbon offsetting.
- Conservation projects that displace traditional landowners.
- “Green” development interventions that ignore lived realities.



Green colonialism and Neocolonial Models in International Voluntary Service (IVS)

Mr. Okoyo examined how even well-intentioned IVS programmes may inadvertently reinforce neocolonial dynamics, particularly when:

- Volunteers from the Global North arrive with a “savior mentality” rather than seeking mutual exchange.
- Projects are externally designed, with little local consultation or ownership.
- IVS supports Western environmental agendas (e.g., reforestation for carbon credits), often disconnected from socio-economic and cultural realities.

He identified several key risks for IVS organizations that may unintentionally perpetuate such models:

- **Paternalism and Cultural Insensitivity:** Imposing Western conservation practices without regard for local knowledge systems (e.g., overlooking pastoralist traditions in Kenya).
- **Lack of Local Involvement:** Project designs that exclude community voices, leading to unsustainable or harmful outcomes—such as the Endorois case, where conservation led to displacement.
- **Resource Exploitation:** Using local labour and land without fair compensation, often seen in short-term reforestation projects.
- **Short-termism:** A focus on quick, visible outputs (e.g., building infrastructure) rather than addressing systemic issues such as climate vulnerability.
- **Neglect of Indigenous Knowledge:** Failing to integrate local ecological wisdom, such as the Endorois' sustainable grazing practices, undermines long-term impact.



Strategies for Ethical and Decolonized Advocacy

To shift from a neocolonial to a justice-oriented environmental practice, Mr. Okoyo proposed the following strategies for IVS organizations:

1. **Raise Awareness:** Educate volunteers and stakeholders on the realities and implications of green colonialism using real-world case studies like the Endorois displacement.
2. **Advocate for Policy Change:** Support enforcement of progressive laws (e.g., Kenya's Wildlife Act of 2013) to protect community land rights and prevent evictions.
3. **Support Local Movements:** Partner with grassroots organizations like the Endorois Welfare Council or community-led conservation efforts in Tanzania that combine livelihoods with environmental stewardship.
4. **Promote Ethical Volunteering:** Create frameworks that prioritize local leadership, fair benefit-sharing, and ecotourism revenue redistribution, as seen in the Maasai Mara conservancies.
5. **Foster Cross-Cultural Learning:** Encourage reciprocal learning between volunteers and host communities to dismantle power imbalances and strengthen shared sustainability efforts.

Country-Level Reflections on Green Colonialism



In a highly engaging segment, Mr. Okoyo invited participants to share personal and national experiences of green colonialism. Several participants highlighted challenges such as:

- The introduction of foreign plant species that disrupted local ecosystems.
- International projects that claimed environmental protection but resulted in community displacement or resource exclusion..

Mr. Okoyo offered two illustrative Kenyan case studies:

- The Green Belt Movement (a positive exception): Founded by Wangari Maathai, this locally led reforestation movement championed community ownership and women's participation. In contrast, more recent international afforestation projects have been criticized for:
 - Planting non-native tree species for carbon offsetting.
 - Displacing local farmers and pastoralists, particularly in the Mau Forest Complex.
- Lake Turkana Wind Power Project: Though one of Africa's largest wind energy projects, it has faced opposition from indigenous communities (El Molo and Turkana) over:
 - Inadequate consultation.
 - Land rights violations.
 - Minimal local benefit from the energy or revenue generated

Toward a Decolonized Ecological Future

In conclusion, Mr. Okoyo emphasized that green colonialism undermines environmental justice, indigenous dignity, and national sovereignty. He urged IVS organizations to critically examine their roles, moving beyond symbolic action toward equitable and locally grounded ecological engagement.

A paradigm shift is essential—from “**volunteering for**” communities to “**acting with**” them. By:

- Elevating indigenous leadership,
- Challenging unjust global systems, and
- Advocating for participatory policies,

Mr. Okoyo observed that International volunteerism can evolve into a truly transformative force for ecological justice, rather than serving as an extension of neo-colonial environmental agendas.



An excursion to Maasai Inkaulele Sidan Tours and Cultural Village



As part of the programme's experiential learning component, participants embarked on an enriching excursion to a Maasai cultural village, where they were warmly welcomed by the Morans (warriors) and the wider Maasai community, under the leadership of Johnson.

