



A Maasai Conservation Vision

THE MAASAI INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY ALLIANCE (MISA)



A Maasai vision for the future
of land, pastoralism and
co-existence with wildlife

We the Maasai elders, women and youth from 26 villages of five districts in Northern Tanzania (Ngorongoro, Longido, Monduli, Simanjiro and Kiteto) developed this document in July 2024.

This document reflects the views, hopes and expectations of over 520 community members representing a diversity of contexts, challenges and opinions. This document is the outcome of a participatory process organised by the Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) and endorsed by all its members. Its objective is to develop and promote an alternative to the colonial, fortress, violent and capitalistic conservation model that is imposed on our Maasai community, leading to the alienation of our land.

The purpose of this document is to support dialogue, alliance building with other pastoralist and agropastoralist communities and international advocacy.



To stay on the land, we need:

- No displacement including under the disguise of voluntary relocation
- The removal of all restrictions on access to grazing land, firewood, water sources, medicinal plants, sacred sites, cultural sites and other traditional uses that are essential for our survival. This includes unconditional access to Ngorongoro Crater, Ormoti, Mairang'wai, Alaitole, Oldupai, Mukulat and Endoinyo Oormorwak as granted by the law
- The Government of Tanzania to respect community customary rights, existing Village Land Use Plans, Certificates of Communal Rights of Occupancy (CCROs) and the rule of law and democracy
- Constitutional changes to recognise communal land ownership and management, the pastoralist way of life, and our rights to make decisions and to exercise control over the land. This requires removing presidential powers over land.
- Reforms of laws and policies governing land, wildlife, natural resources, environment, conservation and livestock to create a consolidated framework that protects sustainable pastoral livelihoods systems, ensures policy coherence and avoids overlap. Legal reform should ensure the recognition of community lands to address the shortcomings of the current Village Land Act, which does not protect our traditional land-use practices.
- The effective protection and promotion of our communal grazing land and traditional land-use practices and knowledge
- Restitution of any land that was unjustly taken from us such as Serengeti/Moru, Western and Southern Loliondo/Pololeti, Taraenger/Tarangire, Alaililai le Mwasuni/Mkomazi, Mkungunero, Entim Oolturot, Mikumi, Sikirari/KIA, Manyara and the Kisongo plains taken by the military in Monduli
- The Government of Tanzania to stop any establishment and expansion of any protected areas through National Parks, Game Reserves, Game Controlled Areas, Wildlife Management Areas, Wildlife Corridors and Forest Reserves
- Equitable, active inclusion and meaningful participation of women in the management, control and decision-making affecting land
- Enhancing community awareness around the potential and challenges associated with land titling and privatisation

LAND



Land is life. We want to stay on the land because it is a source of food, water, pasture, livelihood, salt licks and building materials for our houses. Land is where we find our sacred mountains, trees (*Oreteti, Oloilalei*), medicine, and where we hold our ceremonies and rites of passage.

Land is everything. Land supports healthy livestock and healthy people and land supports our economy. Land is where we have our home, where our parents were born and where we will be buried, and it is where we find wildlife and livestock living together. Land, people and livestock cannot be separated. We have traditional knowledge and skills to manage our land and deal with invasive plant species.



Our life on the land is being threatened by government policies, tourism development, trophy hunting, and current conservation philosophies and interventions. The current legal framework does not adequately protect our right to land and Court orders in our favour are not respected and enforced.



PASTORALISM



We want livestock to continue as the basis of our culture and identity. Livestock is akin to land; without it, life would cease to exist. Our livestock is a source of leadership and respect. It sustains our economy through food, provides us medicine and enables us to cover school fees, clothing and other costs. Livestock embodies our culture through practices like reconciliation and rites of passage, and holds spiritual significance from birth to death.



Our pastoralism is being threatened by land grabbing of pastoral areas, negative and false government narratives about pastoralism, and a lack of policies and investment supporting pastoralism, especially in light of climate change. Pastoralism is a viable livelihood system recognised under national and international instruments (such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other People Working in rural areas) but it suffers from negative stereotypes and misconceptions from various stakeholders.



