IMPACT-ED

Namibia, Eswatini, Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria

IMPACT-ED Workshop Participants at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka P(4)

IMPACT-ED Nigeria	IMPACT-ED Eswatini	IMPACT-ED Kenya
IMPACT-ED Delegation Pays Courtesy Visit to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka	**IMPACT-ED Project Leads Climate Action Conversations**	**Kibabii University Launches International IMPACT-ED Project to Advance Climate Education and Biodiversity Conservation**

Funded by the European Union

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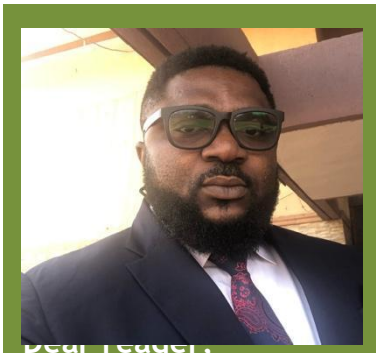
Foreword by the Executive Editor



Dear reader,

It is with great pride and anticipation that I present the inaugural edition of the IMPACT-ED newsletter, highlighting the key achievements and initiatives we have undertaken throughout 2026. This year has seen significant milestones that demonstrate IMPACT-ED's unwavering commitment to integrating mobility, digital tools and climate education to address terrestrial plant diversity and conservation in a changing climate, and to the environmental sustainability of our communities.

Ajah Nnaemeka

IMPACT-ED Newsletter

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce the inaugural newsletter of the IMPACT-ED EU-Mobility NDICI MOBAF Project. This initiative represents a strategic and coordinated response to the growing challenges of climate change, particularly its impact on terrestrial plant diversity and ecosystem sustainability.

IMPACT-ED brings together a strong consortium of partner institutions committed to advancing climate education, strengthening academic mobility, and deploying innovative digital tools to support conservation efforts. Through this collaboration, the project aims to build capacity, equip postgraduate students with critical competencies, and foster sustainable, evidence-based solutions.

This first edition marks the formal commencement of our activities and reflects the collective commitment of all partners to achieving measurable impact. We look forward to sustained collaboration, knowledge exchange, and tangible outcomes that will contribute to a more resilient and sustainable future.

IMPACT-ED

Namibia, Eswatini, Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria

IMPACT-ED holds a workshop at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Participants from partner institutions in Namibia, Eswatini, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and Finland actively participated in the IMPACT-ED Project Workshop held at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The workshop commenced with participant registration and a courtesy visit to the Management of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, followed by the official opening ceremony where the goals, objectives, and expectations of the IMPACT-ED Project were presented.

The opening session provided participants with a comprehensive overview of the project's vision of integrating mobility, digital tools, and climate education to promote biodiversity conservation across African higher education institutions

Throughoutthe day, participants engaged in networking activities, group discussions, and technical sessions designed to strengthen collaboration among consortium members. Presentations and discussions focused on Intra-Africa mobility call, project implementation, biodiversity conservation initiatives, and the role of academic mobility in building institutional capacity and promoting sustainable development.

The workshop also provided opportunities for participants to exchange ideas, share experiences from their respective institutions, and identify areas for future collaboration. These interactions are expected to contribute significantly to strengthening the consortium's collective efforts toward addressing climate change and biodiversity challenges through education, research, and innovation.

Day One concluded with interactive discussions and a wrap-up session that set the stage for subsequent technical sessions on mobility procedures, curriculum development, online learning platforms, and project sustainability planned for the remaining days of the workshop.

Participants engage in discussions and collaborative deliberations during the opening day of the IMPACT-ED Project Workshop at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, bringing together representatives from partner institutions across Africa and Europe.

Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka

As part of the opening activities of the IMPACT-ED Project Workshop, participants from the partner institutions in **Namibia, Eswatini, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria**, together with the project's technical partner from the **University of Turku, Finland**, paid a courtesy visit to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN).

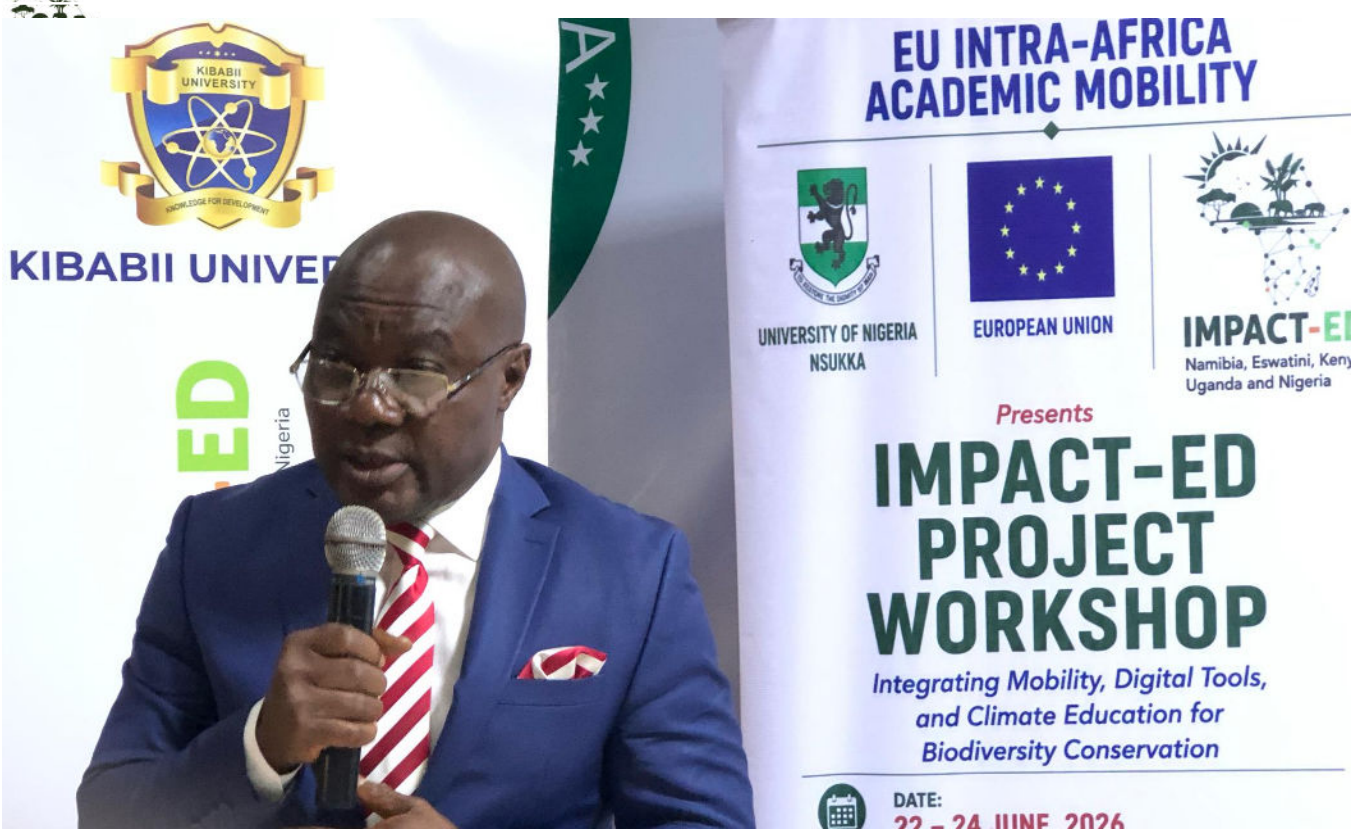
The Vice-Chancellor warmly welcomed the international delegation and reaffirmed the University's commitment to fostering global academic partnerships that promote research excellence, innovation, and sustainable development. He assured all participants of their safety and comfort throughout their stay at the University of Nigeria, emphasising the institution's hospitality and readiness to provide a conducive environment for productive engagement.