Upon arrival, participants were immersed in traditional Maasai hospitality. Female participants were invited to engage in the traditional mudding of a Manyatta—a semi-constructed earthen hut intentionally left incomplete to allow volunteer participation. This hands-on activity provided a rare opportunity to connect with the lived practices of Maasai women and their role in homestead construction.

In groups of four, participants were guided into the Maasai huts where elderly male and female community members offered detailed explanations of the hut's structure and function. Inside, participants learned about the various sections of the hut, including:

- The cooking area and kiln,
- Sleeping spaces for children and the family head,
- Designated areas for young livestock such as lambs, kids and calves.



The experience was described by participants as both thrilling and deeply informative, offering a first-hand appreciation of Maasai architectural and cultural practices. Following the tours, participants gathered for an official introduction session, during which each person shared their country of origin. The Maasai community responded in their indigenous language, with a translator present to bridge communication and foster deeper understanding.

The session concluded with brief, heartfelt speeches by Linus, Kate, Stephen Chesa, and Johnson, affirming the importance of cultural exchange, respect for indigenous knowledge, and solidarity through shared experiences.

Tree planting session

Facilitator: Stephen Chesa

In collaboration with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), a tree planting exercise was held as part of the day's activities. KFS generously donated a variety of indigenous tree seedlings, reinforcing the programme's commitment to environmental stewardship and climate action. Each participant was invited to plant and water at least one tree, creating a symbolic and practical contribution to reforestation efforts. The session fostered a sense of collective responsibility, with participants expressing appreciation for the opportunity to engage directly with nature and community-led conservation.

Throughout the activity, the official videographer conducted interviews with participants, capturing reflections on the day's experiences. These interviews offered valuable insight into the personal impact of the cultural immersion and environmental action. Adding to the vibrant atmosphere, Maasai Morans led traditional chants, drawing enthusiastic participation from volunteers. A particularly memorable moment occurred when Kamogelo Mangwane aka **Biggy**, a participant from South Africa, delivered an impromptu rap performance, which seamlessly intertwined with the Morans' rhythmic chanting—creating a spectacular moment of cross-cultural musical exchange.

The session culminated in a lively jumping dance, a hallmark of Maasai cultural expression. Participants joined the Morans in this energetic activity, which was captured live on Facebook Reels, offering a global audience a glimpse into the joyful spirit of intercultural unity and environmental consciousness.



Nature walk and Cultural Immersion

Facilitator: Johnson

Following the tree planting session and a shared lunch—with participants dining alongside children from the local Maasai community—participants embarked on a guided nature walk led by Johnson and a group of Maasai Morans. The walk provided an immersive environmental learning experience, taking the group through the rich natural landscape up to the banks of the Embakasi River, which forms the boundary between the local community and Nairobi National Park.

Along the route, Johnson and the Morans identified and explained the significance of various medicinal plants, native bird species, and even elephant dung, highlighting it as a natural marker of territory. Upon reaching the river, participants were given an informal ecological briefing: The Embakasi River, a permanent water source, supports a diverse range of wildlife including rhinos, crocodiles, and elephants. However, the group was also made aware of increasing threats to the river's health due to pollution from Nairobi's urban sprawl. Johnson described the delicate balance of peaceful co-existence between the Maasai community and wild animals, including evening encounters with grazing elephants. This harmony, rooted in indigenous environmental knowledge, served as a powerful example of community-based conservation and resilience.

During the walk, a light rain shower passed through briefly. One of the Morans described the rain as a blessing from the ancestors—a sacred sign of welcome to the guests who had travelled from far and wide. The moment added a spiritual resonance to an already enriching experience. Though participants expressed a desire to continue the walk, time constraints required them to board the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) bus for the return journey.





Day 4

Sunday 22th June 2025

Session Start and participatory Engagement

Facilitator: Kate Curtis

The morning began with an intentional grounding exercise designed to centre participants, heighten self-awareness and anchor them in the present moment. Ms Curtis first led a series of gentle stretches, coupled with mindful breathing, to help everyone tune in to their bodies and to the ambient sights, sounds and temperature. She then invited the group to consider a single, reflective question:

“How am I connecting with nature right now?”

Participants sat in a circle and spoke briefly about their feelings for the day, also recounting the highs and lows of the previous afternoon’s visit to the Maasai cultural village. The sharing proved rich, candid and energising.



