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THE African Forest Forum

A platform for stakeholders in African Forestry

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Message from the Executive Secretary

It is my pleasure to share with you the first issue of our newsletter for 2016. This edition is packed with interesting stories of commendable forestry work that our members are implementing in Africa. The AFF team at the Secretariat has had an exceptional past year that was full of activities on many fronts and involving many new partnerships. As reflected in the theme of this year's International Day of Forests - many of these new and emerging areas related to forestry place a very strong emphasis on sustainable forest management.

The urgency to create and effectively drive forest management solutions is inextricably bound to conducting scientific work around policy issues as we address deforestation, forest restoration and climate resilience for our growing populations of human beings, animals and plants, in addition to issues related to the rapidly expanding urban centres in Africa, sustainable supplies of quality water, among many other pressing issues. In this respect effective communication and related capacities are key for sharing forest information in a coherent and timely manner among the ever increasing stakeholders in forestry. Stronger support is needed from national governments and the international community to expand partnerships and capacities of

stakeholders in the sector. This is increasingly becoming apparent as the African forests continue to rapidly increase their role in the supply of international public goods and services, thereby increasing the scope for the international community to enhance its role in the proper development of these resources.

The African Forest Forum continues to place emphasis on the interconnection between science-policy-management in its work. Also efforts to raise awareness and build capacity in many areas that are central to the practice of forestry, as well as on seemingly new and emerging areas, continue to feature high in AFF's work. In this regard AFF has initiated capacity and skills building work on rapid forest carbon stock appraisal, forest certification, and mainstreaming forest related international agreements into development policies, plans and activities. AFF's partnership with the School of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences (HAFL) at Berne University of Applied Sciences in Zollikofen, Switzerland, continues with a new batch of four African students who started their masters' degree programme at this university this February. In the same vein AFF is supporting 18 postgraduate students' research in various African universities.

We continue to share results of our work and those from our partners through our website. We have expanded our website considerably in terms of functionality to include two new knowledge portals. The portals link to over 50 databases on forest resources to provide a one-stop shop for forestry knowledge in Africa. The website avails knowledge on priority issues that are critical for the development of the forest sector including current, new and emerging issues, to inform policy making, investment decisions and capacity building at continental, regional and national levels. We noted that for 2015 the website recorded 77,471 visits by 26,836 visitors from 124 countries worldwide, seeking to improve their understanding of various forestry issues. Governments, scientists, civil society accessed and downloaded a total of 16,259 documents, including those published under AFF Working Paper Series, policy briefs, fact sheets, and training modules on climate change, among others.

We encourage all African forestry stakeholders to continue to make use of the information generated by AFF and its partners in their many decisions and activities in forestry.

Prof Godwin Kowero
Executive Secretary

Building negotiation capacity in Africa for international forestry dialogues



L-R: Margaret Kroma, ICRAF; Edmund Barrow, IUCN; Winnie Khaemba, African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS); Prof. Larwanou Mahamane, African Forest Forum; and Lalisa Duguma, ICRAF. 2 December 2015, at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP21) in Paris, France. Convening held under the theme of “Land Day: Land Degradation Neutrality as a Solution to Climate Change.”

Photo by IISD/ENB <http://www.iisd.ca/climate/cop21/cbd-rcp/2dec.html>

When it comes to influencing the outcomes of dialogues related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) ¹, insufficient capacity by African delegates to effectively negotiate during forest related debates limits opportunities for better bargains.

A detailed study commissioned by a pan African project on “*Lessons Learnt on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa*” confirms that in the years following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the African voice was faintly heard in deliberations at international forestry processes ². As a result Africa failed to adequately articulate its forestry related positions clearly hence partly leading to poor ownership and weak implementation of the agreements on the continent.

The lack of effective African participation at these international discourses could be an indication of a more general lack of competency in human, financial and technical capacity to effectively participate in these debates. This is in light of the fact that international policy debates are, at times, an extremely complex venture. They require a clear set of objectives articulated by leadership; a variety of technical and new skills in areas such as research and technology; high level coordination across relevant government entities; negotiating skills, tactics and strategies; networking among African country teams and consistency in representation over time ³.

It is for this reason that AFF established a *Technical Support Team (TST)* ⁴ to raise the Profile of Forestry that supports African delegates in regional and international dialogues on forestry and related areas in order to ensure that policies developed and decisions made conform to forest compatible development on the continent.

The AFF-TST also facilitates mainstreaming of MEAs into national policies to facilitate the adoption of sustainable forest management practices in Africa. The TST members have wide experience in international policy debates and negotiations related to forestry, and have freely contributed their expertise to African delegates in such discourses.