In his remarks, the Vice-Chancellor highlighted UNN's continued pursuit of academic excellence, knowledge generation, and international visibility. He noted that initiatives such as the IMPACT-ED Project provide valuable opportunities for strengthening institutional collaboration, enhancing research capacity, and increasing the global impact of African universities.

The Vice-Chancellor also acknowledged the growing challenges posed by climate change, describing it as one of the most pressing issues facing society today. He expressed confidence that the workshop's deliberations on climate-responsive education, digital technologies, academic mobility, and biodiversity conservation would contribute practical solutions and innovative strategies for addressing climate-related challenges across Africa.

The courtesy visit concluded with a group photograph, symbolising the strong partnership and shared commitment among the consortium members to advancing the objectives of the IMPACT-ED Project and promoting sustainable development through higher education.

IMPACT-ED Delegation with the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka



The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, giving an opening remark during the Day One session of the IMPACT-ED workshop

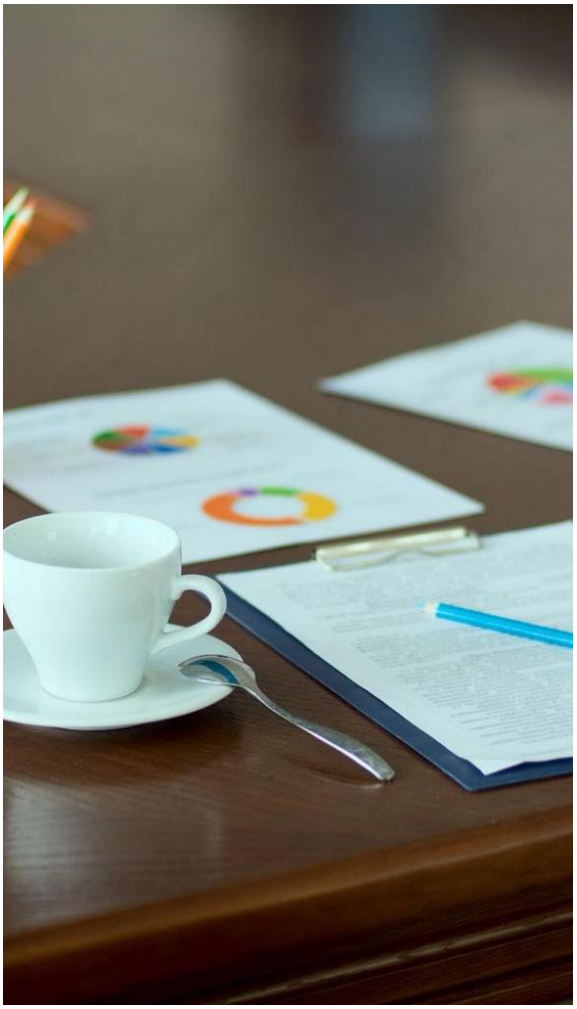
IMPACT-ED Team UNN at the Earth Day 2026, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

IMPACT-ED online module committee

The IMPACT-ED online module committee met virtually on 30 March 2026, with strong representation from participating institutions.

The meeting focused on advancing the development of academic modules and strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration across the consortium. A total of seventeen course topics were proposed by partner institutions, including three submissions from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). These topics were systematically categorised into six thematic areas: Biodiversity, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Tools, Climate Education, Crosscutting Issues, and Community Research.

Participating institutions were tasked with preparing concise synopses of their assigned topics. These drafts are to be submitted to the Project Board for approval through the Chair, Dr Dabiri, ahead of the 9 April 2026 deadline. A standardised template for course development will be shared to guide submissions.



The IMPACT-ED online module report is available for download at: https://impact-ed.kibu.ac.ke

IMPACT-ED Academic Mobility Programme Opens Pathways for Learning, Research, and Collaboration

One of the flagship components of the **IMPACT-ED Project** is its **Academic Mobility Programme**, which is designed to strengthen collaboration among African higher education institutions through fully funded academic exchanges. The programme provides opportunities for students, researchers, trainees, and university staff to gain international experience, develop new competencies, and contribute to collaborative research and innovation in climate education, biodiversity conservation, and digital technologies.

The mobility programme supports four categories of participants:

- **Master's Students** undertake mobility periods ranging from **4 to 24 months**, enabling them to participate in coursework, research activities, field training, and academic exchange programmes.
- **PhD Candidates** benefit from mobility opportunities lasting **6 to 36 months**, supporting both credit-seeking and degree-seeking candidates engaged in advanced research and specialised training.
- **Academic Trainees** participate in **3 to 6-month** placements focused on practical experience in research, innovation, digital technologies, and environmental monitoring.
- **University Staff** undertake exchanges of **2 weeks to 3 months** for teaching, research collaboration, curriculum development, professional training, and institutional capacity building.

For each participating African partner institution, the mobility programme supports: **9 Master's Students, 2 PhD Candidates, 4 Academic Trainees and 2 University Staff Members**

The participating institutions include: University of Namibia (Namibia), Kibabii University (Kenya), Kyambogo University (Uganda), University of Eswatini (Eswatini) and University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Nigeria)

The first call for mobility applications attracted strong interest across the partner universities. Following the successful conclusion of the application period, the selection process is now underway. Applications have been received, assessed for eligibility, and are currently undergoing review by the consortium in accordance with the project's mobility guidelines and selection procedures.

