



*Mtu ni watu*

# Utu/Ubuntu Futures Tanzania 2026

Co-creating Food, Biodiversity, and Climate Futures through Relational Foresight



university of groningen



Utrecht University



June 1-2, 2026  
King Jada Hotel,  
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

*Ubuntu is the term most commonly used in academic and policy discourse, particularly in Southern Africa, but related concepts exist across Africa under different names, including Utu in Swahili-speaking contexts such as Tanzania and Kenya, Botho in Setswana, and Hunhu in Shona traditions. While locally distinct, these concepts broadly emphasise relationality, shared humanity, and mutual responsibility.*

# 1. Concept Note

## 1.1 Background and Rationale

Food security, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience in Tanzania and across the wider Bantu region are increasingly shaped by intersecting ecological, economic, and institutional crises. Scientific expertise, policy frameworks, and community knowledge each offer critical insights, yet they frequently remain fragmented across sectors, disciplines, and unequal power structures.

Ubuntu Futures Tanzania 2026 responds to this fragmentation by rethinking how futures are imagined, negotiated, and governed. Rather than treating food security as merely a technical or managerial challenge, the workshop approaches it as a relational and ethical question: how societies sustain just relationships between people, ecosystems, and future generations under conditions of uncertainty and disruption.

Utu/Ubuntu is therefore not approached as a romanticised cultural ideal or a simplified narrative of harmony. The workshop recognises that African knowledge systems are themselves diverse, contested, political, and shaped by histories of inequality, colonialism, and exclusion. At the same time, relational philosophies such as Ubuntu, Utu, Hunhu, and Botho offer important insights into responsibility, reciprocity, and collective flourishing that are often marginalised in dominant policy and development frameworks.

The workshop uses these traditions not as symbolic references, but as methodological entry points for dialogue, foresight, and collective reflection. It creates a structured space where scientific uncertainty, policy tensions, lived experience, and cultural memory can be brought into conversation to explore future-oriented pathways for food systems transformation, ecological resilience, and social repair.



## 1.2 Objectives

This workshop is not designed as a conventional consultation, expert conference, or showcase of best practices. It is a structured space for collective reflection on what kinds of futures current decisions, institutions, and relationships are already producing, and what would need to change to create more just and resilient pathways.

The workshop pursues four interlinked objectives:

### 1) Practise epistemic pluralism rather than merely discuss it.

Create conditions where scientific expertise, policy experience, local practice, and cultural knowledge can interact without collapsing their differences or reproducing existing hierarchies of legitimacy.

### 2) Shift science-policy-society interaction from knowledge transfer to shared stewardship

Move participation beyond representation and consultation toward collective responsibility for long-term ecological and social outcomes.

### 3) Co-develop future pathways for food security, biodiversity, and climate resilience

Use participatory foresight methods grounded in the principles of care, reciprocity, and repair associated with Ubuntu/Utu traditions to explore alternative futures under conditions of uncertainty and systemic stress.

### 4) Generate durable and non-extractive forms of collaboration

Develop shared research agendas, policy insights, and institutional relationships that strengthen local ownership, mutual learning, and continuity beyond the workshop itself.

## 1.3 Who Participates – and How

Participants include:

- Researchers from Leibniz institutes as well as European, Tanzanian and other African research institutions and universities
- Policymakers and public sector representatives from Tanzania,
- NGOs and community leaders, cultural practitioners, youth representatives, and innovation hubs.

To reduce sectoral silos and prevent fixed hierarchies of expertise, participants will rotate through different functional roles during the workshop:

- Story Holders – contribute lived experience, memory, and grounded perspectives
- System Interpreters – identify systemic patterns, tensions, and trade-offs
- Decision Anchors – clarify institutional realities, constraints, and implementation pathways
- Future Guardians – keep long-term consequences, intergenerational justice, and ecological thresholds visible within discussions

These roles are intentionally rotational. Participants are encouraged to move between forms of knowledge and responsibility rather than remain confined to institutional identities or professional authority.