For pastoralism to stay alive, we need:

- Our traditional land management systems to be documented, formally recognised, respected and protected
- No encroachment on pastoral land for other uses such as large-scale agriculture, investment, tourism, hunting and protected areas
- Adequate funding and incentives for pastoralist development and investment in the livestock value chain, recognising the pastoralist sector's contribution to GDP
- Provision of veterinary services to control disease
- Sustainable use of grazing land and livestock breeds that cope with the impacts of climate change
- Adequate access to market to be able to sell our livestock and livestock products at fair prices without excessive taxation
- Locally adapted food safety standards for selling livestock products on the market
- A transformative pastoralist education system that focuses on traditional values and our knowledge
- No research to be done about us, our land and our pastoralist way of life without our free, prior and informed consent and our meaningful participation



Our coexistence with wildlife is threatened by fortress conservation and trophy hunting. False narratives by the government and conservation organisations about population growth, livestock overpopulation and human wildlife conflicts are used against our people to take over our land. The Tanzanian Government wrongly values wildlife more than human life.



To continue living in coexistence with wildlife, we need:

- To stop conservation policies founded on the philosophy of separating humans from nature
- Recognition, documentation and understanding of Maasai mutual relationship with nature and of the importance of our coexistence with wildlife
- The management of land and natural resources including wildlife to be placed in the hands of local communities
- Trophy hunting to be abolished because it renders animals aggressive and scares our herders and livestock
- If compensation is to be provided for livestock killed by wildlife, the compensation process should be simple and provided in kind
- The compensation for humans killed by wildlife to be adequate and easy to claim, and access to medical treatment for people injured by wildlife to be prompt and covered by the State
- To stop the criminalisation of our community members, including when our livestock enters protected or hunting areas or when we are wrongly accused of killing wildlife
- To stop the militarisation of conservation and stop the use of violence in the establishment and management of conservation areas

COEXISTENCE BETWEEN PEOPLE, LIVESTOCK AND WILDLIFE



We have always coexisted, we coexist and we want to continue to coexist with wildlife. We have cultural, traditional, spiritual, and medicinal attachments to wildlife. Our Maasai peaceful behaviour and knowledge benefits wildlife animals, who feel secured and protected. Different Maasai clans have a cultural and moral obligation to protect different wildlife species.

Conservation as practised in Tanzania does not have a human face and separates us from nature. Substantial parts of Tanzania’s protected areas were established within Maasai land because wildlife were and are abundant in our areas. We and our livestock do not kill and eat wildlife except on rare occasions when we need to protect human life and livestock. We have left behind Alamayio practices of killing lions for prestige.



CULTURE



Culture holds us together and shapes our relationship with livestock, land and each other. We want to protect and perpetuate the following dimensions of our culture:

- The age set and clan system
- Respect
- Livestock as key element of our identity
- Traditional ways of using communal land
- Rites of passage
- Traditional and ritual sites and trees
- Medicinal knowledge and medicinal sites
- Dressing style or code
- Maa language as the custodian of our knowledge and identity
- Naming of our children
- Traditional leadership and community gathering (*Orkiama*)
- Traditional dispute settlement mechanism including *Iloikop*
- The roles of Laibon ritual leaders
- Eating habits of the Maasai in particular for *Irmoran* (Morans not eating alone as way of ensuring sharing of food with the poor)
- Food sharing, solidarity and redistribution of livestock resources between families
- Prayer (*Alama*), women and youth rituals



Our Maasai culture is being threatened by negative stereotypes affecting pastoralists, the expansion of the tourism industry, Bantu assimilation and the combined impacts of religion and formal education on our cultural practices.



For our culture to continue flourishing, we need:

- The Government of Tanzania to stop instigating hate speech against pastoralists and to protect our customary land uses
- The Government to stop systemic, violent and structural discrimination and dehumanisation of Maasai culture and people
- To stop the misappropriation and misuse of our culture by other people and the Government including through Maasai festivals pretending to involve the Maasai
- Establishment of Maa university and schools with culturally appropriate and relevant programmes



HEALTH, FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY ELIMINATION



We lack access to affordable and quality health, education and other social services and facilities in our areas due to systemic discrimination and intentional divestment. In Ngorongoro Division, health facilities have been paralysed for the last three years and the Medical Flying Service providing emergency assistance has been grounded with the purpose of making our life unbearable and compelling our community to vacate our ancestral lands.