Solo Nature Immersion

Next, Ms Curtis guided a short, silent compound walk. Each participant received a brown envelope containing nine to ten slips of paper, each printed with a contemplative statement on weather-connectedness. Over the following 20-minute personal retreat, participants sought a quiet spot—seated or standing—in which to read, meditate and fully immerse themselves in the surroundings.

The prompts included:

- Sit down or kneel. Take a deep breath. Inhale... exhale...
- Look around... soften your gaze... notice the colours, light, and quality of the light. Listen to the small sounds. Close your eyes for a few moments ... what attracted you to this place, here? What or who is sharing this moment and place with you now? Notice the plants, any movement, signs of life...
- Notice your own body. Are you comfortable? What do you feel? Can you notice sensations on your skin? Imagine a circle around you on the ground. Draw this circle with your mind. In this circle, you can slow down. In this circle, you invite in full your presence. Breathe in... and out... Take a few more deep breaths of the clean, fresh, forest air...

- Read this, then close your eyes and touch the ground or a nearby leaf, tree or plant. Spend a few minutes with your eyes closed, feeling and exploring the texture of nature with your hands. Be gentle, be curious. Know that what you are touching may also be feeling you.
- Use your hands to respectfully open the soil or pick up some moss... Take some of this precious substance and hold it in your hand. Smell it. Breathe in its fragrance.
- You are invited to look really closely at the soil, or the moss, or the ground, or the earth... with curiosity. Notice all the tiny details. Breathe in... and out... now look at your hand... notice all the lines on it... the texture on your skin... your nails... look at it closely.

Additional slips carried similar invitations to deepen sensory attention and earth-connectedness.

Reflection and Collection Sharing

At tea-break, participants observed silence while taking refreshments. Each then selected a fresh sheet of paper on which to write or sketch their personal insights from the nature encounter. Finally, everyone reconvened under a shaded tree, forming a circle to present and discuss their reflections—completing a thoughtfully sequenced arc from inner awareness to communal learning.



EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

By Kate Curtis

Framing the Conversation

To foreground the link between policy and advocacy, Ms Curtis opened by asking participants to identify any rules operating at the venue itself. They cited, for example, quiet-time requirements and designated smoking areas. Ms Curtis highlighted how even these local rules stem from policy decisions, and stressed that advocacy is inseparable from policy-making, with awareness and education serving as its essential companions.

Overview of the European Green Deal

Ms Curtis then delivered a concise but thorough exposition of the European Green Deal (EGD), noting that it is a comprehensive package of European Commission initiatives intended to make Europe climate-neutral by 2050. The Deal spans every major environmental lever—energy, land use, biodiversity, clean air, sustainable food systems and the built environment—all directed toward a greener, more resilient economy.

Implications for the Global South

While praising the Deal's ambition, Ms Curtis explored its external ripple-effects, especially for developing countries:

- *Trade & Supply Chains* – Risk that compliance costs will be shifted downstream, effectively outsourcing the burden of “greening” to producers in the Global South.
- *Market Access & Barriers* – New environmental standards could function as de-facto trade barriers, potentially constraining exports.
- *Development & Climate Finance* – The Deal's success may hinge on whether adequate climate-finance mechanisms reach poorer nations.

She invited participants to discuss these dimensions, prompting a lively exchange on both opportunities and risks.



Core Goals of EGD:

- Climate Neutrality by 2050
- Sustainable economy
- Sustainable growth

Ms Curtis enumerated a number key initiatives and Focus Areas:

- Biodiversity strategy
- Farm –to-fork strategy
- Circular Economy Action Plan
- Transport Decarbonization Roadmap
- Clean, Integrated Energy System
- European Climate law
- Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)
- Clean Air Strategy
- Just Transition Mechanism



Ms Curtis closed by reiterating that informed advocacy can shape how global frameworks such as the EGD are implemented, ensuring equity for the Global South while advancing the planet-wide climate agenda.

AFTERNOON SESSION- GLOBAL REFLECTION MEETING RECAP

Moderator: Kate Curtis

Ms Curtis reconvened the plenary after lunch, welcoming everyone back and inviting Ms V Shenoy K and Mr Tawanda Mugowa, representing the Youth Committee (YC), to deliver a detailed recap of the Global Reflection Meeting.