Subsequently, African delegates have begun to better articulate forestry related issues in international negotiations such as those organized by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). Limited TST support has also been extended to forestry related issues in negotiations organized by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to

Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

With current trends moving towards more complex global issues, well-organized and coordinated institutional mechanisms as well as effective national-level policy leadership will be crucial to further build multilateral cooperation around international policy debates.

Who are the members of the Technical Support Team?

1. Macarthy Oyebo (Chair) – Nigeria
2. Andre Madingou (Vice Chair) – Gabon
3. Ndiawar Dieng – Senegal
4. Adjumane Kadio – Cote d'Ivoire
5. Alice Kaudia – Kenya
6. Jones Kamugisha – Uganda
7. Anna Chileshe Masinja – Zambia
8. Sebastien Malele – Democratic Republic of Congo
9. Alima Issufo – Mozambique
10. Ibro Adamou – Niger
11. Fredrick Owino – Kenya
12. Godwin Kowero – (Executive Secretary, AFF) – Tanzania

Key policy measures

Lessons and recommendations made from a recent ‘*Training Workshop for African Forestry Experts on Forest Related International Agreements for Anglophone Africa*’, organized by AFF from 1-4 December 2015 at the Sai Rock Hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, provide key policy measures to ensure effective participation during global debates.

Countries need, for a more equal starting position, national support to aid in identification of national interests and formulation of appropriate negotiating policies and strategies ahead of international discourses. Development of these national positions comes with a wide range of activities, including discussions with government agencies and administrative departments, review of scientific studies, and input from forestry stakeholders such as research institutions, forest enterprises, forest workers, NGOs and civil society.

¹ Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are defined as “legally binding agreements between three or more states relating to the environment” (Yeboah, 2015).

² Oyebo, M. et al, 2009, presentation titled: “*Supporting Africa in International Negotiation Processes – the role of AFF*”. African Forest Forum. Unpublished. Yeboah O. (2014) “*Training module for effective engagement of African delegates in international multilateral processes*”. African Forest Forum. Unpublished.

³ Read more from the proceedings of the ‘*Training Workshop for African Forestry Experts on Forest Related International Agreements for Anglophone Africa*’. Available at www.afforum.org

⁴ For more information on the *Technical Support Team (TST)*, visit <http://www.afforum.org/about/organization/committees>



Participants from the Training Workshop for African Forestry Experts on Forest Related International Agreements for Anglophone Africa organized by AFF from 1-4 December 2015 at the Sai Rock Hotel in Mombasa, Kenya.

In this way, African Governments will be able to put together teams that have adequate understanding of the complexity of international agreements, have technical expertise in the subject matter and are able to provide strong representation for their countries. Institutional capacities for coherence and inter-agency coordination will be strengthened to provide an integrated approach for discussions as well as mainstreaming of MEAs into National Action Plans (NAPs) for implementation and reporting. Furthermore, a strong science- policy-management interconnection should be the focus of research and development in African forestry at the national level.

This notwithstanding, investments in information and dissemination platforms to enhance access to latest knowledge is critical for building national awareness on MEAs among the African forestry community. It is recommended that relevant national agencies in partnership with relevant actors consider taking the lead in building technical, human and financial capacity in terms of new skills, expertise and funding for better outcomes. In addition, permanent secretariats could be established as lead institutions with key focal points to guide consistency in participation at international forestry debates and maintaining institutional memory on these issues.

Further, national policymaking in support of capacity building for multilateral negotiations is necessary for the effective participation of African country teams in these negotiations.

Other capacity building developments by AFF in Sub-Saharan Africa

AFF Sabbatical fellowship awards

AFF, with financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) aims to stimulate and support research by visiting research fellows to advance their professional development in the many areas of African forestry. Through this collaboration, three short term sabbatical fellowships have been offered to African scholars to undertake desk based studies for a period of 2-3 months at the AFF Secretariat. The awards focused on areas described below.



Secondary forest in the southern part of Nigeria. Photo: © M Lawarnou, AFF

AFOLU and forest based carbon markets and trade

This exciting opportunity was offered to African professionals in forestry and related areas to strengthen their knowledge and skills on policies, legal and institutional frameworks at regional, sub regional and national levels in forestry and related sectors. Specifically, the fellows were expected to assess the contribution of regional, sub-regional and national policies, legal and institutional frameworks on integration of mitigation and adaptation in AFOLU, as well as addressing forest based carbon markets and trade.