## 1.4 Methodological Principles

Ubuntu Futures Tanzania is guided by five methodological principles that shape both the structure of the workshop and the forms of participation within it:

- Dialogue over adversarial debate: The workshop prioritises listening, reflection, and collective inquiry over persuasion, performance, or positional negotiation.
- Experience and narrative as legitimate forms of knowledge: Stories, memories, and lived realities are treated not as anecdotes secondary to expertise, but as critical entry points into systemic understanding.
- Future-oriented reflection to disrupt fixed positions: Participants are invited to speak from imagined futures rather than defend present institutional roles, allowing alternative relationships, responsibilities, and possibilities to emerge.
- Silence, pause, and reflection as part of participation: Space is intentionally created for uncertainty, discomfort, and contemplation, recognising that not all forms of insight emerge through continuous discussion.
- Uncertainty as a shared condition rather than a deficit: Scientific ambiguity, institutional limits, and incomplete knowledge are approached as conditions for collective learning and adaptive governance, not merely problems to eliminate.

## 1.5 Expected Outputs

Rather than producing a conventional conference report, the workshop will generate a set of relational and future-oriented outputs:

### 1) Ubuntu Futures Scenarios (2035–2040)

Collectively developed future narratives written from the perspective of societies that have confronted ecological breakdown, food insecurity, and climate disruption through different forms of cooperation, care, and institutional change.

### 2) A Shared Ubuntu Futures Covenant

A jointly developed spoken and written statement outlining shared commitments, unresolved tensions, ethical principles, and areas requiring continued collaboration and accountability.

### 3) A Portfolio of Research and Policy Questions

A structured mapping of:

- what is already known,
- what remains uncertain,
- and what knowledge must be co-produced across science, policy, and communities.

### 4) Relational Documentation

Visual, narrative, and participatory records including quotations, symbols, sketches, and system maps that preserve context, plurality, and the integrity of participant contributions beyond extractive reporting formats.



## Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

The workshop recognises that Ubuntu/Utu traditions are neither uniform nor politically neutral. Across different contexts, relational philosophies such as Ubuntu, Utu, Hunhu, and Botho have been interpreted and mobilised in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways, including in support of hierarchy, exclusion, nationalism, or elite authority. Ubuntu Futures Tanzania therefore does not treat Ubuntu as an uncontested moral ideal, but as a living and evolving field of ethical and political practice open to reflection, critique, and reinterpretation.

The workshop also seeks to avoid extractive forms of participation and documentation. Selected sessions will be audio-visually documented for research, communication, and institutional learning purposes. Participants who do not wish to appear in video recordings will have the possibility to opt out, and alternative seating or participation arrangements will be respected without disadvantage. Facilitation and documentation processes will prioritise informed consent, contextual integrity, and respect for participant agency.

## 2. Programme

**June 1, 2026 Day 1 – Remembering, Listening, Reframing: Ubuntu Futures as Relational Practice**

### **9:00 – 9:30 AM Opening Circle: Grounding Futures in Care, Memory, and Responsibility**

This opening moment anchors the workshop in place, community and intention. It brings together intergenerational voices and diverse knowledge systems to establish a shared space of respect and attentiveness.

**Grounding Welcome:** A grounding reflection rooted in local knowledge, land, and lived experience.

**Youth Response: Edward Charles, CARE Tanzania.** *A reflection from the perspective of the youth, speaking to continuity, aspiration, and responsibility across generations.*

**Institutional welcome:** Anthony Kimaro, The Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF)

**Project welcome:** Sundus Saleemi, Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF)

### **9:30-10:15 AM Opening Conversation**

#### **Baraza Talk: What Is Asked of Us Today in Times of Ecological and Social Rupture?**

This opening dialogue sets the tone for the workshop by centring lived experience, narrative, and relational ways of understanding ecological crisis and collective responsibility. Across Africa, concepts such as Ubuntu, Utu, Botho, and Hunhu reflect locally distinct traditions that emphasise shared humanity, reciprocity, dignity, and mutual responsibility.