Context of the Global Reflection Meeting

- **Venue & Dates:** Versailles, France | 6 – 12 April 2025
- **Purpose:** To strengthen *International Voluntary Service* (IVS) by collectively envisioning its desired future.



Key Themes and Analytical Streams

- IVS Needs Assessment
- Historical Trajectory & Milestones
- SWOT Analysis—strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
- Decolonization & Power Dynamics
- Current Volunteering Trends
- Artificial Intelligence & Digital Volunteering
- Futures & Foresight Methodologies
- Volunteer Rights (including Music Rights)

A slideshow of photographs from Versailles illustrated each thematic segment.

Highlights from the IVS Needs-Assessment Survey

- Limited public recognition of IVS organizations
- Persistent funding constraints
- Community-driven & inclusive projects needed (inter-generational, not youth-exclusive)
- Imperative to adapt continually to a rapidly changing world

Volunteer Rights in International Voluntary Service (IVS):

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sqOzHllm-i9HT0aZbtIGWnXsXuCg_t_dcNI7V9QCvU0/edit?usp=sharing

Volunteer Rights in International Voluntary Service (IVS)

International Voluntary Service (IVS) participants have the right to...

1. Recognition of learning and contribution
2. Safe, dignified and equitable cross-border participation
3. Recognition of Contributions to Climate and Social Justice
4. Access to Decolonised Funding Ecosystems
5. Safe, Inclusive and Rights-Based Participation
6. Protection in Conflict-Affected and Politically Sensitive Contexts
7. Youth Participation and Intergenerational Governance

Reflections & Strategic Take-aways

- Align with specific SDGs while safeguarding IVS core values.
- Remain adaptive and responsive to emerging global contexts.

Communications & Social-Media Amplification

The GRM team showcased a short video produced in Versailles to illustrate digital storytelling as a tool for awareness-raising. Participants were encouraged to share similar multimedia content to broaden IVS visibility.

Immediate Needs & Calls to Action

- Engage in International Year of Volunteers (IYV) 2026 preparations.
- Monitor policy developments relevant to IVS.
- Respond promptly to surveys to maintain robust data streams.
- Promote additional voluntary projects to expand the movement's reach.

Ms Curtis thanked Ms V Shenoy K and Mr Tawanda Mugowa for the comprehensive overview, noting that the insights would directly inform forthcoming strategy discussions.





VOICES FOR CHANGE: EARTHARTIVISTS TOOLKIT

Presenters: Davide Grosso and Kate Curtis

Introducing CCVIS Activity Portfolio

Pillar	Brief Focus
Activities	Flagship projects and campaigns undertaken worldwide
Impact Measurement	Monitoring & Evaluation frameworks that evidence field results
Impact Measurement	Capacity-building modules that fuse art, activism, and ecological literacy
Local Action	Community-rooted initiatives translating global vision into place-based change

Together, Mr Grosso and Ms Curtis guided participants through the “Voices for Change – Earth Artists Toolkit,” positioning it as a practical companion for grassroots cultural activism. Key sections include:

1. Song-Writing Principles – core values that underpin message integrity and artistic authenticity.
2. Song-Writing Methodology – step-by-step process from idea generation to final composition.
3. Community-Engagement Tools & Methods – participatory approaches that centre local voices.
4. Facilitation Tips – guidance on holding inclusive, energizing creative spaces.
5. Technical Tools – e.g., affordable techniques for recording high-quality sound in field conditions.
6. Communication & Visibility Advocacy – strategies for amplifying art-based messages across media platforms.





Day 5

Monday 23th June 2025

Song Writing

Facilitator: Checkmate Mido

The day opened with Zip-Zap-Zop, a kinetic circle game that quickly dissolved inhibitions and sharpened group focus. A participant “zipped” someone in the circle, who crouched as neighbours “zapped” each other; the crouched player then rose to “zop” a new target, and the rhythm continued until the entire group was laughing and fully engaged.