The selection process was competitive, with Prof. Paxie Chirwa from the University of Pretoria emerging as the overall winner of the award. Paxie Chirwa is the Chair and Director of the Postgraduate Forest Programme at the University of Pretoria. He has over 28 years of experience in forestry research and development in eastern and southern African, especially in tree crop interactions in Agroforestry and social

forestry. He spent his sabbatical time at the African Forest Forum Secretariat based at the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) in Nairobi, Kenya.



Prof. Paxie Chirwa, winner of the AFOLU and forest based carbon markets and trade fellowship award

Through the award, Prof. Chirwa conducted desk based studies in the areas mentioned above, guided by specific terms of reference, from 1 November- 31 December 2015 that focused on Anglophone and Francophone African countries covering various forest types (rain forest, mountains, mangroves, woodland and savanna, and parklands of the Sahel).

The findings from his desk based studies are expected to generate knowledge that will improve African stakeholders' understanding of vulnerability to climate change and application of promising adaptation measures pertinent to Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU). The results are also anticipated to support development and strengthening of sound adaptation and mitigation policies that take into consideration gender responsiveness and measures associated with improving resilience of the social systems and ecosystems. In addition, the findings will also offer African countries and regional bodies critical information on gender-sensitive assessment of vulnerability and impacts/influences of climate change and variability on forests, trees and the people who depend on them. The fellowship award was made possible through the AFF SDC- supported project titled "African Forests, People and Climate Change".

Forest compatible development

A post-doctoral/sabbatical fellowship/internship opportunity for “*Supporting forest compatible development through evidence-based policy options for improved forest governance, green growth and enhanced forest productivity for sustainable livelihoods and environmental stability in Africa*” was also offered from 1 November- 31 December 2015.

The fellowship aimed at strengthening knowledge and skills of the African professionals in forestry and related areas on forest compatible development by looking at key issues in forest governance, green growth pathways in forestry, and improved forest productivity; all of these combine to improve livelihoods, national economies and environmental stability. Tajudeen Okekunle Amusa (Ph.D.) was awarded the fellowship and spent two months as sabbatical fellow at the African Forest Forum Secretariat.



Tajudeen Okekunle Amusa during his two month visiting programme in Nairobi

Tajudeen Okekunle Amusa (Ph.D.) is a lecturer at the Department of Forest Resources Management, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. His areas of specialization include forest management and biodiversity conservation.

During his two months' sabbatical fellowship, Tajudeen contributed to AFF's programme activities by preparing and producing evidence-based knowledge products on policy options on forest governance, green economy, and land use land use change and forestry (LULUCF). All these contribute to forest compatible development that would assist African countries to address deforestation and forest degradation in ways that enhance the contribution of forests and tree resources to livelihoods and environmental stability.

The fellowship supported activities in a project entitled “*Strengthening Sustainable Forest Management in Africa*” that seeks to generate and share

knowledge and information through partnerships in ways that provide inputs into policy options and capacity building for improved forest management that better address poverty eradication and environmental protection in Africa. This project is financially supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

AFF student internship programme in collaboration with Kenya Forestry Research Institute

Advances in forestry and management require the ability to blend theory and practice to solve real-world problems. The AFF student internship programme was implemented in collaboration with the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) with the aim being to balance a strong foundation in management fundamentals with leading edge practices in the science of forestry.

In this regard, AFF was pleased to host Ms. Issoufou Balkissa of the Department of Plant and Environmental Sciences at New Mexico State University, USA, as an intern at the secretariat from May –July 2015. As an undergraduate student majoring in Environmental Science, Ms. Balkissa, a national of Niger, participated in a programme of joint youth mentorship activities towards her project titled “*Mainstreaming Sustainable Land Management in Agro pastoral Production Systems of Kenya*”.



Ms. Issoufou Balkissa of New Mexico State University, Department of Plant and Environmental Sciences during a field visit the KEFRI Dry land Eco-regional Research Programme in Kitui

The objective of the project was to restore degraded land in the semi-arid and arid areas in the eastern Kenya. In pursuit of this, the internship accorded Ms. Balkissa the opportunity to conduct field trips to the KEFRI Dry land Eco-regional Research Programme in Kitui. Her field work focused on collection of biophysical and socio-economic data around Kyuso forest

and sites rehabilitated by the project. She also conducted her laboratory internship at KEFRI headquarters, Muguga, where she familiarized herself with soils, biotechnology, pathology, entomology, tree breeding and other related laboratory assignments. These activities facilitated preparation of Balkissa's dissertation. Her successful internship at the AFF Secretariat was made possible under the supervision of Prof. Larwanou Mahamane and Dr. Vincent Oeba, both with AFF.

