



**Maasai International
Solidarity Alliance**

Public Comment on the Enjipai Community Rangeland Carbon Project (Tanzania, #4742)

This comment is applicable to the validations under both the VCS and CCB standards.

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1. Introduction

This proposed project involves introduction of new land management and grazing practices across a large area of land used by indigenous pastoralists (Maasai people). Although it involves a different methodology, it applies a similar theory of change as other soil carbon credit projects being implemented or developed in East African grasslands, such as those of Soils for the Future and other proponents: the Northern Kenya Grasslands Carbon Project (Kenya, #1468), the Kajiado Rangelands Carbon Project (Kenya, #4714), and the Longido and Monduli Rangelands Carbon Project (Tanzania, Project ID #4924).

Those projects have raised fundamental concerns regarding:

- the validity of additionality claims;
- the reliability of monitoring systems;
- the ability to account for carbon leakage in open pastoral systems;
- the integrity of Soil Organic Carbon accounting;
- the social and governance impacts on pastoralist communities, including critical issues of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), consultation and equity of benefits as well as impacts on mobility, communal land management and food security.

The information provided by the project proponent in the Project Description Document (PDD) suggests that similar issues will arise as it reproduces similar assumptions and approaches.

Our comments are divided into two main sections: first, those relating to **‘technical’ issues**, such as additionality and monitoring and, second, those related to **social issues, governance, human rights and legal issues**.

We are asking you to also consider, as part of this Public Comment, [MISA’s research report on Soil Carbon Credits in Northern Tanzania](#), which contains important information about this project and its anticipated implications on Maasai communities if certified.

2. Technical issues

2.1 Questionable additionality

The Project Document does not provide sufficient information to establish the additionality of claimed tenure and grazing-management interventions. The project is based on improved use of Village Land Use Plans (VLUPs) – as normally required to obtain Certificates of Customary Rights & Occupancies (CCROs) - in order to improve grazing practices and hence increase the soil organic content. However, as the PDD notes, some villages already developed such plans as early as 2013 and obtained CCROs in 2015. As we understand it, the work of organisations such as UCRT to develop ‘holistic rangeland management plans’ and obtain CCROs in what is now the Enjipai project area was never intended to be the basis for a carbon project. Hence **the proposed project** does not establish additional carbon savings in these areas; it is, at least in part, monetising previous work.

The PDD does not disclose the baseline tenure status of participating villages, including which villages already possessed VLUPs, communal CCROs, grazing plans, or associated governance structures prior

to the project start date. Given the long-standing involvement of implementing partners in precisely these activities in northern Tanzania, this information is necessary to determine whether the project creates new tenure and management changes or builds upon pre-existing donor-supported initiatives.

To demonstrate additionality, the project should provide evidence of specific, measurable changes in grazing practices relative to the baseline scenario. This should include information such as changes in livestock distribution, timing and duration of grazing, pasture recovery periods, use of wet- and dry-season grazing areas, and stocking rates. Without demonstrating what management changes occurred as a result of the project — rather than simply documenting the existence of tenure instruments or grazing plans — the link between project activities and claimed SOC removals remains uncertain. If the project has indeed been operating since 2021, it should have been easy for the proponent to present such information. As noted below in section 2.8 ‘Project Start Date’, we find it unusual and suspicious that, despite claiming project activities started in late 2021, the PDD does not in fact include even the names of a single participating community, nor provide a KML GIS file of such communities, let alone evidence of the effectiveness of the project’s approach. We believe **the project document cannot be considered complete and the project cannot be validated until this information is provided, and the tenure/CCRO/VLUP status of each village and their previous role in the project is clarified.**

Finally, in the context of the very limited locational information provided by TNC, we note from the map on p70 of the PDD that the project area appears to overlap with two Wildlife Management Areas and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. All of these are potentially subject to regulatory land use planning regimes and/or restrictions on grazing. The project proponent needs to demonstrate what additionality the project would bring to these areas, and how it will distinguish between regulatory impacts and project impacts.

2.2 Baseline is asserted rather than demonstrated

The project’s claim to generate additional carbon removals rests on a broad and weakly substantiated narrative of rangeland degradation. The PDD states in relation to the ‘without project scenarios’ that what would “most likely” occur is:

"1. Unplanned continuous grazing in village grazing areas either seasonally or year-round depending on the extent of prior land-use planning. Drivers include human and livestock population growth along with national policies that have encouraged settlement and restricted movement. These pre-existing conditions are the baseline scenario – see Section 3.1.4 Baseline Scenario (VCS, 3.13)"

We note that the baseline does not state how these claimed socio-economic and political conditions relate to the state of carbon stocks. The PDD then claims that “a substantial body of evidence shows widespread degradation of village rangelands across the project zone and attributes that degradation to drivers that are still present”. However, the evidence then presented does not support this assertion.

The first piece of ‘evidence’ claimed by the project proponent is that:

"A remote sensing analysis of villages in Monduli and Simanjiro districts showed that Enhanced Vegetation Index (EVI, a proxy for rangeland productivity and health) declined for all villages

analysed from 2001 to 2015, in contrast to neighbouring Tarangire National Park where EVI was stable (Figure 3)."