Through these exchanges, the IMPACT-ED Academic Mobility Programme seeks to enhance academic excellence, strengthen institutional partnerships, promote intercultural learning, and build the next generation of researchers and professionals equipped to address climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development challenges across Africa.

IMPACT-ED
Nigeria

The IMPACT-ED first meeting in Nigeria.

The IMPACT-ED EU-Mobility NDICI MOBAF Project successfully held its inaugural meeting in Nigeria on 10 February 2026, marking a significant milestone in the formal commencement of project activities.

The meeting brought together key stakeholders and consortium members, providing an opportunity to formally constitute the project team. During the session, members were officially introduced, and the governance structure of the project was clearly established to ensure effective coordination and implementation.

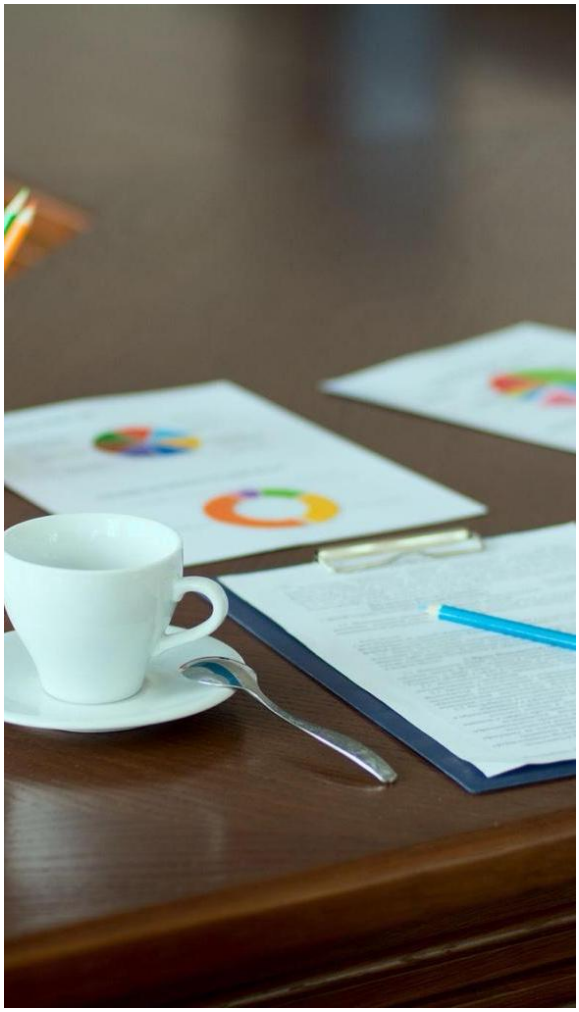
In line with the project's strategic objectives, specific roles and responsibilities were assigned to team members. These assignments were carefully aligned with the expertise and contributions expected from each participant, ensuring accountability and operational efficiency across all work streams.

Furthermore, a structured timeline was established for feedback and follow-up actions. This approach is intended to promote continuous engagement, facilitate timely delivery of outputs, and support collaborative decision-making throughout the project lifecycle.

The successful convening of this first meeting underscores the strong commitment of all partners to the goals of the IMPACT-ED project and sets a solid foundation for subsequent activities.

IMPACT-ED 2nd Meeting in Nigeria:

IMPACT-ED Project Follow-Up Meeting Strengthens Coordination and Advances Key Activities



The IMPACT-ED Project team at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) convened a follow-up meeting on 27 March 2026 at the Institute of Climate Change to review progress, integrate new members, and strengthen coordination for upcoming project activities.

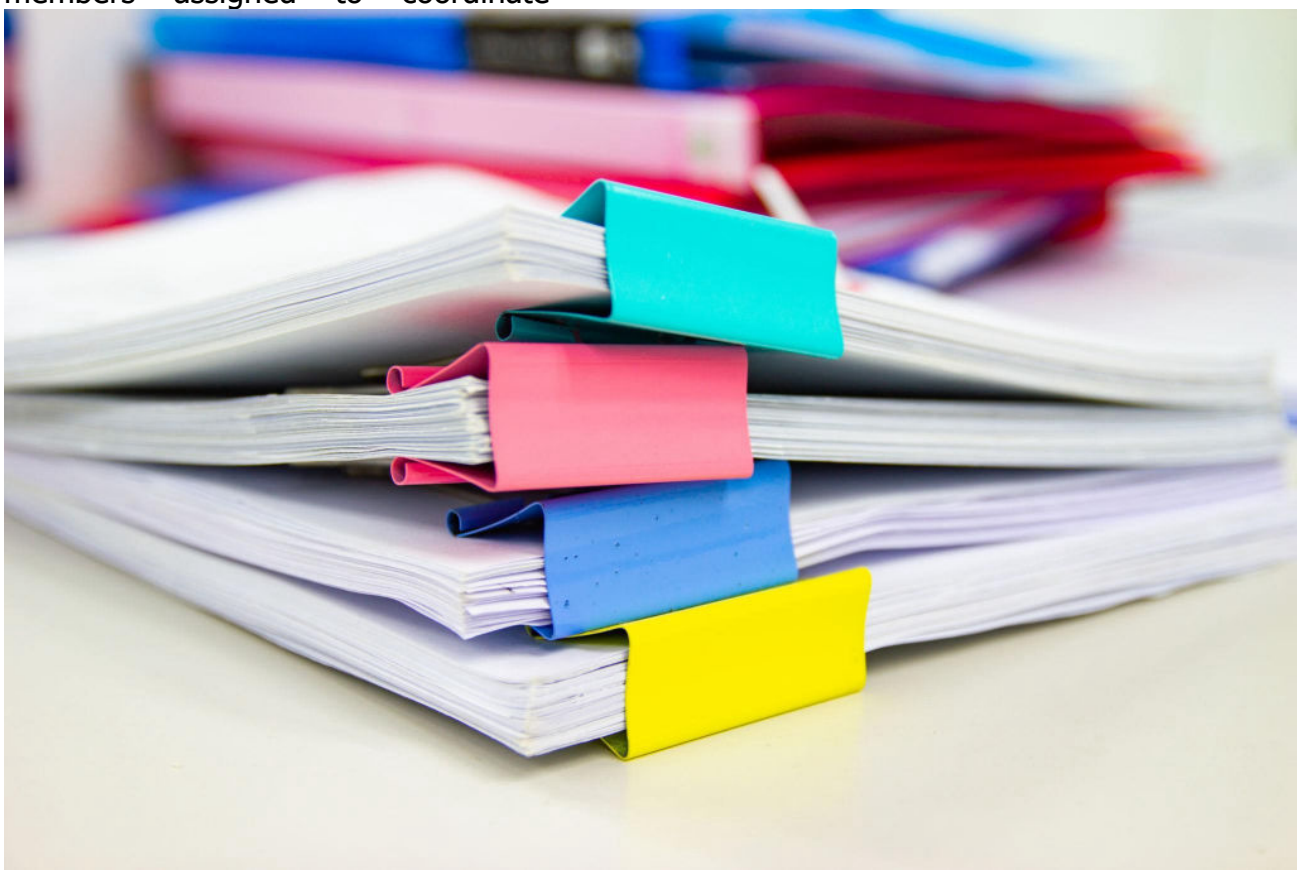
The meeting, chaired by Prof. Chinenye Anyadike, provided an opportunity to assess progress since the kick-off meeting and reinforce expectations around timely task delivery, active participation, and effective documentation. UNN's strategic roles within the consortium, including leadership in newsletter development, workshops coordination, curriculum contributions, and stakeholder engagement, were reaffirmed.