Testimonial by Issoufou Balkissa

When I learned that an internship was required for the degree, I knew that I wanted to do it in Africa, no matter what. As far as I can remember, I have wanted to build my professional career in Africa, so I needed to have an insight of how it works there. I was not disappointed since it really has opened my mind.

I went to Kenya with almost no ambition than just completing the requirement. However, I gained so much more than I had expected and learned a lot about myself and my research interests.

I gained knowledge on statistical analysis and really improved my field and laboratory skills. Most of all this internship taught me a lesson on perseverance. As the saying goes, “when one door shuts, another opens”.



AFF selects 18 African student research fellows for graduate programme

The African Forest Forum (AFF) has selected 18 pre-doctoral students from 11 countries across Africa to receive fellowships that will help them complete their graduate degrees in forestry based programs. The graduate student support is provided for 1 research fellow, 11 PhD and 6 master's degree students.

AFF established the research fellowships programme in 2014 to contribute to capacity development and professional expertise in forestry among young professionals in Africa. Since then, the aim has been to advance understanding and support research on key thematic issues to inform forest policy and practice in Africa

Ten of the new fellows are supported through the “*African Forests, People and Climate Change*” project funded by SDC. Their in-depth studies will focus on the impacts of climate change vulnerability of biophysical and socio-economic systems with particular emphasis on gender responsiveness and critical ecosystems.

The remaining eight fellows will base their research on land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) linked to climate change which is part of a Sida supported project entitled “*Strengthening Sustainable Forest Management in Africa*”. The main aim is to contribute towards enhanced sustainable management practices that have potential to improve resilience of forests and trees to the adverse effects of climate change, and up-scale promising approaches that support livelihoods. Both research fellowship programmes will cover various forest types including rain forests, mangroves, woodland and savanna, and parklands of the Sahel.

Meet the 2015 international student research fellows

Research fellowship programme : *Assessment of impacts of climate change vulnerability of biophysical and socio-economic systems with particular emphasis on gender responsiveness and critical ecosystems in Africa*

Student	Country	Research title
Basiru Adeniyi Okanlawon	Nigeria	Vulnerability analysis of gender in relation to climate change and climate variability to communities living adjacent to the south west region of Nigeria
Moussa Massaoudou	Niger	Dynamique, résilience, valeurs socio-économiques et potentiel de séquestration du carbone des peuplements ligneux des parcs à <i>Faidherbia albida</i> (Del.) A. Chev. et <i>Prosopis africana</i> (Guill., Perrot et Rich). Taub. du centre-sud du Niger
Zelege Arragaw Alemayehu	Ethiopia	Vulnerability and adaptive responses of smallholder farmers' to climate change in the central highlands of Ethiopia
Fenta Muluken Mekuyie	Ethiopia	Understanding resilience pathways to climate change in a changing rangeland environment among pastoral societies of Afar region, Ethiopia
Musa Tarig Tagelsir Hassan	Sudan	The use of non-timber forest products as potential adaptation measures in the Sudan's forestry sector
Saalu Faith Nyangute	Kenya	Climate variability and gender vulnerability assessment of forest dependent communities and their coping mechanisms for improved livelihood: case study of Buyangu community in Kakamega tropical rain forest, Kakamega County
Oyieko Simeon Oruko	Kenya	Use of geo-information technology to model the environmental and socio-economic effects of global warming and climate change and variability in Narok County, Kenya
Mataya Bennet Andack Fraser	Malawi	Towards a comprehensive integration of climate change in forest management in Malawi
Halesi Chisangalalo	Malawi	Assessment of impacts of climate change vulnerability of biophysical and socio-economic systems with particular emphasis on gender responsiveness and critical ecosystems in Malawi
Rakotondrasoa Lovanirina Olivia	Madagascar	Assessment of impacts of the climate change vulnerability of Human communities and ecosystems in central and northeast of Madagascar

Research Fellowship Programme : *Land use, land use change and forestry linked to climate change*

Sylvanus Mensah	Benin	Quantifying the effects of land uses on ecosystem services provided by trees and forests in a landscape context
Dongang Ceraphine Mangwa	Cameroon	Community perception of forest conservation policies and impact on land cover change and CO ₂ emissions around the Korup and Kupe reserves, Cameroon
Roger Bruno Tabue Mbobda	Cameroon	Economic evaluation of carbon storage and sequestration as ecosystem service of protected areas in Cameroon: a case study of the Dja Wildlife Reserve.
Berhanu Terefe Abdissa	Ethiopia	Biophysical dynamics of forest shifting cultivation: its implication for carbon sequestration and climate change
Chemuku Wekesa	Kenya	Effects of forest fragmentation on forest cover dynamics, tree diversity and carbon stock in Eastern Arc Mountains of Taita Hills, Kenya
Alice Jebiwott	Kenya	Forest cover dynamics and ecosystem services of Katimok Forest Reserve, Baringo County, Kenya
Justinian Mushumbusi Bamanyisa	Tanzania	The potential of co-operatives in reducing emissions and enhancing sinks from land use, land-use change, and forestry
Ferdinand Handavu	Zambia	Modelling carbon dynamics of the Zambian miombo woodland ecosystems