However, this remote sensing data is merely descriptive: it does NOT attribute causes to the decline in vegetation quality. So this does not provide evidence that TNC's analysis of the cause of vegetation decline is valid. It could equally be due to climate change, as indeed appears to be recognised in the third of TNC's purported pieces of 'evidence':

The second piece of evidence is the claim that:

"A 2023 remote sensing analysis informed by an extensive field survey found significant levels of soil erosion, an indicator of rangeland degradation, across the project zone, including in established CCROs (Figure 4)."

Again, information is merely descriptive: it does not establish WHY these changes are happening. The third piece of evidence refers to:

"Another remote sensing study from 2023 analysed bare ground cover and found that while most strongly driven by rainfall, the rate of increase of bare ground cover was positively correlated with human and livestock densities. This study additionally found that there was no difference in bare ground cover between CCROs and unprotected lands in contrast to lower coverage of bare ground in WMAs and national parks (Figure 5). These trends combined with continued human population growth in the three project districts (Table 16)²¹ suggests that unplanned, continuous grazing and the continued degradation of rangeland health is the most likely scenario in the absence of the project."

This shows that bare ground cover (as a proxy for vegetation decline) is "Most strongly driven by rainfall". So **if rainfall has been the largest cause of vegetational change then the baseline case becomes largely invalid.**

The charts then provided in the PDD (p32) the opposite of what the project proponent claims: bare ground is in fact NOT correlated with population density. The finding that bare ground appears to be correlated with livestock density is hardly surprising. But this chart in itself does not provide evidence to support TNC's baseline, as it does not provide any evidence about WHERE any such over-grazing is occurring, nor whether it correlates with the areas shown in the first two remote-sensing analyses, or whether there is in fact any statistically significant and causal relationship between the two after controlling for the strong effect of rainfall.

Semi-arid savanna ecosystems such as the rangelands of northern Tanzania are characterised by high interannual variability in rainfall, which strongly influences vegetation productivity, biomass production and remotely sensed vegetation indices. In fact, a remote-sensing assessment specifically covering Longido and Monduli Districts found that vegetation dynamics in these rangelands are closely linked to rainfall variability. Using long-term rainfall data (1940–2020, including CHIRPS 2.0) and NDVI data (1981–2020), the study found that hot dry periods caused reductions in vegetation cover, but that vegetation generally showed high resilience and recovered rapidly following normal or above-

average rainfall years.¹ The authors therefore caution against interpreting short-term vegetation changes without accounting for rainfall-driven variability.

This issue is particularly relevant given the timing of the proposed project. The claimed project start date (2021) coincides with an exceptional multi-season drought affecting East African rangelands during 2020–2022. This was followed by substantially improved rainfall conditions in 2023–2024. Any increase in vegetation productivity observed during the early crediting period could therefore reflect natural recovery from drought rather than changes caused by improved grazing management.

The Project Document does not demonstrate how its modelling framework separates the effects of any altered grazing practices from rainfall-driven fluctuations in vegetation productivity. This is especially important where remotely sensed indicators of vegetation condition or productivity are used directly or indirectly to estimate SOC change. A robust additionality assessment should demonstrate that similar vegetation recovery would not have occurred under baseline grazing practices following a return to favourable rainfall conditions.

Without explicit controls for rainfall variability and drought-recovery cycles, naturally occurring increases in biomass production following wet years risk being incorrectly attributed to project activities, resulting in an overestimation of additional SOC removals.

Moreover, the PDD’s analysis also relies on a comparison between grazed communal rangelands and nearby “protected areas that represent low-grazing reference systems” (for example, village lands in Monduli and Simanjiro versus Tarangire National Park, and CCROs versus WMAs and national parks as shown in Figures 3–5 of the PDD). This is not a credible counterfactual. Protected areas, by definition, exclude or severely limit livestock grazing and are subject to fundamentally different ecological and management regimes. The two areas are thus fundamentally non-comparable and do not provide a basis for isolating the marginal impact of the project intervention.

In our assessment, this results in a circular logic: historical degradation is assumed, the baseline is constructed on that assumption, and carbon gains are then credited against it. **As the degradation is not convincingly demonstrated, we consider that the entire additionality claim is undermined.** This goes to the core integrity of the credits that may be issued.

2.3 Monitoring is fundamentally confounded by rainfall variability

The project documentation relies on satellite-derived indicators of vegetation cover and productivity (including EVI and bare ground) alongside process-based modelling to characterize rangeland degradation and simulate soil organic carbon dynamics in a warm, semi-arid environment with highly variable rainfall. In this landscape, the PDD itself notes that bare ground dynamics are “most strongly driven by rainfall,” with human and livestock densities only providing additional explanatory power, and it highlights that precipitation is highly variable between years and seasons. Against this backdrop, attributing observed improvements in vegetation condition or productivity during the crediting period to improved rangeland management, rather than to favourable rainfall patterns, is inherently challenging.