Checkmate then guided a sequence that seamlessly blended:

- Deep-breathing drills to steady posture and expand lung capacity.
- Nature-connection walk within the compound, where participants silently attuned to ambient sounds, textures and scents before regrouping to share sensory impressions.
- Vocal warm-ups inspired by Jacob’s Vocal Academy, including:
 - Five-minute full-range routine
 - Focused “AH” resonance exercise

Framing the art of Song Writing

Prompting reflection, Checkmate asked: **“What does song-writing mean to you?”** Responses surfaced five core dimensions:

Dimension	Illustrative Participant Insight
Inner channelling	“A way to connect and order what’s inside me.”
Self-expression	“My medium to say things I can’t speak.”
Potential amplifier	“It sparks latent talents in others.”
Condensed storytelling	“A compressed diary of diverse emotions.”
Communicative tool	Music that narrates lived experienced

He distilled these thoughts into the simple equation: **Song-writing** = Music + Lyrics + Authentic Feeling



Peer sharing and Iteration

Writers paired up to read their raw lines aloud, exchanging quick feedback before several volunteers performed excerpts to the larger circle. The exercise reinforced collaboration, showcased diverse stylistic voices and demonstrated how melody can arise from even the roughest lyrical seed.

Key Take-away

Checkmate closed by underscoring that song-writing is an embodied, relational process—equal parts breath, environment, spontaneity and disciplined craft. The morning's arc of physical activation, sensory attunement and timed writing furnished participants with a replicable toolkit for future creative sessions.





Day 6

Tuesday 24th June 2025

Session Start and Participatory Engagement

Icebreaker: “Ringo Ringo Wamarungurira Wife Wakarungurira”

The sixth day opened with a lively, circle-based icebreaker that blended song, movement, and spontaneous laughter. The game dissolved early-morning inertia, synchronized the group’s energy, and created an atmosphere of mutual trust essential for the creative tasks ahead.

Mind-Body Grounding

Breathing exercises

- Connect-With-Yourself Moment – a brief inward check-in inviting participants to note their emotional and physical state.
- Guided Breathing – slow diaphragmatic cycles to calm the nervous system and sharpen focus.
- Rhythm Exercises – claps, foot-stomps, and body percussion that eased the group into a shared tempo and primed them for collaborative music-making.

Presentation and Discussion

With the guidance of the facilitator, the plenary co-created “Our Song Recipe,” a framework designed to translate collective insights into a powerful musical statement. Throughout the exercise participants experimented with timbre, cadence, and local idioms, ensuring the piece remained culturally authentic while globally relatable. By the end of the session, a draft melody and lyrical scaffold were in place, ready for refinement in subsequent rehearsals.





Day 7

Wednesday 25th June 2025

Morning Session

Facilitator: Kate Curtis



The session with Ms Curtis began with a calming meditation to help everyone relax and focus. After meditation, Ms Curtis led the group through some light exercises. She thereafter asked everyone to reflect on how they were feeling and encouraged them to describe their emotions using colours, their current state of being, and the type of weather they felt represented their mood. This activity enabled participants to connect with their emotions and share their thoughts in a creative way.

Fun engaging Exercise

Facilitator: Checkmate Mido

Later, the group had a session with Checkmate, who introduced a fun and engaging exercise involving numbers and actions. Participants enthusiastically took part in this activity which required focus and coordination. After the exercise, the group moved indoors for voice warm-ups. Checkmate guided them through humming, inhaling, and exhaling exercises to prepare their voices. To make the session more interactive, Checkmate suggested that members share songs from their own communities. This would allow the group to learn and sing together, creating a sense of unity and cultural exchange. The idea was well-received, and members showed interest in contributing songs for future sessions.

Tea break session

After the morning sessions, the group enjoyed a refreshing tea break with steaming tea, rich coffee, boiled maize, and sweet bananas. The nourishing snacks and warm drinks provided energy while members chatted and relaxed in a friendly atmosphere. Laughter and casual conversations filled the space, making it a pleasant and refreshing pause before continuing the day's activities.

Estonian Music with Katrin Kaesis & Annette-lis Seppel

Ms Kaesis and Ms Seppel shared Estonia's powerful folk song: "Isamaa ilu hoieldes" (loosely translated as "Keeping the Fatherland's Beauty"), explaining its deep meaning as a symbol of national resilience. The song represents Estonia's struggle to preserve its culture and nature against historical challenges. Their passionate performance showcased haunting melodies and rich harmonies characteristic of Estonian folk tradition. Participants were moved by the emotional delivery and the song's message of unity and perseverance. The artists emphasized how music strengthens cultural identity, urging listeners to engage with Estonia's story. The session concluded with reflections on music's universal power to inspire hope. The YouTube link to the song was provided for participants who would be interested navigating the internet and listening to this powerful folksong until cows come home: https://youtu.be/VZDd32nP7SY?si=i_CqxDh-wUYDcqQ

Song writing- A continuation By Checkmate Mido



The group worked together to turn the previous days' collected words into song lyrics. Everyone was expected to share ideas about the music while looking at the words on the wall. Checkmate Mido assisted participants to combine all thoughts in a pleasant fashion. Annette then played different beats with some participants suggesting they preferred faster rhythms while others, slower one. She demonstrated to participants how each beat changed the song's feeling. Subsequently, participants were divided into two teams for ease of working together. One team made rhythms using the beats and the other team, led by Mr Agduk, worked on making the words sound right and good.