Four African students graduate from AFF-HAFL Scholarship Programme

In response to the challenges and impacts of climate change in Africa, and more specifically to the forestry sector, the African Forest Forum and the School of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences (HAFL) at Bern University of Applied Sciences in Zollikofen, Switzerland, have agreed to establish a partnership that will support a scholarship for capacity building of African scientists that will eventually enhance the role of forests and forestry in adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

As part of its gender mainstreaming objectives, women and youth benefiting from the scholarship are expected to become future champions in spreading knowledge and wisdom through AFF and related institutions.

On 25 September 2015, three of the four sponsored African students graduated with a *MSc in International Management of Forest Industries* from the School of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences (HAFL) at Bern University of Applied Sciences in Zollikofen, Switzerland. The fourth one completed her studies in March 2016.



Graduation day of the AFF-HAFL scholarship students, 25.09.2015 (left to right: Yonas Yemshaw, Kinuthia Ngugi, Tesfaye Bekele, Oliver Gardi, Kouami Kokou, Kokutse Adzo Dzifa, Urs Scheidegger, Nesibu Kedirkan, Boateng Kyereh, Jacob Amoako, Jürgen Blaser, Mélanie Feurer, Ayélé Dangbo)

Jacob Amoako (Ghana), Fifonsi Ayélé Dangbo (Togo), Nesibu Yahya Kedirkan (Ethiopia) and Carolyne Kathini Kyalo (Kenya), received grants from AFF-HAFL Scholarship Program covering all expenses including research project costs for the 2014-2015 academic year. A total of 41 candidates from 14 African countries applied for the scholarship.

Winners of the Award were selected following a two-level selection process. The first step was based on a list of selection criteria developed by AFF-HAFL scientific experts where 10 candidates were shortlisted. The successful candidates were then taken through an aptitude assessment in interviews in compliance with admission requirements of HAFL.

Ultimately, the four academics were awarded based on their research proposal and motivation letter towards: relevance of the problem, clarity of research objective, clarity of research question, methodology, work plan and budget. The motivation letter was examined for the ability to articulate the linkages between personal goals and training and the coherence of the stream of thought.

110 candidates from 19 different African countries have since applied for the 2nd edition of the scholarship. Four scholarships have been awarded to Temitope Elizabeth Adeniyi (Nigeria), Lydia Afriyie (Ghana), Fredyas Jaurès Eyebiyi (Benin) and Matia Mulumba Agabe (Uganda). The students arrived in Switzerland in the beginning of February 2016 and will graduate in September 2017.

Graduates of the 2014-2015 AFF-HAFL Scholarship Programme



Jacob Amoako is currently in Ghana where he is doing some voluntary work for Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) and other organizations. Jacob is pursuing his scientific career and wants to become a lecturer in future. He is looking for a PhD scholarship which will enable him later to be employed by KNUST or FORIG. Jacob already in close contact with Bonn University and has prospects to start a PhD in the next few years.



Fifonsi Ayélé Dangbo is in close contact with HAFL. She will be working as a scientific assistant in a new project on REDD+ in Togo, which will start within the next few months. Ayélé will be the central link between HAFL and Togo. Ayélé would like to continue working in the field of forestry and natural resources. If there is an opportunity, she is also interested in pursuing a PhD.



Nesibu Yahya Kedirkan is working as assistant researcher in the newly established Environment and Forest Research Institute (EEFRI) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Nesibu has the goal to become an independent consultant for forestry, climate change and related issues at national and international levels. In order to reach that level he is looking for a PhD scholarship first, which will be partly supported by EEFRI. Nesibu is particularly interested in doing a PhD in GIS and remote sensing either in Switzerland or Germany.



Carolyne Kyalo is back in Nairobi at the University of Nairobi where she worked before her studies in Switzerland. At the same time, she is working on her master's thesis. Carolyne wants to pursue a career in science. If possible she would like to continue her education by pursuing a PhD.

Reshaping the narrative on forest certification in Africa

Certification is widely advocated as a means to sustain the world's diverse forest ecosystems. Approximately 11% of global forest area has been certified under a variety of schemes. In Africa however, forest certification is still largely a marginal concept compared to orthodox policy approaches on forestry, yet it has the potential to advance responsible forest management for the benefit of present and future generations.