¹ Verhoeve, S.L., Keijzer, T., Kaitila, R., Wickama, J. & Sterk, G. (2021). Vegetation Resilience under Increasing Drought Conditions in Northern Tanzania. *Remote Sensing*, 13(22), 4592. DOI: 10.3390/rs13224592

Although the PDD explicitly recognises climatic variability and recurrent drought as key risks to forage availability, rangeland health and SOC stocks, it does not describe a project-specific empirical approach that would clearly separate the effects of weather from those of the proposed grazing interventions on vegetation and soil carbon. In our assessment, this reliance on indicators that are predominantly climate-driven, without a robust attribution framework, raises a significant risk that weather-related increases in vegetation and associated soil carbon will be partially, and potentially systematically, credited as project-induced gains. **This opens the door to systematic over-crediting, where carbon gains driven by weather are incorrectly attributed to the project.**

2.4. An unproven theory of change

The Project Document relies on an assumed theory of change in which the establishment or strengthening of Village Land Use Plans (VLUPs) and Certificates of Customary Rights of Occupancy (CCROs) enables improved grazing management, which in turn results in increased soil organic carbon (SOC). However, the evidence provided is insufficient to demonstrate that this causal pathway applies in the project area, or that the claimed SOC benefits are additional to existing conditions.

The existence of a VLUP or CCRO does not itself demonstrate a change in grazing management capable of generating additional SOC accumulation. Formal recognition of communal grazing areas may provide important tenure security, but it does not prove that baseline grazing practices were unsustainable, that livestock movements were previously unmanaged, or that traditional systems of seasonal grazing and pasture recovery were absent or ineffective. **Pastoralist systems in northern Tanzania have historically relied on mobility, negotiated access arrangements and seasonal use of grazing resources; therefore, formalisation of these systems should not automatically be treated as a transition from “unmanaged” to “improved” grazing.**

2.5 Soil Organic Carbon accounting relies on opaque and unproven modelling chains

The Project relies on the DayCent model to estimate soil organic carbon (SOC) dynamics but does not provide a clear quantification of model uncertainty or error margins associated with its outputs. The Project Document provides an estimate of total project uncertainty of approximately 16 % (pp. 99), presented as a single flat rate without a transparent derivation or uncertainty propagation across the modelling chain. However, the document does not clearly disaggregate uncertainty across the multiple stages of the modelling chain (remote sensing → biomass → soil carbon), nor does it provide a detailed explanation of how uncertainties are propagated through these steps.

There is, to our knowledge, no published validation study or carbon-standard protocol that would support a generic, project-wide uncertainty rate as low as 16% for long-term soil organic carbon stock changes simulated with DayCent across large, heterogeneous rangeland landscapes.

Furthermore, the project documentation does not demonstrate whether the projected carbon benefits materially exceed the stated 16% uncertainty margin for DayCent-based SOC stock changes. In the absence of a quantitative comparison between net sequestration estimates and their associated uncertainty (e.g. confidence intervals or signal-to-noise analysis), it is not possible to determine whether the claimed net sequestration represents a robust signal or merely falls within the bounds of model uncertainty.

In addition, the PDD states that “Ex-ante SOC stock changes under the baseline scenario are conservatively assumed to be zero for all quantification units” (p. 84). While presented as a conservative methodological choice, this assumption effectively bypasses the need to empirically establish baseline SOC dynamics. It implies that baseline trends are not directly measured but instead imposed by assumption, with modelled project scenarios then compared against a static counterfactual. In the absence of clearly reported baseline SOC measurements and variability, it is not possible to determine whether projected carbon gains represent real increases over existing conditions or fall within the natural variability of the system.

Taken together, the reliance on indirect modelling, the absence of disclosed uncertainty ranges, and the assumption of a static baseline undermine confidence that the project can reliably quantify net carbon benefits. At minimum, the PDD does not provide sufficient information to assess whether projected sequestration exceeds the margin of model uncertainty.

Soil carbon in dryland systems is spatially heterogeneous, highly variable, and vulnerable to rapid reversal. Yet the project proposes to generate large volumes of credits on the basis of indirect modelling rather than robust empirical measurement. This approach does not meet a reasonable standard of evidentiary confidence for long-term carbon storage.

2.6 Leakage is intrinsic, substantial, and effectively unquantifiable

A key potential source of ‘leakage’ is when livestock moves outside the project area. In that case, this could result in denser vegetation inside the project area, but in less vegetation in neighbouring areas. The benefit to the vegetation density comes at the expense of neighbouring areas and cannot be claimed as benefits arising from the project. Given that the project operates in a landscape defined by mobility, livestock routinely moves across village boundaries, across project boundaries, and across national borders. As well as the inherent ‘leakiness’ of this system, the nature of the area (very large, very sparsely populated and with very little fixed infrastructure), raises huge practical problems in monitoring what could be constant livestock movements into and out of the project area. We note that **the methodology chosen by TNC for this project, VM0042, is ill-suited to conditions where ‘displacement’ of livestock is a common** and indeed necessary occurrence and part of the usual annual grazing cycle, and dependent on changing local weather patterns. We note from the map of claimed ‘project area at validation’ on p70 of the PDD that the initial carbon accounting area is highly fragmented, with extremely long and complex boundaries relative to the areas concerned. This makes it essentially implausible that the area would not experience very high levels of leakage as cattle move into and out of the project area. Meaningfully monitoring these movements will be all but impossible.