**Moderator: Sundus Saleemi (ZALF)**

**Storyholders:** Relational Knowledge and Oral Traditions

- **Kiyingi Martin**, Nkumba University, Uganda – Ubuntu
  - **Wakanyi Macharia-Hoffman**, African Folktales Project, Kenya – Ubuntu
  - **Joram Tarusarira**, University of Groningen / Zimbabwe – Hunhu
  - **Richard Mbunda**, University of Dar es Salaam – Utu
- Storyholders bring lived realities, cultural memory, and narrative insight into the space, grounding the conversation in experience rather than abstraction.

### **10:15-10:30 Facilitation Orientation**

- **Ariel Macaspac Hernandez**, German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA)  
Introduction to roles, dialogue principles, and facilitation logic.

### **10:30 – 11:00 AM COFFEE BREAK**

### **11:00 – 12:30**

#### **Session 1 – What Must Be Remembered So the Future Can Feed Us**

Moderators: Ariel Hernandez and Wakanyi Macharia-Hoffman

#### **Remember - Ubuntu Inquiry 1**

This opening session grounds the workshop in lived experience and practices that have sustained food systems across generations. Through short stories from farmers, community knowledge holders, and practitioners, participants reflect on what risks being lost in current food system transformations. In mixed dialogue circles, these insights are discussed and then bridged toward the future by asking what would need to change for such practices to still shape food systems in 2035. The session identifies key memories, practices, and conditions that must be protected to enable resilient and just food futures.

**Stories from knowledge holders** (7 minutes each) (1 minute silence after each story):

- **Chrian Marciale**, Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority (TPHPA): *Tell us about a practice that once made food systems resilient, and what threatens it today*
- **Ngisere Sumleck Mamasita**, Tanzania Indigenous Communities Empowerment Foundation: *What knowledge did you learn that was never written down—but feeds people?*
- **Veronica Joseph**, IKAM Integrated Farms: *Which local practices are most often ignored or overwritten—and why?*
- **Admire Chamisa**, SeedCup Coffee Ltd. Zimbabwe: *What do we forget at our own risk?*

## Small Circle Dialogue (30 minutes)

**Group 1 moderator:** Mahlet Degefu Awoke

**Group 2 moderator:** Sundus Saleemi

**Group 3 moderator:** Raghid Shehayeb

### Guiding Questions:

1. What practice, value, or relationship stood out to you?
2. What conditions allowed it to exist?
3. What is currently eroding those conditions?

### Future Bridge (30 min.)

Each group produces three things only:

4. One sentence beginning with: "In 2035, this still exists because..."
5. One condition (policy, social, ecological, institutional)
6. One threat that must be actively resisted

**Output:** Key memories, practices, and conditions that must not be lost.

12:30 – 2:00 PM LUNCH BREAK



## Session 2 – Where Does the System Resist Care?

Moderator: Ariel Hernandez and Wakanyi Macharia-Hoffman

This session identifies where food, biodiversity, and climate systems actively resist care, reciprocity, and continuity, even when good intentions exist.

Tension holders (5 min. each) (1 min. silence after each input)

- **Larissa Nowak**, Senckenberg Nature Research: *From your research perspective, where do global models, indicators, or policy frameworks fail to travel well—and how does the system push back when they are applied in contexts like Tanzania?*
- **Neema Robert Kinabo**, College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka: *From your research and lived engagement, where do local food and ecological systems resist externally designed solutions—even when those solutions are well-intended or evidence-based?*
- **Salim Nandonde**, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries: *Where do policy tools fail to align with lived realities and why?*
- **Philipo Mrutu**, Mrutu Agro-Solutions Company Limited/Smart Agropreneurship Innovation Centre (SAIC): *From your experience, where do market incentives, supply chains, or investment logics make it difficult to act with care for ecosystems and communities, even when sustainability is a stated goal?*
- **Beatrice Merian Muliahela**, Farm Africa: *Where do well-meaning interventions unintentionally erase care or local agency?*
- **Emmanuel Sulle**, Arusha Climate and Research Centre: *Where does the system make care impossible, even when people try?*