Checkmate helped put the words and music together perfectly. The room was full of energy as everyone shared ideas. With Ms Seppel's beats, the words on the wall, and Checkmate's help, participants were keen on crafting a special song that is inclusive.



Lunch break session

The team enjoyed a delicious and energizing lunch featuring warm chapatis, fresh spinach, flavourful wet fry chicken, and crispy fried potatoes. The satisfying meal provided the perfect fuel for the afternoon creative session Song-writing session.

Outdoor Session with Kate

Ms Curtis led an engaging outdoor session featuring an energetic ninja game that had everyone participating. The activity encouraged teamwork and laughter as members enjoyed the playful challenges. Thereafter, the session transitioned beautifully into a musical break when Ms V Shenoy K, Mr Hebbar, and Nagarathna, participants from India, shared a special song with the group. Their performance under the open sky created a wonderful moment of cultural exchange and connection. The outdoor combination of physical activity and musical sharing was energizing leaving the group refreshed and bonded as we prepared for the remaining part of day's creative work.

Song Writing- Continuation

The group reviewed the beat samples created by Biggie, Mr Saporito, and Ms Seppel's group. Together, they listened and collectively decided which elements to keep or modify. Mr Agduk and Ms V Shenoy K then led a productive discussion about the lyrics, where word choices and structure were refined. The group brainstormed new ideas to strengthen the intended message.

As the Song writing facilitator, Checkmate provided valuable guidance on musical composition, helping participants shape the overall sound. Ms Jal-Jamalova contributed an important suggestion to make the song more powerful, which inspired further creative development. The group, with Checkmate's guidance, sang the lyrics while listening to the beats that were provided to ease the process prior to the studio visit. Upon saturation point, the group enjoyed a relaxing evening break with a selection of snacks including bread cones and biscuits, accompanied by hot beverages tea, coffee, and drinking chocolate for variety. The refreshments provided a pleasant pause in the Earth Artivists' busy schedule.



Session with Checkmate Mido

Checkmate echoed more about the studio session that would be happening the next day. He emphasized the importance of supporting each other as the group geared for the studio. He noted that even if only a few people were on the microphone, everyone was expected to remain focused and keep their energy connected. Above all, he encouraged the team to have fun and enjoy the moment, reminding them that they will one day reminisce being in the studio together, on that particular date. Perfection, he said, is not the goal, rather, openness, playfulness, and creativity were key ingredients guiding the session. The aim was to make music, build connections, and enjoy the process together.

A briefing on upcoming Ngong Hills activity and Studio visit

Mr Grosso and Mr Omondi informed participants about a scheduled trip to Ngong Hills as well as the studio. Later, Magaa joined to help with music preparation and explained the studio process. Ms Jal- Jamalova shared a presentation with suggestions to improve the lyrics, enabling the team to strengthen the composition before recording.

Presentation on Art as a powerful tool

By Hana Al-Jamalova

Ms Jal- Jamalova highlighted that the world is facing serious challenges, and artists have a role to play in responding through their work. She observed that art is a powerful tool for self-advocacy and does not always have to be direct but could take varied dimensions: poetic, symbolic, or experimental. Her message was clear, firm and ex-cathedra: artists should find their own voice rather than imitate others. For Ms Jal- Jamalova, this kind of artistic expression is deeply political.

Song writing- Continuation

The whole group worked with Checkmate and Magaa to choose the best words from Ms Jal- Jamalova's song ideas. The strongest lyrics were picked and mixed with own thoughts. Checkmate helped with the music while Magaa arranged the words to flow well. Everyone shared their opinion to make sure the final song showed what everyone aspired. At dinner, participants enjoyed a tasty Kenyan dinner with mukimo (mashed potatoes with greens), spicy pilau rice, fresh vegetables, and flavourful beans.