However, the PDD only addresses leakage in a highly superficial and optimistic way, stating that ‘the project activities ... will not result in the reduction or displacement of livestock production’, but providing no empirical evidence on actual herd movements or displacement risk in this highly mobile pastoralist context. It does not consider Maasai traditional grazing patterns, nor does it acknowledge that pastoralists are sharing their grazing areas even beyond village boundaries. Recent research suggests that pastoralists in the targeted area are adapting to climate change by travelling further

than they used to in the past, as evidenced by a 2025 article published in *Rangeland Ecology and Management* documenting changes in livestock movements in Longido and Monduli districts.²

The article found that:

- pastoralists are adapting to increasing drought frequencies by moving further away to other grazing lands (68%), followed by feed supplementation (52%) and herd splitting (51%), which means that small livestock (goats, sheep) stays close to the homestead while larger livestock (cows) are taken to graze in distant pastures;

- pastoralists travelled up to 644 km over 16 days during recent severe droughts;
- shortage of food as a result of drought and invasive species was mentioned by half of participants in the research; and
- longer movements are associated with higher risks and higher workload for women. Yet such movements are lifesaving.

It concluded that: "Movement and, thus, extensive grazing are essential to maintain healthy rangelands." Therefore, these are not peripheral risks—they are central features of the system.

The PDD formally lists all leakage sources required under VM0042 but then sets total leakage to zero based purely on optimistic assumptions about livestock production, without providing empirical evidence on actual herd movements or displacement risk in this highly mobile pastoralist context.

The PDD describes a monitoring system in which grazing coordinators and village institutions record livestock movements and implement complex seasonal grazing plans, potentially using GPS-enabled or other spatial tracking tools. It does not provide empirical evidence from what are claimed to be previous project activities since 2021, nor of comparable projects showing that such a system can reliably capture livestock movements and leakage at scale.

This absence of reported results is particularly significant given the complexity of pastoral mobility in the region. Furthermore, under the grouped project structure—where new areas may be added over time—it is not always clear which specific villages or grazing units are actively participating, monitored, or included within the credited project boundary at any given time. This raises additional concerns regarding the completeness, consistency, and verifiability of the monitoring system.

In practice, it is highly likely that grazing pressure will be displaced rather than reduced, impacts will shift geographically, and credited carbon gains will not represent net climate benefits.

2.7. The grouped project structure undermines validation and accountability

The project is structured as a grouped project, so that, once the overall design is validated, additional community areas can be added as "project activity instances" under the same framework rather than as separately validated stand-alone projects. The final project area is expected to reach 843,170 hectares according to the PDD – yet, other than the map on p70, the PDD provides no indication of how much land or how many communities or other landholders are already signed up to the project, or what their status is. The PDD states that new areas may be added provided they share similar

² Anna Christina Treydte, Amana Othman Kilawi, Janeth Baraka Mngulwi, and Gladys Lendii, "Biophysical Challenges to Pastoral Mobility in Northern Tanzania," *Rangeland Ecology & Management* 104 (2026): 58–66, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1550742425001538>.

baseline conditions, similar additionality characteristics, and similar monitoring approaches within the Tarangire ecosystem. This is a weak safeguard. In reality, ecological conditions vary significantly across landscapes, social and governance structures differ between communities, and assumptions derived from initial sites may not hold elsewhere.

This structure allows large-scale expansion **towards a final project area of nearly 850,000 hectares** - on the basis of essentially zero initial evidence, even though the project claims to have been in operation for nearly five years. As is illustrated in Section 3 below, there are reasons to seriously doubt the validity even of some of the existing claimed community sign-ups. There would need to be very careful village-by-village validation scrutiny of whether there has been, for example, duress placed on village councils or other people to sign up, on whether villages hold proper land certificates, and on whether there is, for example, any conflict with neighbouring communities, any of which could invalidate communities' land being enrolled in the project. **The grouped project structure risks bypassing this entirely, and largely allows the project itself to determine whether villages are able to join.** The project developer has, of course, a very strong vested financial interest in ensuring that more villages sign up, regardless of whether this is legitimate or not. We argue that the developer has already shown highly questionable scruples in this, as shown below in Section 3.

2.8. Project start date

We believe the auditors must closely scrutinise the proponent's claim that the project started in 2021 and could generate a very substantial amount of credits from 2022 to the present. As noted earlier, we are aware that much of the work done in the area in relation to land-use planning and obtaining of CCROs by organisations such as UCRT was never intended to pave the way for a carbon project. **For a project which claims to have been running for nearly five years, the number of cases of 'Data not available' being recorded in the project metrics (PDD pp6-8) is notable.**

If the project truly started in 2021 then there should be evidence produced and made available for public scrutiny, such as:

- project activities carried out after that time were clearly motivated by (and, for additionality purposes) only possible through carbon credit funding;
- actual project impact reports, including on the claimed link between improved land use planning and greater soil organic content;
- specific details of which communities were involved in the project, what their status is in terms of VLUPs and CCROs, evidence of FPIC having been granted to the carbon project and appropriate agreements to participate in it;
- monitoring reports, analysis and reviews providing a basis for the current project's claims to additionality, baselines and the projected carbon storage figures.

In the absence of any of these, it should be assumed that the project did not in fact start when claimed and cannot be awarded credits for that back-dated period.

2.9 Permanence assumptions are not credible in a drought-prone system

The project assumes consistent annual carbon removals over a 40-year project lifetime (implemented as an initial 20-year crediting period with the option to renew for a further 20 years) under broadly

similar management assumptions. This assumption is difficult to justify in a system characterised by high rainfall variability, recurrent drought, livestock mobility, and ecological uncertainty. The actual fluxes in soil carbon under such circumstances are very poorly understood. The PDD itself acknowledges that extreme climatic events may significantly disrupt grazing patterns. A recently published paper has found that soil carbon is likely to be lost more rapidly under conditions of drought,³ which is already increasing due to climate change in the project area. The project's non-permanence risk report is not available for scrutiny.