During round-table updates, key committees reported significant progress. The Selection Committee is finalising student mobility processes, while the ICT and Newsletter team continues development of the project's communication template. The Online Modules Committee is advancing interdisciplinary course development, and curriculum contributions from the Institute of Climate Change have been formally submitted.

Preparations for upcoming activities were also a major focus. Plans for Earth Day 2026 include tree planting and environmental awareness campaigns, with designated team members assigned to coordinate logistics and stakeholder engagement. Additionally, arrangements for the June 2026 workshop are underway, including participant logistics, venue selection, and security coordination.

The meeting concluded with clearly defined action points and timelines to ensure continued momentum and effective delivery across all work streams. The next meeting was scheduled for 30 March 2026.

This follow-up engagement underscores the strong commitment of the UNN team to the successful implementation of the IMPACT-ED project and reinforces a collaborative approach toward achieving its objectives.



IMPACT-ED Third Consortium Meeting Advances Academic Module Development.

The IMPACT-ED consortium convened its third meeting on 30 March, 2026

Following deliberations, the topic Climate Change Mitigation and Energy Nexus was formally adopted for UNN. Additionally, discussions were held regarding potential overlap between UNN's Data Acquisition and Management for Environmental Systems and a similar proposal from the University of Namibia. It was agreed that both topics would be retained and developed independently at this stage, pending further review.

The UNN team will develop synopses for two key areas: Climate Change Mitigation and Energy Nexus and Data Acquisition and Management for Environmental Systems, with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary applicability.

The meeting reaffirmed the consortium's commitment to collaborative curriculum development and timely delivery of project milestones.

IMPACT-ED UNN Marks Earth Day 2026 with Tree Planting and Environmental Awareness Campaign

In commemoration of **Earth Day 2026**, the IMPACT-ED Project at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), partnered with the University's **Committee on Environment** to organise a two-day environmental awareness and tree planting campaign aimed at promoting climate action and biodiversity conservation within the university community.

Held on **22 and 23 April 2026**, the event brought together members of the IMPACT-ED UNN team, staff, students, and environmental advocates in a collective effort to reinforce the importance of environmental stewardship. Participants engaged in awareness activities highlighting the urgent need to restore degraded ecosystems and increase green spaces across the University campus.

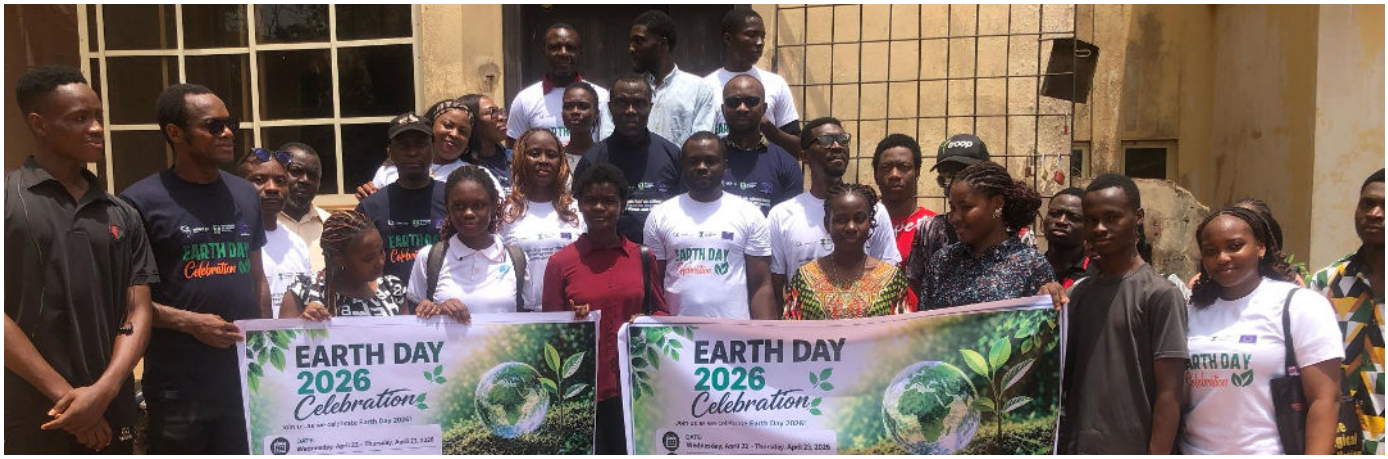
The IMPACT-ED UNN team, The Director of the Institute of Climate Change Studies, Energy and Environment and the Committee on Environment lead the Earth Day 2026 campaign, promoting tree planting and sustainable environmental practices across the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

As part of the celebration, trees were planted in strategic locations within the University, while additional areas requiring afforestation were identified for future planting initiatives. The IMPACT-ED UNN team spearheaded efforts to secure institutional support and mobilise resources to expand tree planting activities, demonstrating the project's long-term commitment to sustainability and ecosystem restoration.

From Left to right, The Chairman of the Committee on Environment, UNN, The Director of the Institute of Climate Change Studies, Energy and Environment, UNN, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, UNN and the IMPACT-ED UNN team leader during the symbolic tree planting ceremony, reaffirming the University's commitment to biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.