Loss of grazing land and limited access to saltlicks combined with the impacts of climate change have generated increased levels of hunger and malnutrition, because of reduced livestock productivity and episodes of livestock death. The banning of cultivation, high food prices due to entrance fees and a disabling and unfair business environment make food insecurity particularly prevalent in Ngorongoro Division.

We experience structural poverty in our community due to systemic marginalisation, intentional destruction of our livelihoods by the State and exclusion from employment opportunities, adding to existing inequalities within our communities. Thousands of our livestock have been and continue to be seized and confiscated by the Tanzanian Government, resulting in increased poverty. Many of our youth are leaving to try and find a better future in different cities in Eastern and Central Africa.



To address the challenges, we need:

- Communal land-tenure security
- To stop any encroachment on grazing areas
- To stop the confiscation and auctioning of livestock
- Access to adequate and local health facilities at affordable cost
- To allow Flying Medical Service to operate so it can continue saving peoples' lives (especially pregnant women and children), deliver its vaccination programmes and intervene in case of emergency
- Mutualisation of economic resources and micro-credit schemes to support income generation and social funds for poor families, and the promotion of women's economic empowerment activities
- Diversification of economic activities and decent employment opportunities
- Restocking of livestock programmes prioritising poor families
- Equal access to resources for youth



EDUCATION



We are facing serious challenges in accessing our right to education. Government schools lack qualified and sufficient teachers and adequate facilities, and are too distant from our homes, leading to reduced access and dropout particularly during the rainy season. Poor families lack the financial resources to pay school fees and other school related costs. We want to send our children to school so they can become lawyers and defend our community lands.



For our children to access good-quality education, we need:

- A transformative pastoralist education system that focuses on traditional values and indigenous knowledge
- Local and appropriate education facilities and transportation
- Mobile/satellite school following livestock movements, training and hiring of local teachers from the community and an adequate curriculum that reflects our way of life
- School-related costs to be fully covered by the State, particularly for poor families
- Increased awareness on the importance of girls' education and adequate facilities to protect young girls
- Increased dialogue between parents and teachers to address the problem of school dropouts
- To use and teach Maa language in early primary school to impart traditional knowledge
- To encourage civil society organisations (CSOs) working with Maasai to use and promote the Maa language
- To use and support Maa media as a way to promote Maasai culture, Maa language, Maa traditional knowledge and Maa bonds with nature and pastoralism
- The Tanzanian Government to ensure adequate school operations and maintenance in Ngorongoro



GENDER EQUALITY and WOMEN'S RIGHTS



We experience social inequalities between men and women in our community. We are encouraged to see a number of women taking up leadership positions, speaking up in community meetings and participating in decision making. We value women's substantial contributions to the economic and social wellbeing of the family and community. Women are at the forefront of our community land struggle.



To continue advancing gender equality and women's rights, we need:

- Gender parity and effective participation of women and youth in the village council and all relevant decision-making bodies
- Placing equal value on boys and girls
- To promote economic equality
- Encourage microfinance, entrepreneurship and self-reliance programmes for youth
- To stop gender-based violence and harassment which undermines women's participation
- Equal treatment of and equal access to resources by different wives in polygamous families
- Women's platforms where women can speak up and share challenges and develop self-confidence
- To change the Tanzania Constitutional and legal system to allow women independent candidacy without resorting to the political party system that is traditionally male dominated
- Equal right to property ownership and inheritance from family property

NO TROPHY HUNTING



We believe trophy hunting is inhuman, immoral, barbaric and against Maasai culture. Trophy hunting segregates and creates a racist distinction between the rich (trophy hunters) and the poor (poachers). It leads to the depletion of wildlife, which negatively impacts on photo tourism. Trophy hunting indirectly facilitates poaching and trafficking of wildlife and wildlife resources. Why should animals die for human leisure?

We want all forms of trophy hunting to stop.

Trophy hunting is not compatible with pastoralism and biodiversity conservation, and leads to land alienation and displacement of the pastoralist communities.