Soil carbon gains in such systems are inherently fragile. Yet the project does not provide sufficient assurance, through site-specific evidence or publicly accessible risk analysis, that the credited removals will be durable over multiple decades.

More generally, **there is no scientific evidence that rotational grazing, as put forward by this project will ensure that more carbon is stored in the soil.** A global assessment⁴ found that shifting to rotational grazing does not produce statistically significant improvements in plant cover, biomass, or animal productivity compared to existing grazing patterns, indicating no demonstrable benefits in rangeland production outcomes.

3. Social, governance, human rights and legal issues

3.1. Competition and overlap between the Longido and Monduli Rangelands Carbon Project (LMRCP) #4924 and Enjipai Community Rangeland Carbon Project (Tanzania, #4742)

There are two competing projects being developed in the same area: the Longido and Monduli Rangelands Carbon Project (LMRCP) #4924, developed by Soils for the Future, and this project #4742, developed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). This competition has given rise to a carbon crediting race over the past two years: carbon proponents have been exerting tremendous pressure on villages to sign, and this has been fostering community conflicts.

The PDD claims that an MoU between TNC and Soils for the Future has been agreed. In order to comply with Principles of Free Prior and Informed consent, as well the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and ILO Convention 169, this agreement – which relates almost entirely indigenous-occupied land - should be published in full, made available to the area's inhabitants, and be subject to their Free Prior and Informed Consent (see also below).

Given that there cannot be two carbon offset projects in the same area with very similar objectives, the development of both projects should be halted until such time as, inter alia, the respective proponents have clarified which specific communities they are targeting and that they have agreed how the two projects will relate to each other.

³ See Xishu Zhou et al, Drought amplifies warming-induced soil carbon loss in a decade-long experiment, Nature Climate Change, 13 March 2026 DOI: 10.1038/s41558-026-02584-2, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-026-02584-2>

⁴ Heidi-Jayne Hawkins (2017) A global assessment of Holistic Planned Grazing™ compared with season-long, continuous grazing: meta-analysis findings, African Journal of Range & Forage Science, 34:2, 65-75, <https://doi.org/10.2989/10220119.2017.1358213>

3.2. FPIC and Community Participation Claims

The project affects a claimed 100,000 people, most of whom are Indigenous, across more than 40 villages and at least one Wildlife Management Area, in addition to all the other communities living in and around the area that will be impacted (see 3.6. below). It proposes a 40-year intervention, hence with long-term contractual implications.

Evidence we have gathered from engaging with community representatives in the area over the last two years indicates that only one village, Karao, appears to have expressed interest in joining the project. For the rest, community members indicate that engagement with Enjipai representatives has been extremely limited if not non-existent at the level of their village.

The PDD claims that the project will enrol villages based on the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The Project Document also indicates that it will engage with village councils according to carbon trading regulations stating that villages councils are the entity holding carbon rights.

The reference to FPIC indicates that the project proponent is aware that the Maasai people living in the targeted areas are Indigenous Peoples under International Law and that this status grants them specific rights that cannot be taken away, including full self-determination over their lands. However, the documentation provided offers limited detail on the depth, consistency, and inclusiveness of these processes. In particular, there is little evidence demonstrating how information was communicated at the household level, how understanding of complex issues such as carbon rights, long-term contractual obligations, and potential risks was ensured, or how dissenting views were identified and addressed.

Before expanding on our concerns regarding FPIC, it is important to indicate at the outset how it should be conducted in a Maasai context. FPIC is both a procedural and substantive process as it involves decision-making (procedural) and the consent to be obtained (substantive). To Indigenous Peoples such as the Maasai, FPIC is very relevant and crucial on issues which attract profound impacts on Indigenous Peoples in the following aspects:

- Lands, cultural territories, and traditional resources;
- Culture and spirituality centred on land;
- It affects the Maasai culture of sharing ('Osotwa');
- It touches on the subsistence and livelihood of the people;
- Collective identity and self-governance; and
- Evictions, dispossession, and restrictions on access.

FPIC has four elements:

1. It should be free from coercion, intimidation, manipulation, retaliation, or undue pressure.
2. It should be prior, meaning that it should be conducted sufficiently in advance of authorization, design and planning, or implementation.
3. It should be informed, meaning that accurate, precise, complete, and understandable information should be provided in accessible forms and languages.
4. There should be clear and unqualified consent. It should be understood that consent in the Maasai context is a collective decision made through Maasai institutions and decision-making processes, including a decision to approve, seek modifications or conditions,

postpone, or withhold agreement to a proposal. It is not enough for this to be done only at the level of the village council with 25 people.

FPIC should not be a mere procedural step to rubber-stamp a pre-determined outcome. FPIC is a right and not an obligation imposed on Indigenous Peoples such as the Maasai to engage in negotiations in all circumstances. In the Maasai context, they are the ones who should decide whether and how to engage in an FPIC process. FPIC does not mean reducing consent to a simple “yes” to a pre-defined project.