The campaign also featured the active participation of the **Chairman of the Committee on Environment** and the **Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture,** the **Dean, Faculty of Engineering** and the **Director, Institute of Climate Change Studies, Energy and Environment**, whose presence underscored the University's collective commitment to environmental protection and climate resilience. Their engagement reinforced the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing climate challenges through education, research, and community action.

The Earth Day celebration reflects the core objectives of the IMPACT-ED Project by translating climate education into practical action. Through initiatives such as tree planting, environmental awareness, and institutional collaboration, the project continues to inspire sustainable practices and empower students and staff to become champions of biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.



Members of the IMPACT-ED UNN team, the Committee on Environment, University staff, and students gather to commemorate Earth Day 2026 through environmental awareness and climate action.

IMPACT-ED UNN Champions Climate Action Through 1,000 Trees Planting Campaign

The IMPACT-ED Project at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) reaffirmed its commitment to environmental sustainability by actively participating in the University's **World Environment Day 2026** celebration held on **5 June 2026**. The event culminated in an ambitious campaign to plant **1,000 trees** across the University campus as part of ongoing efforts to combat climate change and promote biodiversity conservation.

Members of the IMPACT-ED UNN Team joined T.R.E.E Initiative, The Taskforce on Environment, environmental stakeholders, staff, and students during the launch of the 1,000 Trees Planting Campaign in commemoration of World Environment Day 2026.

The tree planting exercise brought together members of the IMPACT-ED UNN Team, T.R.E.E.Initiative, the Committee on Environment, students, staff, and other environmental stakeholders in a collaborative effort to restore green spaces and improve the University's ecosystem. Participants planted tree seedlings in designated locations while identifying additional areas requiring afforestation to enhance the University's environmental resilience.

The initiative built upon the momentum created during the **Earth Day 2026** activities, where the IMPACT-ED UNN Team led awareness campaigns highlighting the urgent need for climate action and biodiversity conservation. Through advocacy and engagement with University leadership, the project helped raise awareness of the environmental challenges facing the institution and the wider community. This engagement contributed to the University's decision to organise the large-scale **1,000 Trees Planting Campaign in collaboration with T.R.E.E Initiative** in celebration of World Environment Day.

By transforming environmental awareness into practical action, the IMPACT-ED Project continues to demonstrate how higher education institutions can play a leading role in addressing climate change through education, community engagement, and sustainable environmental practices. The campaign reflects the project's broader mission of integrating climate education, digital innovation, and biodiversity conservation while inspiring students and staff to become active stewards of the environment.

An IMPACT-ED UNN team member plants a tree as part of the University's biodiversity conservation and climate action initiative

IMPACT-ED

Eswatini

The University of Eswatini (UNESWA) is proud to introduce its dedicated team of academics and specialists driving the IMPACT-ED Project. The team brings together expertise in textiles, agriculture, botany, food science, and environmental engineering, representing the very best of interdisciplinary scholarship in service of Eswatini and the wider region.

Meet the Team

UNESWA IMPACT-ED Project Team Members

Prof. Lodrick Makokha Wangatia

LOCAL COORDINATOR

Prof. Wangatia is an Associate Professor with a background in Textile Processing and Materials Science and Engineering. His research portfolio spans nanotechnology in manufacturing for reducing industrial environmental pollution, and alternative processing using sustainable natural materials.

Role in IMPACT-ED: *Prof. Wangatia coordinates the full UNESWA team, oversees student teaching and research activities, and manages the student selection mechanism. He also serves on the Project Management Board.*

Ms. Senelisile Moyo

PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR

Ms. Moyo is a Textile Engineering specialist with research experience spanning textile science, environmental technology, and materials engineering. Her focus areas include membrane science for textile dye wastewater treatment, textile surface modification, nanotechnology in membrane science, and eco-friendly textile processes such as natural dyes, bio-mordants, and self-cleaning textiles.

Role in IMPACT-ED: *Ms. Moyo provides essential day-to-day administrative support to the project team and serves on the Project Management Board.*

Professor Absalom Mganu Manyatsi

TEAM MEMBER – CLIMATE CHANGE EXPERT

Prof. Manyatsi is a Professor of Land and Water Management whose research interests include climate change adaptation and mitigation, climate-smart agriculture, precision agriculture, indigenous knowledge for disaster management, and the application of Artificial Intelligence in climate change contexts.

Role in IMPACT-ED: *Prof. Manyatsi contributes expertise in climate change sensing tools and coordinates internship activities across the consortium.*

Professor Solomon K. Worku

TEAM MEMBER – FOOD PROCESS ENGINEERING

Prof. Worku specialises in Food Process Engineering, with research focusing on food rheology, product development and sensory evaluation, valorisation of food waste through product development, and food process modelling and optimisation.

Role in IMPACT-ED: *Prof. Worku leads activities related to climate change effects on food and nutrition, and champions the promotion of all project activities.*

Professor Paul Kamau Wahome

TEAM MEMBER – HORTICULTURE & BOTANY

Prof. Wahome is a Botanist and Professor of Horticulture specialising in Floriculture, Ornamental Horticulture, Landscaping, Plant Propagation, and Nursery Management. He has led research into climate change adaptation in areas including plant stress physiology, salinity and drought stress tolerance, conservation agriculture, hydroponics production, and irrigation and mulching experiments.

Role in IMPACT-ED: *Prof. Wahome leads the establishment of the botanical garden at UNESWA and provides expertise in plant conservation.*

Dr. B.P. Makhanya

TEAM MEMBER – CONSUMER SCIENCE

Dr. Makhanya is a Consumer Science Specialist whose research focuses on apparel sizing and fit, body image, fashion consumer behaviour, and apparel design. She has also conducted research on sustainable textiles, including the use of indigenous plants as natural dyes and environmentally friendly textile processing methods, contributing to sustainable development and biodiversity conservation.

Role in IMPACT-ED: *Dr. Makhanya coordinates student support activities across the project consortium.*

Ms. Zodwa Ndlela

TEAM MEMBER – AGRICULTURE & BIOSYSTEM ENGINEERING

Ms. Ndlela is an Agriculture and Biosystem Engineering expert with extensive experience in environmental monitoring using GIS. She has been involved in training personnel on the use of remote sensing tools, food security, and curriculum development for climate change.