Bonfire session



At 9pm, all participants sat around a warm bonfire for a fun music night. Mr Saporito led the group in singing many songs as everyone joined in happily. The fire crackled while people sang, told stories, and laughed together. It was a perfect way to relax after the busy day. Sitting under the sky resplendent in stars, sharing music and jokes, propelled the bond among participants and ignited the spirit of humanity and togetherness. The blazing joy of the fire, songs and friendship made it a night that would be etched in the minds of participants for a month of Sundays.





Day 8

Thursday 26th June 2025

Participants woke up with great anticipation of the excursion to Ngong Hills. They were welcomed for a breakfast of a kind: hot tea, crispy fried sweet potatoes, fluffy mandazi, and scrambled eggs. The ambience was serene, with every whisper and discussion sailing in a glossy sea of easy conversation. There was gaiety and mirth as everyone appreciated the delicious, energizing meal. Everyone ate not only to their preference but also to their satisfaction. The comforting meal left participants satisfied and ready for the day's activities.

The day began at Nashepa Gardens where Bwana Chesa and his team warmly welcomed participants with tea and coffee. Thereafter, the team proudly performed the song they had long practised. After the meals, there was a lively running competition that brought lots of laughter and team spirit. The friendly races got everyone energized and created fun memories.

With full stomachs and happy hearts, we then travelled to the recording studio in Rongai to continue the musical journey.

Ngong Hills Tree Planting

This session was led by Stephen Chesa of KFS. Each participant took an active role of tree planting and remained stoic in the cold weather. Team spirit was visible with each participant demonstrating his or her planting skills, an activity punctuated by happiness. It was a great satisfaction for participants seeing their clothes get muddy for the sake of preserving the environment. Though seemingly exhausted at the end of the exercise, they were proud of the work accomplished. A number of them remarked that the rain made the day memorable.





Studio Recording Session Summary

The group arrived at the studio excited and ready to record the song. Antonio, Biggie, Victonell, Paola, and Ian took turns as lead singers, while Lauryn, Raksha, and Nagarathna provided beautiful background vocals. Every member participated enthusiastically, ensuring that collective voice came through in the recording. Magaa, the skilled producer, worked behind the scenes to ensure everything sounded perfect. Checkmate Mido, the music leader, guided participants through the process, helping everyone stay in rhythm and harmony. Linus, Kate, and Davide provided an exciting support system while recording was in progress, KVSQ's photo/videographers Sydney and Clinton captured the entire process to document with exactitude the special musical creation. Their footage would help participants from across walks of life remember the meaningful experience.

After an intense but rewarding session, participants returned to their accommodation centre, tired but with their faces lined with marks of animation. In the evening, Members enjoyed a delicious dinner of flavourful wet fry chicken, soft matoke, fresh steamed cabbage, and tasty pasta. The well cooked meal brought smiles as participants shared stories and laughed together at the tables, making dinner both gratifying and fun.





Day 9

Friday 27th June 2025

After a delicious morning meal of fluffy mandazi, sweet boiled maize, crispy toasted bread, and golden pancakes, all paired with steaming tea and coffee, everyone's face shone with brightness and ready for the music video shoot session.

Music Video Shoot Session

The session was led by Clinton and Sydney, who brought infectious energy and creative direction to the group as participants recorded the collective song. Dressed in vibrant traditional regalia, participants immersed themselves in the spirit of cultural celebration; dancing and singing with enthusiasm as the rhythm of the song brought the group together in unity and joy.

Clinton and Sydney skilfully maintained high energy throughout the session, ensuring every participant felt engaged and involved. The atmosphere was lively and inclusive, with some participants leading vocals while others danced, creating a dynamic and spirited performance environment. The session culminated in a high-quality final recording, a remarkable product of collaborative effort and cultural pride.

In the evening, participants took a well-deserved break, enjoying a selection of hot tea, coffee, and sweet buns. The refreshments served not only as a delicious treat but also revitalized the group, creating a warm and relaxed space for informal conversations and connection. The shared laughter and dialogue around the tea table further deepened the sense of camaraderie, preparing participants for the activities ahead.