To the Maasai, for FPIC to be sought, it needs to involve all relevant groups within the community and should be understood and agreed upon by all. In any FPIC process, Indigenous Peoples should not be treated as stakeholders but as decision-makers in anything that needs to be implemented. All FPIC processes should conform to international human rights standards set out in ILO Convention No. 169, UNDRIP, and other international instruments.

Our review of the PDD has identified that FPIC is utterly lacking. The focus of the proponent, as the basis of engagement and involvement, is the village council. The basis of consultation is only the village council. The process described in the PDD is not only contrary to FPIC standards and the Maasai system of management, but also to Tanzanian laws governing the management of village land.

Any allocation of the use of village land in Tanzania by the village council should obtain approval from the Village Assembly. According to section 8(5) of the Village Land Act [Cap 114 R.E. 2019], it is mandatory for the village council to "not allocate land or grant a customary right of occupancy without prior approval of the Village Assembly." It is therefore a legal requirement in Tanzania for the Village Assembly to approve decisions affecting the management of village land.

The Village Assembly is a public participation forum involving all members of the village. It is common for many Maasai villages to have more than 1,000 people at a minimum, while the village council comprises only 25 people who cannot make decisions on behalf of the rest.

Therefore, **our review of the PDD shows that** the proposed project is not in compliance with village land laws, under which the ultimate decision-maker is the Village Assembly.

In addition, our engagement with the impacted communities shows a clear knowledge gap on how the voluntary carbon market operates, the global context in which it has developed and the lack of a regulatory framework governing it, and the implications of entering into a carbon contract. This knowledge gap is observed in all villages except for the few members of the village government who have more information. CSOs and other stakeholders, including decision-makers, were also found to have very little knowledge and capacity on soil carbon business.

We are also concerned by the community's lack of access to independent legal advice; the only legal opinion community members have access to is that of the district legal advisor, a government employee. This might create a conflict of interest since the district is also a beneficiary of the profit-sharing scheme of the project and has been shown to pressure communities to sign. Recently, there have been several cases where district governments have used state machinery to intimidate and suppress people who oppose or seek more understanding of the business. Even when the contract suggests going to court, it is not possible for villages to file cases against the government in Tanzania.

Further, there is a serious lack of independence as the district government is party to the agreement and mediation processes. This creates a conflict of interest reinforced by the fact that the benefit-sharing agreement allocates as per the carbon regulations 8 % of the carbon revenues to the district; in a country that does not respect the rule of law and that is known for its authoritarian regime, this is highly concerning.

In addition, when we conducted the MISA study on the implications of carbon credits on the Maasai in 2025, we found that rangeland areas are shared beyond village boundaries. Maasai people and their livestock know no village borders. The Maasai culture of sharing grazing areas (Osotwa) reflects a longstanding tradition of brotherhood, reciprocity, and collective stewardship of rangelands. To make FPIC meaningful in the Maasai context, participation and engagement should not be confined to a single village. Rather, it should involve all communities that share and depend upon the same rangeland ecosystem, even where such communities are located beyond village boundaries. Engaging only a village council will not only undermine the rights of people in that particular village but also the rights of people who use the same rangeland area.

Meaningful Free, Prior and Informed Consent requires full understanding, broad participation, and the genuine ability to refuse. The documentation provided does not demonstrate that this standard has been met.

3.3. Women excluded from land and village governance structures

Women and youth tend to be left out of decision-making processes; their participation in the village council and village assembly meetings is limited and not adequately encouraged and guaranteed; properly involving women, youth, and other marginalized people requires putting in place a dedicated process to ensure their proper involvement. There is no clear information on how this will be done in the PDD.

Women are central to community life and livelihoods. They are often the majority due to outmigration of men and male youth. Yet, their participation in land and pastoral governance is structurally limited **from land and grazing committees as well as local government institutions like the Village Council.** Even if they are present, women are often not in a position to voice their concerns due to social norms and that specific measures must be put in place to ensure their FPIC.

In addition, the statutory requirement that 7 out of 25 village council members be present for decision-making does not align with the standards of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), which are intended to ensure that the community as a whole has an opportunity to be heard and to provide consent. Finally, village assembly meetings may convene only a limited portion of the community, as no minimum threshold for women's participation is established for the assembly to be considered valid. While there are quotas in place for one third of women to sit on the village council (which we believe is insufficient and should be 50%), no quota is in place to ensure gender balance at village assembly meetings, which is the ultimate decision-making power at village level.

The PDD does not specify any dedicated, project-level mechanisms to overcome the well-documented structural barriers that prevent women and youth from meaningfully participating in land and grazing governance in northern Tanzania. In practice, this means that the project largely relies on existing

institutions and legal minimum quotas, without putting in place the kind of tailored processes that would be required to ensure effective FPIC for women, youth and other marginalized groups.

For all the reasons outlined above, we have serious concerns about the systemic and structural exclusion of women from decision-making at various levels and about their complete lack of involvement and consent to this project. Saying, as stated in the PDD, that women's participation will be "incentivised" is not enough.