Role in IMPACT-ED: *Ms. Ndlela provides expertise in climate change sensing tools and coordinates the supervision of student theses.*

IMPACT-ED Project Leads Climate Action Conversations

at the University of Eswatini Earth Day Commemoration

AT A GLANCE

- Eswatini's NDC 3.0 targets a 2.24 million tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 — a 115% increase in ambition over the previous commitment.
- Botanical gardens function as active carbon sinks and biodiversity repositories, but need greater funding and institutional support.
- Precision and climate-smart agriculture offer transformative solutions for food security, constrained by cost, training gaps, and weak policy frameworks.
- Existing agricultural research is inconsistent and constrained by sparse weather data and uncalibrated crop models — urgent investment in field research is needed.
- IMPACT-ED's mission — building climate-responsive graduates — was affirmed across every presentation.

On 22 April 2026, the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) hosted its Climate Commemoration Day at Cardiff Hall, Luyengo Campus, under the theme "Mitigating Climate Change." Organised through the IMPACT-ED project, the event brought together government representatives, environmental experts, academics, students, and development partners for a day of knowledge sharing, policy dialogue, and stakeholder engagement. Five key presentations — spanning climate policy, nature-based solutions, precision agriculture, and research evidence — converged on a single, urgent message: The time for climate action is now, and education must be at its centre.

From Science to Solutions: What the Experts Shared

The keynote address, delivered by the Director of Eswatini Meteorological Services, anchored the day's discussions in scientific reality. Rising temperatures, intensifying heat waves, and erratic precipitation are already reshaping ecosystems, water resources, and agricultural systems across the region — and Eswatini is no exception. Against this backdrop, four further presentations unpacked the policy, technological, ecological, and research dimensions of the climate challenge.

Mr Nqobizwe Dlamini, NDC Coordinator at the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, outlined Eswatini's Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0) — the country's most ambitious climate commitment to date, targeting a reduction of 2.24 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions by 2035, a 115% increase in ambition over the previous NDC (NDC 2.0). Sector-specific adaptation goals include

limiting annual crop yield reductions to less than 15%, restoring 150,000 hectares of degraded ecosystems, and capping climate-related economic losses at under 3% of GDP per year. But Dlamini was clear that policy alone is insufficient.

> ***"Advocate through research. Advocate through innovation. Advocate through voice. Translate our national policies into local action."***
> *— Nqobizwe Dlamini, NDC Coordinator, Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs*

The Eswatini National Trust Commission (ENTC) extended this call to action into the natural world, presenting on the role of botanical gardens in carbon sequestration and climate mitigation. Botanical gardens, the ENTC argued, are not passive landscapes — they are active carbon sinks, biodiversity repositories, and living climate monitoring tools capable of tracking phenological shifts as early indicators of ecosystem change. In Eswatini, they also conserve indigenous plant species and showcase drought-tolerant, water-efficient landscaping suited to the local climate. Yet limited funding, land-use pressures, and capacity gaps mean these institutions remain under-resourced relative to their potential.

On the agricultural frontier, Professor A.M. Manyatsi presented on Precision and Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) as dual frameworks for building food system resilience. Precision agriculture — harnessing GPS, satellite and drone technology, automation, and Artificial Intelligence — enables farmers to optimise yields while reducing environmental impact. Climate-smart agriculture integrates water-smart practices, agroforestry, soil management, and digital tools to increase both productivity and climate resilience. The benefits are compelling: food security, economic gains, and long-term sustainability. The barriers, however, are real — high technology costs, weak extension services, inadequate training, and the absence of supportive policy frameworks continue to limit uptake.

> ***"Technology alone is not enough — precision and climate-smart agriculture require supportive policies, trained farmers, and coordinated institutions."***
> *— Prof. A.M. Manyatsi, Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering, UNESWA*

Dr M. Mkhwananzi brought the evidence lens to bear on agricultural adaptation, reviewing existing research on climate change impacts on Eswatini's farming systems. His analysis of regional and local literature — spanning 13 perception studies, 11 socio-economic studies, 8 biophysical studies, and 4 policy studies — revealed a troubling pattern: research findings are frequently inconsistent. For the same region, some studies project yield increases while others project declines. The culprits are sparse and incomplete weather station data and crop models such as DSSAT applied without the field trial calibration they require to be reliable. Most studies also focus on crops, leaving livestock — vital to rural livelihoods — significantly under-researched.

> ***"The models commonly used are applied without calibration — there are no field trials conducted to support the modelling."***
> *— Dr M. Mkhwananzi, Department of Crop Science and Biosystems, UNESWA*

Together, these presentations mapped both the urgency and the complexity of Eswatini's climate challenge. They also revealed a shared call to action: for expanded research infrastructure, stronger policy implementation, greater investment in climate-smart technologies, and above all, an educated and engaged citizenry prepared to lead.

IMPACT-ED: Where Education Meets Climate Action

A panel discussion and stakeholder exhibition rounded out the day, allowing students, stakeholders, and experts alike to exchange ideas on climate change and engage directly with climate initiatives underway across the country.

The Earth Day 2026 commemoration demonstrated precisely what IMPACT-ED exists to foster: the convergence of academic inquiry, institutional policy, and community engagement around shared environmental challenges. As the presentations made clear, Eswatini has the frameworks, the science, and the ambition. What is needed now is the collective will — and the educated, empowered professionals — to turn commitment into action.

Taking Root:

UNESWA Establishes a Botanical Garden to Safeguard Eswatini's Plant Heritage

Presented by Prof. P.K. Wahome | University of Eswatini, Luyengo Campus | June 2026

The University of Eswatini (UNESWA) has taken a landmark step in biodiversity conservation with plans to establish an IMPACT-ED project-sponsored Botanical Garden in Luyengo Campus. Driven by growing threats to Eswatini's indigenous flora — from habitat destruction and climate change to overharvesting — the garden will serve as a living sanctuary, research laboratory, and educational resource for students, scientists, farmers, and the wider public.

Prof. P.K. Wahome presented the UNESWA Botanical Garden plans during the IMPACT-ED workshop held at UNN, Nsukka, in June 2026. The initiative, which is part of the project deliverables, marks one of the most significant environmental undertakings at the University, set to position UNESWA as a leader in plant conservation and climate-responsive science education in the region.

Why a Botanical Garden — and Why Now?

Prof Wahome noted that a botanical garden is far more than a collection of plants, but a documented living collection maintained for scientific research, conservation, education, and public display. He emphasised that botanical gardens function as critical bridges between ecological preservation and public enlightenment, offering ex-situ protection for endangered flora, hosting research in plant taxonomy, genetics, and pharmacology, reducing urban heat islands, and preserving indigenous cultural knowledge tied to plants.