## “Utu/Ubuntu Mind”

### Small-Circle Sensemaking and Mind Mapping Exercise (80 minutes)

Participants move into newly composed mixed-role groups (5-7 persons each) to collectively interpret the system resistances identified in the preceding inputs. Guided dialogue focuses on identifying the types of resistance at play (economic, institutional, cultural, ecological, political), examining who bears their costs, and reflecting on which forms of care are blocked or devalued. The purpose is not to solve these tensions, but to develop a shared language for understanding how and where systems push back against transformation.

### Guiding Question: How does care show up in your daily life (home, work, community)?

Each group selects one from the following:

1) What type of resistance is visible here? (economic, institutional, cultural, ecological, political)

2) Who bears the cost of this resistance?

3) What forms of care are blocked or devalued?

Working in group and using provided flipcharts and materials, participants collaboratively create a system map that captures how and where the food, biodiversity, and climate system pushes back against care. Each map identifies a key pressure point, a reinforcing loop, and a hidden assumption shaping current dynamics, and is titled with the sentence: “This system resists care by...”. The exercise translates shared insights into a visual language that will inform the subsequent foresight work.

## Circle Conclusion (30 minutes)

Moderators: Wakanyi Macharia-Hoffman and Ariel Hernandez

The circle concludes with a collective reflection that surfaces recurring patterns of systemic resistance across the dialogue groups. Short witness reflections and a moment of pause allow participants to acknowledge tensions without resolving them prematurely. These shared insights form the basis for the subsequent foresight work, where participants will explore how future food systems might be designed when care, reciprocity, and repair are no longer resisted but intentionally enabled.

System Witnesses (2 minutes each): What resistance felt most real or uncomfortable in what we have seen?

Inviolata Masha, World Vegetable Centre & Richard Mbunda, University of Daresalaam

## 6:30 PM – Dinner and Social Event

### Evening Reflection – Futures in Song and Story

This evening session creates a shared cultural space for music, poetry, and storytelling that speaks to care, food, and continuity across generations. Participants are invited to listen and participate without analysis or documentation, allowing experiences to be felt rather than interpreted. The purpose of the session is emotional integration, relational trust, and grounding the workshop in shared humanity beyond professional roles. Participants are invited to sing, dance, tell a story or recite a poem, proverb, etc. about care from their home countries.

9:00 – 12:00 PM

### Session 3 – Ubuntu Foresight Labs – Reimagine our Future

The session asks the question what kind of relationships we need now to repair for us to live in the future together.

Shared framing for all Future Holders: Please speak as a future holder, grounded in your sector and speaking from 2035 or 2040. Do not describe plans or policies. Describe everyday realities in a future where food systems, biodiversity, and climate are held together through care, reciprocity, and repair.

#### Future Holders (5 minutes each)

- **Abdisalam A. Sheikh**, Climate Governance Movement & Research, Kenya: What did your generation refuse to accept in the way food was produced, ecosystems were degraded, and climate risks were shifted onto the future?
- **Narriman S. Jiddawi**, University of Dar Es Salaam, Zanzibar: How was care embedded into food security, biodiversity protection, and climate adaptation—not as emergency response, but as a shared social and institutional practice?
- **Felicitas Sommer**, Technical University of Munich, Germany: What did institutions in Europe have to unlearn in order to become trustworthy partners in ecological repair and food justice?
- **Barik Mwasaga**, Office of the Prime Minister: How were future generations represented in decision-making?
- **Evans Rubara**, AfriMali Insight: How did firms become accountable for long-term ecological damage?