A recent 'Regional Training Course on Forest Certification for Eastern and Southern Africa' organized by the African Forest Forum from 7-11 December 2015 in Kenya for stakeholders in forestry, highlighted some of the challenges and barriers to the uptake of forest certification services on the continent. The workshop enabled broader debate to occur in a less ideologically constrained manner for participants to openly recognize that the existing trade discourse on certification lacks the traction it once had.



Harvesting forest plantation trees for saw milling. Photo © Bjorn Lundgren/AFF

Particularly because the narratives that inform forest certification as a voluntary market driven tool have proven to be so malleable and accounted for changes through time that they have continued to exude an appearance of relevance in Africa. Furthermore stories shared from past and on-going programmes in East and Southern Africa reveal a notable decline in long term sustainability owing to low return on investments, lack of

perceived market advantage, weak financial and human resource capacity as well as complex certification standards and systems¹.

In addition to these practical obstacles limiting the impact of forest certification on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in Africa, other salient questions to be addressed with hard data from research studies or pilot projects are; what drives demand for certification of timber/wood products in this context and to what extent can the value chain be modified to reflect realities in the incentives that could influence national competitiveness and market access. Additionally, what is the financial cost-benefit analysis that proves forest certification to be an economically viable option at the local level?

Subsequently, the task ahead would be to reconstruct a trade narrative that better captures the environmental, economic and social benefits of forest certification that has at its core a concern for the interests of all African forestry stakeholders. This would be in line with the call made by the AFF Executive Secretary- Prof. Godwin Kowero and others towards the end of the regional training course, for a new paradigm on forest certification that can accelerate the adoption of good management practices in sub-Saharan Africa².

This nascent narrative will serve that same purpose as the existing trade narrative except it will provide empirical evidence on tangible benefits derived from certification in terms of profitability while verifying that forest products are being produced without harm to forests or to the natural and human systems that they support³. Part of the intent would be to inform development of market and information systems that link African forest owners/operators, primary producers and traders to the different actual and potential sub-regional, regional and international markets of certified forest products and services, which champion and reward SFM.

The other objective would be to advocate

for a review of current national forest and forest related policies and strategies, laws, regulations to identify gaps towards mainstreaming of forest certification measures in institutional frameworks⁴ and in developing standards and indicators upon which performance targets may be monitored and reported against. In strengthening government agencies to provide an enabling environment for the upscaling of the forest certification process, countries that are currently partially and wholly excluded from this new system of governance will begin to reap the real benefits of their participation in international trade of certified timber exports.

It matters not that only voluntary, independent third-party, forest or chain-of-custody certification schemes can balance consumer, producer and conservation interests. What matters is that the appeal to a new trade narrative that better accounts for economic reality gives an influence of relevance and efficacy to a form of forest governance that has generated and will likely continue to preside over inequitable gains.

Moreover, in pursuing endeavors like Sustainable Forest Management – which also involves reshaping of a trade narrative around existing global conventions and a shift towards the green economy initiative – a framework for active participation of all stakeholders, including forest enterprises, environmentalists, unions, forest workers, social groups whose livelihoods depend on forest and tree resources, will be promoted to ensure consistency and credibility of the certification process.

As the African continent undergoes rapid political, economic and social transitions that could gain momentum during the coming decades⁵ it is imperative that the opportunity be taken now to create this new narrative and in the process alter the relative importance of the different forest functions.

¹ Kalonga S. (2015). "Forest Certification in Practice". Lecture, *Regional Training Course on Forest Certification for Eastern and Southern Africa*, African Forest Forum. Unpublished

² Read more on the proceedings of the *Regional Training Course on Forest Certification for Eastern and Southern Africa* (AFF, 2015) available at www.afforum.org

³ For more information, see http://www.afforum.org/sites/default/files/English/English_55.pdf

⁴ Regional Economic Blocks such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have made progress towards this end with countries like Namibia, South African and Uganda having revised their forest/environmental policies and laws to provide more support to Forest Certification, forest companies and relevant stakeholders (AFF, 2015).

⁵ Barklund, A. & Teketay, D. (2004). *Forest certification: a potential tool to promote SFM in Kenya*. African Forest Forum. Nairobi Kenya

Strengthening capacity on forest certification in Eastern and Southern Africa

Thirty-eight African forestry practitioners from 13 countries recently converged at the Sai Rock Hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, for a “Regional Training Course on Forest Certification for Eastern and Southern Africa”.