The Botanical Garden will address rapid habitat loss, overharvesting of medicinal plants, climate variability, and the erosion of traditional ecological knowledge, which is placing many of the Kingdom's unique plant species under severe pressure.

A Sanctuary for Eswatini's Rarest Plants

At the heart of the botanical garden's mission is the conservation of Eswatini's most threatened flora. The garden will provide sanctuary to a remarkable range of rare, endangered, vulnerable, and culturally significant plant species, including:

- Wild Ginger (Siphonochilus aethiopicus) — a critically endangered medicinal plant of great cultural and therapeutic significance.
- Mbuluzi Cycad / Woolly Cycad (Encephalartos heenanii) — globally prized, extremely rare, and of significant cultural value; heavily protected.
- Ceropegia meveana — a recently discovered endemic flowering plant found exclusively in the Barberton region of South Africa and south-eastern Eswatini.
- Swati Impala Lily (Adenium swazicum) — a striking rare succulent with vibrant pink flowers, native to the Lowveld and Lubombo region.
- Pepper Bark Tree (Warburgia salutaris) — a vulnerable and heavily overharvested medicinal tree.
- Utricularia cymbantha — recognised as Eswatini's smallest carnivorous water plant.
- Marula Tree (Sclerocarya birrea) — of deep traditional and cultural importance across Southern Africa.

The garden will also provide refuge for a range of vulnerable and threatened indigenous species including the Swati Aloe (Aloe dewetii), Red Hot Poker (Kniphofia umbrina), Leadwood (Combretum imberbe), Knob Thorn Tree (Senegalia nigrescens), and Anise Root (Annesorhiza flagellifolia). Importantly, it will protect endangered indigenous food plants — such as African Nightshade (Umsobo), Spider Plant (Ulude), Jute Mallow (Ligusha), and Amaranth (Imbuya) — which are vital to traditional diets and food security but increasingly threatened in the wild.

A Living Laboratory for Research and Learning

Beyond conservation, the UNESWA Botanical Garden is conceived as a fully functional research and education facility. Its objectives include providing a wide range of plant species for taxonomical, ecological, physiological, genetic, and breeding studies for university, secondary, and primary school students; serving as a living laboratory for plant science across disciplines; protecting species vulnerable to climate change and global warming; and sharing plant material with farmers, traditional healers, researchers, and partner institutions locally and internationally.

The garden will also offer an accessible and beautiful green space for UNESWA students, staff, and visiting tourists — combining the practical with the restorative, and creating opportunities for environmental education through direct engagement with living plant collections.

Groundwork Already Laid

Establishing the botanical garden builds on conservation infrastructure already in place at UNESWA. The University hosts the Eswatini Institute for Research in Traditional Medicine, Medicinal Plants and Indigenous Food Plants (EIRMIP), which has a Field Station at Mafutseni and an existing mandate to propagate and distribute rare plant species. Local partnerships — including with the Taiwanese African Vegetable Initiative (TAVI), an initiative of the World Vegetable Centre — are also supporting thousands of Eswatini farmers in transitioning to endangered traditional vegetable crops for sustainable food production and income.

In a significant show of institutional commitment, Luyengo Campus has donated two hectares from the University Farm for the garden's establishment. The University Farm has also pledged ongoing support, including irrigation water, mowing services, and maintenance of the access road.

What Comes Next: The Road to November 2026

With land secured and partnerships forming, a clear implementation plan is now in motion. Scheduled activities include:

- Fencing and partitioning of the two-hectare site into dedicated zones for woody plants, herbaceous plants, indigenous ornamental plants, indigenous food plants, medicinal plants, and endangered or threatened species.
- Establishment of a greenhouse for housing climate-sensitive and exotic plant materials.
- Creation of a visitor park with shade structures, outdoor furniture, and outdoor gym equipment.
- Soil preparation including digging of planting holes and procurement of fertilisers, manures, and pesticides.
- Planting, scheduled to begin at the onset of the rainy season in November 2026.

Plant materials will be collected from a wide network of partners, including the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs (which has already donated numerous indigenous plants with a promise of more), the Eswatini National Trust Commission, the Eswatini National Herbarium, EIRMIP, the Taiwan African Vegetables Institute at Malkerns Research Station, Malandela's Indigenous Nursery, Plant Cor (PTY) Ltd, Crowie's Garden, Swazi Green, other commercial nurseries, and wild habitats including Malolotja, Phophonyane, Mantenga, Mlilwane, Mlawula, Hlane, and Mbuluzi Nature Reserves.

A Garden for Eswatini's Future

The UNESWA Botanical Garden represents far more than a horticultural project. It is a statement of institutional purpose: that the University of Eswatini is committed to safeguarding the Kingdom's natural heritage, producing graduates equipped to lead in biodiversity science and conservation, and building the research infrastructure Eswatini needs to respond to climate change.

For IMPACT-ED, the botanical garden is a tangible, living manifestation of the project's core mission — integrating climate education, plant diversity conservation, and community engagement into the fabric of African higher education. As the first plants go into the ground in November 2026, UNESWA will begin writing a new chapter in Eswatini's conservation story.

DID YOU KNOW?

Eswatini is home to over 3,000 plant species — many of them found nowhere else on Earth. The UNESWA Botanical Garden will help ensure that future generations can study, use, and learn from this extraordinary natural heritage.

IMPACT-ED
Kenya

Kibabii University Launches International IMPACT-ED Project to Advance Climate Education and Biodiversity Conservation

Kibabii University officially launched the IMPACT-ED Project during a kick-off meeting held from 11th to 13th February 2026 at Farm View Hotel in Busia County, Kenya marking the beginning of a four-year international initiative focused on climate education and biodiversity conservation. The meeting brought together the project team and University Management to outline the implementation framework of the project titled: "Integrating Mobility, Digital Tools and Climate Education to Address Terrestrial Plant Diversity and Conservation in a Changing Climate (IMPACT-ED)"

Key project activities include curriculum development, integration of climate education into existing programmes, and academic mobility opportunities for postgraduate students, undergraduate trainees, and staff across partner universities. A major outcome will be the establishment of a Botanical Garden at Kibabii University to support conservation research, experiential learning, and environmental awareness. University management confirmed that space for the facility will be allocated within the main campus, with possible expansion to Sirisia Farm if needed.

A Section of Kibabii University Project members during the Project launch workshop in Busia, Kenya

Representing the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs), the Dean of the Faculty of Science, Dr. Martha Konje, commended the project team and underscored the role of digital technologies in addressing climate challenges. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning, Partnerships, Research and Innovation), Prof. Julius Maiyo, described the initiative as impactful to both the University and the wider community, emphasising teamwork and transparency in implementation.