3.4. Unfair and Problematic contracts

Key concerns about the Enjipai contract, annexed to the PDD, are as follows:

- a) unsatisfactory FPIC process
- b) unclear and detrimental termination clauses;
- c) inadequate dispute resolution mechanism involving the district despite the existence of a clear conflict of interest since the district receives a share of the carbon credits sold and may not wish to see the contracts terminated;
- d) involvement of the district legal officer as witness and facilitator leading to a lack of independent process;
- e) restrictions on the use of the land for any other uses during the duration of the contract;
- f) unilateral drafting. According to Tanzanian law, villages are supposed to participate in formulating the contracts. We are concerned about Enjipai having already drafted a contract to be taken to the villages even before engaging them. This is a major concern to us because we believe that a contract is a mutual consensus between two parties. It means that the idea, the design, and the drafting of the contract should be undertaken by both parties. However, Enjipai drafted the contract with all the terms, and the village is only required to sign it. This is not compliant with FPIC.

3.5. Impacts on grazing practices and communal land use

The PDD refers repeatedly to 'improved rangeland management'. It is not entirely clear (or well defined) what this means, though it is evidently based on more rapid rotational grazing across defined grazing blocks. This involves tightly grouped herds, externally coordinated movements, prescribed grazing schedules, and formal monitoring by project staff. This is not a continuation of traditional Maasai grazing practices in their original, community-driven form. It is a new and externally structured system inspired by Western science tested in other climatic conditions (US, France) that are not replicable.

Our research shows that Maasai pastoralist communities within the project area have many concerns about the project:

- The project will **severely restrict land use and mobility** and disrupt traditional grazing practices;
- The project will **displace traditional land use practices** and take the land out of the community's control to place it in the hands of an outsider, dismissing Indigenous knowledge;

- The project will **introduce rigidity in land use and prevent communities from responding to climate variability** in a flexible way. Community members pointed out that their current grazing practices and mobility allow them to maximise access to water, salt licks or grass. With climate change, protecting and ensuring full mobility will be more important than ever, they argued;
- The project will prevent Maasai pastoralists from **sharing grazing areas with other Maasai**. We asked participants to identify and list all the communal grazing areas they rely on at different times of the year and share with other Maasai. All the people we interviewed were able to designate these areas in detail along with the arrangements governing their shared use. Beyond sharing grazing areas with neighbouring villages, we found that most communities go long distances to graze in common areas they share with other Maasai - especially in times of severe drought - or welcome other communities into their areas. They are concerned that these grazing areas will be incorporated into one of the two soil carbon projects and hence reduce or block their availability for grazers not within that project.
- The project will bring **intra- and inter- community conflicts and tensions**. A typical example that was given was the following case. If village A shares a grazing area with village B and village A enters into a carbon agreement, then allowing access to livestock from village B or taking livestock outside the project boundaries will result in financial loss. In the process of implementing (rapid) rotational grazing, livestock movements will be monitored to ensure that a) there is no encroachment (livestock from other areas coming in) and b) there is no leakage (livestock leaving the project boundaries). While this will not be strictly prohibited, it will lead to fewer carbon credits sold, hence less financial revenues. There seems to be nothing in place in the projects to address such concerns.
- The project will **restrict access to refuge areas in times of drought**. Maasai community members explained to us that they keep aside some refuge areas that are mostly used in case of severe drought. Despite the fact that these places are within the village land (Engaruka, Magadini, Loondolwo, Ngarasero) they always welcome and accommodate pastoralists from outside those particular villages to use these strategic areas. For instance, the plain between Gilai mountain to Oldonyo Lengai to the outskirts of Kerimasi mountain are communally shared by three districts such as Ngorongoro, Longido and Monduli. The community representatives also explained to us that they welcomed pastoralists from Ndinyika and Sanjan in Malambo from Sale Division of Ngorongoro following the 2022 eviction where the great plain of Sanjan was turned into a Game Reserve and the people were left without alternative rangeland. Our meetings also showed that pastoralists from outside the villages had to construct temporary/seasonal bomas (Ronjoi) in the pastureland until the drought ended, when they returned to their villages. People in Ketumbeine Division (Olopolosek, Orkeju Loongishu, Engushai, Armanie) fear that if the villages surrounding Ngarasero, Oldonyo Lengai and Engaruka enter into contract carbon business, it will be the end of pastoralism.

Maps of Longido⁵ and Monduli⁶ show the grazing areas used for the different seasons. The grazing areas are communal and extend beyond village boundaries. The DLTP project has also documented livestock routes in Longido. While long-distance migration is observed among pastoralist herds in all districts, the longest distances are observed in Longido because it is the driest district in the country. **This means that mobility will be key to survival in Longido. Strategic mobility is a key coping mechanism against livestock death in times of drought and should be preserved as climate change brings more frequent and severe droughts.**

3.6. Undue influence and interference of the state

There is **no dedicated, sector-specific legislation** to guide dispute resolution for soil carbon contracts, and the procedures outlined in the reviewed contracts lack clear legal standing and are impractical.

3.7. Absence of national legislation regulating soil carbon projects

In October 2022, the Minister of State, Vice President's Office, Union and Environment published the Environmental Management (Control and Management of Carbon Trading) Regulations, 2022, under Government Notice (GN) No. 636, signalling Tanzania's formal participation in the global carbon trading industry. Amendments were introduced in October 2023 under GN 721. The Regulations establish the institutional framework for carbon trading, requirements and steps for carbon project registration (from concept note to project document to international validation), stakeholders' involvement, and the introduction of a costs and benefit sharing scheme. In addition, non-binding [National Carbon Trading Guidelines](#) were published in October 2022.