Workshop participants have heard four futures being actively held across generations, civil society, policy, and business. In the foresight labs, each participant will inhabit one of these futures—Care, Reciprocity, or Repair—and make it tangible through daily practices, system changes, and a shared Ubuntu Covenant

### Group Work - Parallel Futures (Care – Reciprocity – Repair)

Moderator: Ariel Hernandez

In parallel foresight labs, participants work in mixed groups (10-12 persons each) to explore future food, biodiversity, and climate systems through three Utu/Ubuntu-inspired lenses: Care, Reciprocity, and Repair. Each group inhabits a future in which its guiding principle is structurally prioritized and develops a narrated future story, a systems map, and a covenant statement. The session translates shared values and insights from Day 1 into concrete future imaginaries that inform collective responsibility and continued collaboration.

#### Group Set-Up

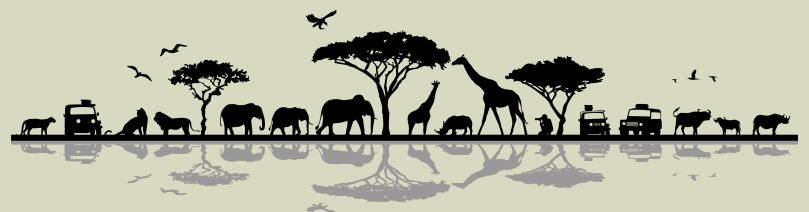
Participants are assigned to one future lens (foresight labs)

- o Future of Care – What systems prioritize care over efficiency?
- o Future of Reciprocity – What is given back to land and communities?
- o Future of Repair – What has been broken and how is it healed?

Mixed roles in every group

One facilitator + one visual documenter per group

- Group Future of Care moderator: **Nora Schuetze**, University of Kassel
- Group Future of Reciprocity moderator: **Raghid Shehayeb**, Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development
- Group Future of Repair moderator: **Angelina Böhnisch**, Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien (IWM)



## Working Logic of the Ubuntu Foresight Labs

Each foresight lab follows the same three-step process. Participants first co-create a narrated future, speaking in the first-person plural and grounded in the everyday practices of a shared future in 2035 or 2040.

This narrative is then translated into a systems map that identifies key actors, relationships, and enabling institutions, explicitly highlighting what has changed compared to the present.

The process concludes with the formulation of a short Ubuntu Covenant—a collective commitment beginning with “To sustain this future, we commit to...”, which may also name practices or dynamics that must be refused or discontinued.

### Outputs per group:

Each group moves through the same three steps:

1. Narrated Future Story
  - Speak in first-person plural (“*We farm...*”, “*We decide...*”)
  - Year anchor: 2035 or 2040
  - Focus on everyday practices, not policies
2. System Translation Map
  - Identify key actors, relationships, enabling institutions
  - Explicitly show what changed compared to today
3. Ubuntu Covenant Statement (Commitment)
  - One short statement beginning with: “To sustain this future, we commit to...”
  - May include what is refused or stopped

### 12:00 – 1:30 PM LUNCH BREAK



*Mimi ni kwa sababu sisi tupo*

### 1:30 – 2:30 PM

#### Umoja Walks – From Futures to Responsibility

Moderator: Ariel Hernandez

Following the Ubuntu Foresight Labs, participants engage in facilitated walking dialogues in small, mixed groups (ideally 3 persons per group). Through moments of silence, reflection, and shared exchange, the walk allows participants to reflect on the futures imagined and consider what responsibilities and tensions these futures raise for their own institutions and practices.

**Reality check:** “*What part of the future we imagined feels hardest for my institution, community or family to live up to?*”

The session supports embodied reflection and prepares the ground for the subsequent dialogue on shared responsibility and commitment.