The workshop was organized by the African Forest Forum (AFF) from 7-11 December 2015, through its project entitled, “*Strengthening Sustainable Forest Management in Africa*”.



Participants of the “Regional Training Course on Forest Certification for Eastern and Southern Africa” held from 7-11 December 2015.

The goal of the training was to equip stakeholders in forestry with knowledge, tools and skills on forest certification, setting of national standards, as ways for building their capacity for implementation of forest certification schemes in order to enhance sustainable forest management in the two sub-regions. The specific objectives were to:

- ▶ sensitize forest practitioners on the concept of forest certification, including forest certification schemes and their requirements, and its potential role in improving forest management;
- ▶ build the capacity of forest practitioners on the concept, principles, and implementation of forest certification, including Chain of Custody (CoC) certification; and develop skills on national forest certification standards (NFCS) that are best suited for countries in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The workshop brought together representatives of government officials, forest managers, representatives of research and academic institutions, civil

society organisations and the private sector involved in primary and secondary forest production and trade in forest products as well as forest certification organisations. The 38 participants were drawn from Eastern and Southern African countries namely: Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The workshop also offered a platform for the exchange of knowledge and unique expertise from peers in advancing sustainable forest management through interactive sessions, field visits as well as group presentations.

Participants expressed commitment to the lessons and recommendations laid out in the training’s outcomes at both institutional and country level. The course received positive participant feedback, a reassurance to the AFF Secretariat to continue its development and roll out to include Francophone countries.

Voices from our members

AFF shaped my career



Peter Gondo, Technical Advisor UNFF Secretariat

I started off in TST before the forum was formed. Our goal as the TST was to organize Africans to speak in one voice in order to further the African agenda in forestry. We had noted that people who came to represent Africa in international meetings lacked skills to negotiate. Also, new people came from different disciplines who did not understand the nature of negotiations and appropriate implementation strategies. Negotiators needed to have both technical and negotiation skills. There was need for a team with expertise to guide African negotiators, especially diplomats to analyze issues and back the negotiators with factual information.

I served AFF as a member of the governing council, member of the TST and also chair of the resource mobilization committee. Through this network, I got opportunities for consulting for governments and institutions mainly in the area of financing for SFM but also understanding the sources of forestry funding. I also conducted several studies on forest financing.

Based on this experience, I interacted at global level in forest management and in strategic resource. I was engaged by the UNFF to conduct studies for forest financing as part of financing for the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and I also developed a guide on institution of Community Based Forestry (CBF) in Africa for FAO. In Nigeria, I played a significant role in the revival of the Nigeria Forest Committee.

Right now, I am an adviser on sustainable forest management at the UNFF, thanks to the networks and experience gained through the African Forest Forum.

Mainstreaming women’s perspectives in international dialogue



Cecile Ndjebet, President, African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests (CAMECO), Cameroon

“I participated in international negotiations training which will impact significantly on my participation as member of Women Major Group”

The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative

What it is and what FAO has been doing to catalyse its implementation

By Foday Bojang, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for Africa

Background

The idea of a 'Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative' (GGWSSI) was first proposed in June 2005 by the former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo, to the Summit of the Leader and Heads of State of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. In July of the same year he made the same proposal to the African Union (AU) Summit in Sirte, Libya, where he called for action at the continental level. The regional programme of implementation of the GGWSSI, having been adopted by the Summit of Heads of State of the African Union (AU) in January 2009, became a Pan-African Initiative which seeks to improve the lives and livelihood of the communities in the Sahara and Sahel zone, from Dakar to Djibouti and including North Africa.



Countries of the GGWSSI

The Republic of Senegal was already, like many other West African countries in the Sahel, engaged in activities that answer to the objectives of the GGWSSI. Consequent on the call from President Obasanjo, the Commission of the African Union (AUC), the CEN-SAD Secretariat and Senegal developed independent concepts and programmes plans for implementation. On the initiative of the AUC, the three plans were harmonized into one, which was adopted by the AU Summit in January

2009 and submitted for consideration by the CEN-SAD Summit of June 2009. The adapted Regional Programme became the 'blue print' for the implementation of the Initiative at country and sub-regional levels.

What is the Great Green wall for the Sahara and the Sahel?

The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative was conceived as an integrated land management programme based on a clear societal and cultural vision. It aims at promoting sustainable development in the Sahelo-Saharan landscapes through the empowerment of communities and governments of the region to implement sustainable land management and restoration measures that would slow and reverse desertification process and its negative impacts while improving production and productivity in the region. The Initiative further aims to improve the lives and livelihoods of the inhabitants of the region themselves through, in addition to increased sustainable agricultural production, creation of decent employment amongst the rural communities and providing access to markets for their products.