In his address, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Isaac Ipara Odeo applauded the interdisciplinary research team and reaffirmed the University's commitment to curriculum reform, research excellence, and adherence to ethical and quality standards.

Kibabii University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Isaac Ipara Odeo addresses the Project Team members during the Launch

The Principal Investigator Prof. John Makokha presents a matrix and work plan for the Impact-ED Project during the Project Launch

IMPACT-ED Open Day: Kibabii University Engages Community in Climate Action

Kibabii University hosted an IMPACT-ED Open Day on Thursday, 23rd April 2026, marking a significant milestone in advancing climate education, digital innovation, and environmental sustainability within the University community. The Open Day formed part of the dissemination and stakeholder engagement activities under the IMPACT-ED Project.

The Vice-Chancellor of Kibabii University Prof. Isaac Ipara Odeo irrigates a commemoration tree during the Impact-ED Project Open Day

The event was strategically held within the University to maximise visibility and engagement among staff, students, and visitors. It provided a dynamic platform through which Kibabii University demonstrated its growing leadership in addressing global environmental challenges through research, education, and community outreach.

Throughout the day, the project team, led by Principal Investigator John Makokha, actively engaged participants by sharing insights into the project's objectives, scope, and expected outcomes.

A branded open tent served as a central information hub, enabling direct interaction with staff and students while facilitating the distribution of brochures highlighting key themes such as biodiversity conservation, climate change education, and the application of digital technologies in environmental monitoring.

The Open Day attracted notable participation from the University's Management, including Vice-Chancellor Isaac Ipara Odeo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning, Partnerships and Research Innovation) Julius K. Maiyo, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs) Joshua Ogendo, alongside members of staff, students, and external stakeholders. Their presence underscored the institution's commitment to sustainability, research, and innovation.

The Principal Investigator Prof. John Makokha and other Project Members during the Project Open Day

The Co-PI Prof. Joshua Abuya interacting with Ms. Chifwenge Siame, a PhD student from Malawi during the Open day

A key highlight of the Open Day was a tree planting exercise led by the University management in celebration of World Earth Day. This symbolic yet practical activity reinforced the University's dedication to environmental conservation while translating awareness into tangible climate action aligned with global sustainability efforts.

Despite its success, the activity highlighted opportunities for further enhancement. The high turnout limited the depth of individual engagement, while the limited use of interactive digital tools pointed to areas for improvement. Future initiatives will benefit from incorporating more interactive demonstrations and extended engagement sessions to deepen stakeholder participation and learning.

Members of the University Management together with the IMPACT-ED Project Team Members

Creation and Population of the IMPACT-ED Project Website Subdomain

Kibabii University team has launched the project website for the activities of the IMPACT-ED Project on this link [Home - IMPACT-ED EU-Mobility NDICI MOBAF Project](#) *(further content to follow)*

A Screenshot of the IMPACT-ED Project Website (subdomain)

IMPACT-ED
Namibia

IMPACT-ED KICKS OFF IN NAMIBIA

Following the signing of the Grant Agreement by the Coordinator, the University of Namibia (UNAM), and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), and accession by the partner beneficiaries at the end of October 2025, implementation of IMPACT-ED (Integrating Mobility, Digital Tools, and Climate Education to Address Terrestrial Plant Diversity and Conservation in a Changing Climate, GAP-101234251) officially began on 1 January 2026.

To ensure orderly and systematic implementation, the first physical meeting of the Project Management Board, made up of the coordinators of all partner institutions, took place in Windhoek.

The kick-off meeting, hosted by UNAM, was held from 26 to 30 January 2026 at the Arebbusch Travel Lodge in Windhoek. It concluded with a day visit to the Gobabeb Namib Research Institute in the Namib Desert.

The Board resolved to meet in person twice a year, giving a total of eight physical meetings over the four-year life of the project. These will be supplemented by regular online meetings.

The Board also resolved to establish committees to coordinate the scholarship selection process, online modules, curriculum development and botanical garden establishment. Other items deliberated included the mentoring programme forums, the consortium agreement, the project website and the upcoming workshop in Nigeria.

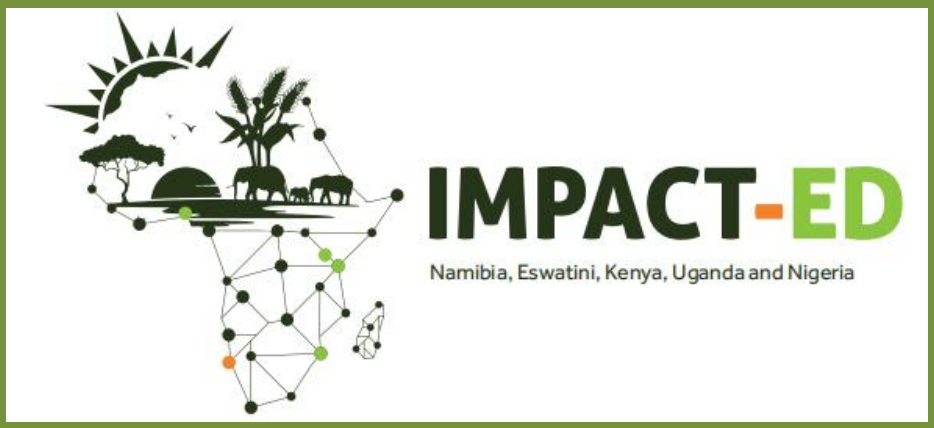
Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme Kick-off Meeting for 2024 Projects and Cluster meeting on Green Transition in Africa

The Project Management Board attended the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme Kick-off Meeting for 2024 Projects in Brussels, Belgium, from 14 to 15 April 2026. The meeting was organised by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in cooperation with the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), and held at the Thon Hotel EU, Rue de la Loi 75.

The kick-off informed the beneficiaries of the newly selected projects (Call NDICI-2024-MOBAF) on managing a mobility project in Africa, and strengthened cooperation and leadership within and across projects. Participants also discussed recognition of studies, visibility and communication, and impact and dissemination. A Cluster Meeting on Green Transition in Africa followed on 16 and 17 April 2026, covering climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable energy, agri-food systems and biodiversity, in line with the Global Gateway Investment Strategy for Africa.

Special thanks to our partners

None of these achievements would have been possible without the generous support of our partners.



IMPACT-ED

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