### 2:30 – 4:00 PM

#### Session 4 – From Futures to Responsibility

##### Boundary Commitment Dialogues

Moderator: Ariel Hernandez & Wakanyi Macharia-Hoffman

Building on the Ubuntu Foresight Labs and the Umoja walking dialogues, this session invites participants to reflect on what shared futures imply for present-day responsibility. In mixed groups (10 persons per group), participants identify concrete institutional commitments, enabling conditions, and unresolved tensions that shape the translation of care-, reciprocity-, and repair-based futures into practice. The session emphasizes mutual accountability and boundary awareness, preparing the ground for continued collaboration beyond the workshop.

Mixed tables address one question only: “*What responsibility does my institution or community carry if these futures are to exist?*”

Each table formulates:

- One concrete institutional commitment
- One enabling condition
- One unresolved tension to be kept visible

**4:00 – 5:00**

**Closing Ubuntu Covenant - Collective Declaration**

The workshop concludes with a shared Ubuntu Covenant, articulated through spoken commitments and collective refusals of extractive practices.

Participants name the values, responsibilities, and boundaries that will guide future collaboration and establish a temporal anchor for continued exchange beyond the workshop.

**6:00 PM**

**Closing – “We Eat Together”**

A shared meal marks the closing of the workshop, creating space for informal dialogue, relational grounding, and embodied closure. Eating together affirms reciprocity, belonging, and the understanding that futures are sustained through shared care as much as through ideas.

**List of Participants**

Admire Chamisa	SeedCup Coffee Ltd-Zimbabwe & Dimitra Technology
Anthony Kimaro	The Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestr (CIFOR-ICRAF)
Alpha Ntayomba	Population and Development Initiative
Asha Abinallah	Tech and Media Convergency
Bariki Mwasaga	Office of the Prime Minister
Chrian Marciale	Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority (TPHPA) Arush
Edward Charles	CARE Tanzania, Daressalam
Emmanuel Sulle	Arusha Climate and Environmental Research Centre, Aga Khan University
Eunice Kachundwa	TARI/ University of Dar es Salaam
Evans Rubara	AfriMali Insight
Gileard Minja	Mwenge Catholic University of Tanzania
Gladys Kitaro	The Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestr (CIFOR-ICRAF)
Inviolata Mosh	World Vegetable Centre
Joash Henry Sanga	Tanzania Steep Pipes Limited
Kainyu (Kai) Njeri	Wombs of the World
Mathew Bukhi Mabele	University of Dodoma
Narriman Jiddawi	University of Dar Es Salaam, Zanzibar
Neema Robert Kinabo	College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka
Ngisere Sumleck Mamasita	Tanzania Indigenous Communities Empowerment Foundation
Philipo Mrutu	Mrutu Agro-Solutions Company Limited /Smart Agriprenurship Innovation Centre
Rehema Mwateba	Women Seed Guardians Group
Richard Mbunda	University of Daresalaam
Rose Ugulumu	Business and Human Rights Tanzania
Salim Werner Nandonde	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries
Tito Lanoy	Tanzania Herpetological Society
Veronica Joseph	IKAM Integrated Farms
Abdisalam A. Sheikh	Climate Governance Movement & Research, Kenya
Angelina Böhnisch	Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien (IWM), Germany
Ariel Macaspac Hernandez	German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Germany
Felicitas Sommer	Chair for Land Management, Technical University of Munich, Germany
Joram Tarusarira	University of Groningen, the Netherlands
Larissa Nowak	Senckenberg Nature Research, Germany
Mahlet Degefu Awoke	Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops (IGZ), Germany
Martin Kiyngi	Knowledge Governance, Uganda
Nora Schuetze	University of Kassel, Germany
Raghid Shehayeb	Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development, Germany
Sundus Saleemi	Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF), Germany
Wakanyi Macharia-Hoffman	African Folktales Project & University of Utrecht, the Netherlands