The regulations were not initially designed for soil carbon projects. It is unclear if and how the benefit-sharing percentage provided in the guidelines applies to soil carbon. In addition, the Regulations prioritise conservation and profit over land and human rights.

One of the main changes introduced by the 2023 amendment to the Regulations is that, in the case of non-REDD+ projects (like soil carbon), the distribution of benefits is to be negotiated directly between the project proponent and the Managing Authority. **This means that the benefit-sharing agreement depends entirely on the ability of villages or the WMA to negotiate with Enjipai. This does not adequately protect local communities.**

3.8. Benefit-sharing

The Project Document contains only limited and high-level information regarding the structure and operation of benefit-sharing arrangements. **Although the Project Document states that 51% of gross project revenues are to be allocated to communities, 31% to Enjipai, and 18% to government entities, it does not provide sufficient detail on the underlying cost structures, budgeting assumptions, or distribution formulas that would allow communities to understand how this headline split translates into actual net payments.**

In particular, there is no transparent accounting of what revenues will be net of. It is reasonable to assume that a range of costs—including those associated with project development, implementation,

⁵ https://dtlp.nottech.co.tz/Longido_GA.html

⁶ https://dtlp.nottech.co.tz/Monduli_GA.html

technical partners, validation and verification, registry fees, and administrative overheads—will be deducted before any distribution to communities. However, the Project Document does not clearly set out these cost structures, nor does it provide sufficient detail to allow participating communities or external reviewers to assess the likely magnitude of net returns. **Key financial projections, including the Enjipai ex-ante financial model, are submitted as “commercially sensitive” documents and are not disclosed, further limiting the ability of communities or third parties to verify assumptions or anticipated net benefits.**

Our field research conducted in January 2025 and on an ongoing monitoring basis since then raises concerns that community members are not aware of the specific terms governing benefit sharing, including how revenues would be calculated or distributed.

More broadly, while the Project Document repeatedly refers to a “benefit-sharing mechanism”, it does not clearly describe how this mechanism operates in practice. While the Project Document lists a range of governance bodies and roles (including the Enjipai Board, Project Council, District Advisory Committee, Project Steering Committee, and Village Councils), it provides only schematic descriptions of how decisions are actually made in practice, what concrete control rights communities have over funds, and what transparency and accountability mechanisms exist to oversee the use of revenues. There is no information on who is responsible for managing funds, how decisions on allocation are made, what governance or oversight structures are in place, and what accountability mechanisms exist to ensure transparency and equitable distribution.

The PDD claims that ‘over 60% of gross revenues’ will be passed back to villages, yet it offers no transparent explanation of how this figure is derived or how it aligns with its separate statement that 51% of revenues will be returned to communities. The actual revenue-sharing basis (gross or net) and the calculation method remain unclear. The PDD is entirely silent on how and by whom financial reports will be prepared and how (or if) they will be shared.

The concerns above are compounded by the absence of detailed, publicly accessible information on benefit-sharing arrangements, which creates a significant risk of opacity, mismanagement, and unequal distribution of project revenues.

While the Project Document outlines a headline revenue split between communities, Enjipai and government entities, the underlying financial model is submitted as “commercially sensitive” and not disclosed, limiting public scrutiny of how this arrangement will operate in practice.

Specifically, the Project Document does not clearly state which financial vehicle would be used for flows of carbon credit revenues, and what access supposed beneficiaries would have to financial statements or other records of that vehicle to ensure they are receiving their rightful allocation. In large-scale, long-term projects of this nature, such lack of clarity risks communities not receiving their fair allocation, and is likely to undermine community trust and may give rise to disputes or unintended social impacts. In the absence of such information, it is not possible to determine whether the project’s claimed community benefits are substantive, or whether they may be significantly reduced by upstream financial and contractual obligations, or not be transparently allocated at all. This in turn determines whether the communities’ understanding of the likely benefits (an important part of the ‘Informed’ in FPIC) is justified or not. Given that the Project Document does not provide communities with transparent projections of net benefits or clear guarantees regarding access to detailed financial

information, there is a serious risk that community expectations about future revenues may not align with actual outcomes.

3.9. Carbon rights arrangements transfer effective control away from communities

The project states that carbon rights originate with communities as landholders. However, communities are required to sign carbon rights assignment agreements, **under which Village Councils, as Managing Authorities, transfer all carbon rights from the village project area to the project proponent**, and the proponent controls issuance and sale of credits. This creates a clear asymmetry: communities bear long-term land-use constraints and risks, while control over carbon assets and market participation is centralized **in Enjipai Carbon Limited as the entity holding and marketing carbon rights on behalf of all participating villages and WMAs**. The implications for benefit distribution, liability, and long-term autonomy are not adequately addressed.

4. Conclusions

This project proposes to generate large volumes of carbon credits from a complex and highly variable pastoral system using indirect measurement, contested assumptions, and a governance model that raises serious social concerns. The key risks—non-additionality, lack of a credible baseline, leakage, monitoring uncertainty, and lack of permanence—are not incidental. They are structural features of the project design.

Given the strong similarities to earlier projects that have already faced significant criticism, it is not sufficient to assume that these risks have been resolved. On the contrary, they remain central and unresolved; if anything, they demand more diligent procedures, clearer evidence, and tighter checks.

In its current form, the project does not provide a credible basis for the issuance of carbon credits and should not be validated under either the VCS or CCB.