Preparing for implementation; Taking the song into the work camps

Facilitators: Kate Curtis and Davide Grosso

In a forward-looking session, Ms Curtis and Mr Grosso guided participants through the next steps for implementing the collective song project within upcoming work camps. They outlined a phased approach for community dissemination, noting that while final versions of the song and lyrics may take some time to be finalized, the material will be made accessible in formats compatible with any standard computer, ensuring ease of use across all participating regions.

Participants were encouraged to begin sharing behind-the-scenes photos and progress updates, as much of the foundational content has already been developed. The facilitators emphasized the importance of strategic coordination among partner organizations and advised the use of a unified project hashtag across social media platforms. This would enable streamlined tracking of content, enhance digital visibility, and foster broader engagement.

Although specific technical tools were not extensively detailed, it was confirmed that the chosen dissemination method is accessible and appropriate for all groups involved. Ms Curtis and Mr Grosso recommended that the final roll-out be timed carefully—particularly in light of pending election periods and partner availability—to ensure clarity and avoid logistical complications.

Regarding the recording of local adaptations, participants were reassured that simple mobile phone stabilizers would suffice, and that high-cost equipment is not necessary. The overarching aim is to maintain project momentum and visibility, with the hope that additional groups will be inspired to join the movement upon witnessing the creative outputs of participating organizations.

To support continuity, the facilitators confirmed that the project's online communication group will remain active. This will serve as a central space for sharing updates, celebrating contributions, and nurturing collaboration—ultimately allowing the initiative to grow organically and reach broader communities through both musical expression and collective action.



Local Action/ Next steps Reflection on the campaign-how to document and share

Facilitators: Davide and Kate

In a reflective session, Mr Grosso facilitated a discussion on the strategic documentation and dissemination of campaign experiences. He emphasised two key pathways: guiding individuals directly into media and creative industries, and sharing personal narratives to spark broader societal engagement. Davide encouraged each participating organization to leverage media not only as a tool for visibility, but as a platform to initiate sensitive yet essential conversations. He underscored the need for careful, context-aware storytelling that fosters both awareness and empathy, particularly when addressing complex or underrepresented issues.

Central to the discussion was the principle of amplifying marginalised voices—those often excluded from public policy dialogues or community decision-making. Davide challenged participants to ensure their media interventions extend beyond internal circles, reaching individuals and communities who are routinely left out of critical conversations, especially by political actors.

Final Reflection and Evaluation of Learning Outcomes

Facilitator: Kate Curtis

The programme concluded with a comprehensive reflection session facilitated by Ms Curtis, providing participants with the opportunity to collectively assess their experiences and share insights gained throughout the initiative. The session encouraged open dialogue on what worked well, areas for improvement, and lessons learned, creating a space for thoughtful feedback and mutual appreciation.





To complement the group discussion, participants were invited to complete an online evaluation form, designed to gather detailed and structured input. The form included key questions such as:

- Overall experience of the programme
- Helpfulness and effectiveness of the facilitators
- Most engaging or impactful activities
- Suggestions for enhancing future editions of the programme.

The reflection process served as a critical learning milestone, reinforcing both individual and collective growth. Ms Curtis ensured that every participant's voice was acknowledged, both verbally during the session and anonymously through the digital feedback tool. The candid reflections and constructive suggestions collected will be instrumental in shaping and improving future iterations of the Earth Artists programme, ensuring it continues to evolve in relevance, inclusivity, and impact.

Outdoor Reflection Session

Facilitators: Kate Curtis and Davide Grosso

The programme's closing activity took place outdoors, where participants assembled for a final, reflective exercise guided by Ms Curtis. Each person received a sticky note and was invited to record key take-aways—new skills acquired, friendships formed, and sources of inspiration. Participants then shared their reflections aloud, celebrating collective growth and individual achievements.

Mr Grosso followed with a structured dialogue centred on four questions:

1. What did you learn?
2. How did you feel?
3. Which climate-justice concerns affect your community most?
4. What message would you send to world leaders?

The discussion elicited thoughtful contributions. Many highlighted enhanced teamwork through music, a renewed sense of empowerment to pursue climate action, and impassioned appeals urging global leaders to move decisively from rhetoric to implementation.

The session concluded on an emotional note as several participants prepared to depart. Warm farewells and expressions of gratitude underscored the enduring bonds forged during the programme. Despite the poignancy of parting, the group dispersed with a strong sense of solidarity, shared purpose, and commitment to advancing the programme's climate-justice objectives in their respective communities.





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