

Youth-Led Kenya Upcycling Innovation Hub Launches on the Road to COP31

Three community organisations from Kibera, Mathare and the Maasai Mara unite to turn discarded material into livelihoods — in a model built for the road to Antalya.

“Do not wait until some deed of greatness you may do, do not wait to shed your light afar; to the many duties ever near you now be true, brighten the corner where you are.”

— INA DULEY OGDON, “BRIGHTEN THE CORNER WHERE YOU ARE,” 1913



The Kenya Upcycling Innovation Hub was unveiled at the Zero Waste Forum in Istanbul, 6 June 2026.

NAIROBI, KENYA / ISTANBUL – 2 JULY 2026. The Kenya Upcycling Innovation Hub has launched as a youth-led collective turning discarded material into products, income, and local enterprise. Unveiled at the Global Zero Waste Forum and the Zero Waste Festival in Istanbul on 6 June 2026, the Hub connects three community organisations already leading circular economy work where they live: Enkilla Afrocouture in the Maasai Mara, Mto Wangu Initiative in Mathare, Nairobi, and Nane Experience in Kibera, Nairobi.

THE THREE COMMUNITIES



Enkilla Afrocouture

A Maasai-led venture creating upcycled fashion and craft, combining traditional knowledge and design with new materials to build income for women and young people.

“In Maasai culture, nothing is wasted. We add our beadwork and design to what others discard, turning it into fashion that carries our identity to the world and income home to our women.”

Damaris Looseiya, Enkilla Afrocouture

KIBERA, NAIROBI

Nane Experience

A community hub that turns discarded material into products and income, and serves as a gathering point for youth-led enterprise in the settlement.

“In Kibera, Mathare and the Mara, young people already know the value of upcycling waste to things of beauty. We created the Kenya Upcycling Innovation Hub to turn their daily hustle into lasting work that benefits themselves, their family, their community and the world.”

Shadrack Otieno, Nane Experience



MATHARE, NAIROBI

Mto Wangu Initiative

Leads community-driven upcycling and circular economy work, turning waste into products and livelihoods.

“Communities in Mathare are already leading local climate solutions. Their work must be recognized, connected and supported to shape implementation and demonstrate that community action drives global change.”

Faith Adoyo, Mto Wangu Initiative

The Hub builds livelihoods from what others throw away, and it is designed to sustain itself through community support rather than one-off grants. It serves as a central space for young entrepreneurs to build circular economy solutions through training, incubation, and co-working, and it runs targeted upcycling programmes, including youth and women textile-to-profit initiatives. The work starts in Nairobi and the Maasai Mara and aims to scale to other counties across Kenya. Each corner brightened becomes a model the next community can follow.

ON THE ROAD TO ANTALYA

The launch comes as the world looks toward COP31 in Antalya, where youth-led action is key.

“Young people and women are already among the most powerful drivers of climate action. Their participation must go beyond symbolic inclusion and extend to shaping decisions and leading implementation.”

Samed Ağırbaş, COP31 Climate High-Level Champion — Global Baku Forum, March 2026



The Hub puts that approach into practice — designed and led by the communities it serves, showing climate action and livelihoods advancing together. Kenya is the first such Hub. Groups in Ecuador and Ghana are already in conversation to establish their own along the same lines, making this the start of a model that can be replicated and scaled.

Brighten the corner where you are

ABOUT THE KENYA UPCYCLING INNOVATION HUB

The Kenya Upcycling Innovation Hub is a youth-led collective formed at the Zero Waste Forum in Istanbul in June 2026. It unites Enkilla Afrocouture, Mto Wangu, and Nane Experience to turn discarded material into products, income, and enterprise in informal settlements and Maasai communities. The Hub is completing its registration in Kenya, and each member organisation is already registered in its own right.

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