FAIR TOURISM



We have nothing against the tourism industry and tourists in principle, provided that tourism respects our way of life. Tourism should respect our culture, pastoralism, spirituality, environment and human rights and should not instigate land dispossession. Massive promotion of tourism by the Tanzanian Government threatens our access to spiritual areas, grazing areas, water and firewood. Essential natural resources are being diverted away from our communities to satisfy the needs of the tourism industry at the expense of our people.



For tourism to benefit our communities and respect the environment, we need:

- Our community to run and manage tourism activities such as campsites on our community land
- Community consent and intellectual property rights and copyrights over photos, fabric and Maasai cultural items
- To stop any form of tourism that leads to restrictions on pastoral activities and interferes with our access to essential natural resources like firewood, water and other traditional land uses
- Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) before any tourist infrastructure development in our community lands
- To stop any form of photographic tourism that leads to the deterioration and misappropriation of our culture
- Decent employment to be provided and to prioritise local communities
- Gate fees to go directly to community coffers
- Controlled and sustainable number of tourists and hotel development in our area
- Equitable access to and compulsory sharing of benefits derived from tourism in our land including through legal reforms



In order to ensure that we are not negatively impacted by carbon credits, we need:

- To ensure carbon credit projects neither interfere with nor undermine in any way pastoralism, access to natural resources such as water, grazing areas, firewood, access to sacred sites, our traditional knowledge and land-use practices
- To ensure carbon credit projects fully guarantee and protect our land tenure security
- To suspend the promotion, negotiation and signature of any carbon credit contract until a) the knowledge gap on carbon related issues has been addressed, b) local communities have sufficient time for proper discussion and informed consultations, and c) after the local and general elections to avoid politics and corruption
- FPIC to be ensured at all stages, from project identification to formulation, implementation and closure. FPIC should be obtained before we enter into any carbon contracts. For that purpose:
 - No agreement on carbon should be concluded without full involvement of all members of the community and relevant village general assemblies
 - Neutral, transparent and independent information should be provided allowing our communities to assess the advantages and pitfalls of the proposed contracts. This includes proper training, communication and independent and credible legal advice to all community members with emphasis on women and youth.
 - Clarity and transparency on the contracts, financial flows, complaint mechanisms, and roles and responsibilities of parties and individuals involved should be provided.
 - Independent, accessible and culturally appropriate monitoring, feedback, grievance, appeal and redress mechanisms should be mutually agreed by the community including through its village assemblies and should not involve political actors.
 - Carbon proponents should provide detailed benefit-sharing schemes and put in place environmental & social safeguards to ensure carbon projects do not affect the pastoral land-use system, community culture and traditional land-use practices. They should disclose all relevant information on the carbon credit buyer to ensure accountability.

NO CARBON CREDITS WITHOUT FPIC



We notice the rapid development of the carbon credit business and have received conflicting, contradictory and insufficient information and training on the opportunities, challenges and threats associated with carbon credit initiatives. We note with concern that this undertaking is leading different communities to sign contracts without full consideration and participation by villagers and likely impacted persons. We further note that information on carbon is concentrated in the hands of a few, which limits collective discussion and decision-making. We fear that carbon credits may become another form of land grabbing, adding to the existing multiplication of conservation areas, wildlife corridors, game reserves, game-controlled areas, hunting blocks and forest reserves. We believe carbon offset should not be a substitute for reducing carbon emissions in the Global North.

The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)

The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) is an international alliance standing in solidarity with the Maasai of Northern Tanzania. We bring together international faith-based organisations, human rights organisations, international aid and development organisations, as well as grassroots organisations, individual activists, researchers and lawyers representing the Maasai in several land cases. Our alliance includes, among others, the Africa Europe Faith Justice Network (AEFJN), Agrecol Association for AgriCulture & Ecology, Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP), Center for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR) at Coventry University (UK), CIDSE - International family of Catholic social justice organisations (International), Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation (IMPACT), FIAN International, FINAL GOVERNANCE, KOO (Koordinierungsstelle der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz (Coordinating Office of the Austrian Bishops' Conference), Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (Society for Threatened Peoples), Misereor, PINGO's Forum (Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisations), PWC (Pastoral Women's Council), TEST (Traditional Ecosystems Survival Tanzania), UCRT (Ujamaa Community Resource Team) and Welthaus Graz. Our main objective is to put an end to the human rights violations facing the Maasai of northern Tanzania.

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