

Culture, Resilience, Action: SASAL's Indigenous-Led Climate Work

By Mana Omar | Executive Director, SASAL

At SASAL, we believe that climate justice starts at the roots—within the stories, songs, and systems of indigenous communities.

What began as a youth-led dream in the heart of Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands has grown into a movement. Today, SASAL (Spring of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands) is an indigenous, youth- and women-led organization advancing climate resilience and gender equality among pastoralist communities—using tools as ancient as song and as modern as global policy advocacy.

Music as Advocacy: When the Land Cries, We Sing

In 2024, we released [Esipata Oloingange](#), a Maasai-language climate justice song. We didn't expect what followed.

- 99.5% of surveyed community members heard the song
- 85.4% said it significantly increased awareness of climate issues
- 39.8% took real action—discussions, behavior changes, advocacy
- Youth, especially from rural areas, led the charge

This proved something vital: indigenous music is not just cultural expression—it's climate policy in sound.

The Enkang' Model: Showing, Not Telling

We also launched the [Enkang' Model](#)—a living demonstration of how climate adaptation can be rooted in tradition. This modern-traditional village showcases solar-powered homes, rainwater harvesting, climate-resilient Manyattas, and women-led economic empowerment.

It's a place where communities don't just hear about solutions—they live them.

Capturing the Intangible: Non-Economic Loss and Damage (NELD)

At SASAL, we are not just documenting droughts or displacement—we are capturing what is often invisible but deeply felt: the loss of identity, culture, spirituality, language, sacred sites, and traditional ways of life.

Through our community-driven NELD research, we are elevating indigenous experiences and data that rarely make it into policy briefs. When a grazing land dries up, it's not just an economic loss—it is the loss of stories told through the land, ceremonies once held under specific trees, and the transmission of knowledge through herding pathways.

This work is our contribution to making sure non-economic loss and damage is seen as a real, fundable, and urgent part of climate justice. Without it, any response is incomplete.

W Psychosocial impacts of MAM floods in Entasopia.docx

Climate Storytelling Through Indigenous Lens

Numbers are powerful. But stories change hearts.

That's why SASAL is investing in climate storytelling through short documentaries and visual media, led and narrated by indigenous youth. Our films explore what it means to live on the frontlines of the climate crisis—and to fight back with cultural resilience.

By combining traditional Maasai music, interviews, and on-the-ground footage from pastoralist communities, we are making the case that climate policy must be informed by lived experience—not just satellite data.

Our goal: to ensure indigenous climate stories are not just told—but told by us.

<https://youtube.com/@sasal2019?si=C7wNpwi-8Q1LpQTj>

From Grassroots to Global

Despite deep funding and access barriers, SASAL has:


- Spoken at UN forums
- Been featured in national media
- Built a platform for indigenous music-based advocacy
- Released data showing the behavioral and policy influence of our work

We're proving that frontline communities have solutions—and when given the mic, they can move the world.

We're Just Getting Started

We still face structural limitations—project-based funding, limited delegation support, and invisibility in major decision-making spaces. But we are not waiting for permission.

We are raising our voices, reclaiming our stories, and inviting others to walk with us.

 If you believe in shifting power to those most impacted by climate change, let's connect.

 www.sasal.org

 Contact: manasitiomar92@gmail.com / executivedirector@sasal.org