Marketing agricultural produce.
Photo credits: Charlie Pye-Smith/ICRAF (2014)

The landscape approach that underlines the GGWSSI programme consequently encompasses crop and livestock production, forestry and agro-forestry and rangeland management, soil and water conservation, rural infrastructure development, market access, and the promotion of renewable energy and modern bioenergy use. It must be emphasized that while forestry constitutes an important aspect of its implementation, the GGWSSI should NOT be perceived as a purely

afforestation or tree planting programme which aims to establish a 'wall of trees' to counter the encroachment of the Sahara desert.



Photo: Charlie Pye-Smith ICRAF

The Pan African Agency for the Green Wall, which was established under the leadership of the then President of Senegal, President Abdoulaye Wade, has decided to focus its implementation within a 15 Kilometre wide and 7000 Kilometre long belt from Dakar to Djibouti, focusing on about 11 countries. The original concept of the African Union however has a more amorphous approach, covering about 22 countries, with the possibility of other countries joining in. The AU concept had a 30 years initial implementation phase.

It is desired that the GGWSSI should, as much as possible, form a contiguous mosaic of improved landscapes. Achieving this will undoubtedly pose a serious challenge for the poor economies of the region and more so for the even poorer communities who are expected to play an important role in its implementation. However, with sufficient political commitment (as demonstrated by decisions adopted by the Heads of State of the African Union), coupled with strong international support for the affected countries and technical, financial and managerial support for the local communities spread along the length and breadth of the target areas, the ambitious GGWSSI can make a positive impact, albeit the need for patience and tenacity during implementation. The governments that are involved are the primary implementers and it is expected that there will be strong community and individual involvement, including the private sector.

FAO involvement to-date

FAO was closely involved in the development of the Concept Paper and Regional programme of action of the GGWSSI. In addition to making inputs into these two documents, FAO also participated in the various inter-agency meetings held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2005 and 2006 to advise on the way forward for the Commission of the African Union regarding the Initiative. The then FAO Director General (DG), Dr Jacques Diouf, participated in the expert and ministerial meeting held in February 2008 in Saly, Senegal, where he stressed that FAO will support the Initiative.

Following discussions with the Commission of the African Union and based on a request from the Commission, the FAO Regional Office for Africa (RAF) developed a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project in 2009 to be jointly implemented with the AUC in five pilot countries, namely: Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mali and Niger. The TCP was approved by the DG and its implementation began in November 2010. The African Forest Forum (AFF) in support of FAO, played a crucial role in this collaborative framework with the AUC, through assistance in identification and fielding of consultants to assist countries to implement the TCP. Through the TCP (worth \$460,000), FAO provided support to the Commission of the African Union aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Commission to provide assistance to the 5 pilot countries to develop sound strategies, plans and project proposals for

the future successful implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel initiative.

In addition to the TCP, the Commission of the African Union also requested FAO to prepare a project for funding of the GGWSSI to be submitted to the European Union (EC) to similarly support an additional 8 countries as well as cross-cutting activities at regional level. The 8 countries that the AUC identified to benefit from this project were: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Mauritania, Nigeria, The Gambia, Senegal and Sudan. This new phase resulted in the mobilization of € 1.75 million (Euros) principally from the EU, with contributions from the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and from FAO itself. The new project aimed at the:

- ▶ development and adoption of a harmonized regional strategy for effective implementation by AMCEN in 2012 and by the AU Assembly in January 2013;
- ▶ development and validation of detailed implementation plans and project portfolio for the eight countries;
- ▶ formulation of three (3) trans-boundary projects and investment plans for their implementation;
- ▶ development of a strategy and action plan for capacity development including piloting field activities with local communities;
- ▶ development of a learning and networking platform for enhancing knowledge sharing, technology transfer, best practices promotion; and
- ▶ development of a communication strategy for the initiative.

Results

Both the TCP and the AU-EU projects have been successfully implemented by FAO. The participating countries now have in their possession, strategies, implementation and resources mobilization plans and project proposals as appropriate for the further implementation of the Initiative. Furthermore, public awareness was created on the significance of the Initiative and a partnership platform was established.

Way forward

FAO will continue its collaboration with the AUC and countries to promote and facilitate the implementation of the GGWSSI. Given the success of the two initial projects mentioned above, the European Union has committed to continue its partnership with FAO and the AUC and has therefore approved a wider programme (41 million EUR) for FAO to continue to provide support to implementation activities in Africa and to expand the Great Green Wall concept and experience to the Pacific and the Caribbean.

For further information on this initiative, contact:

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Upcoming events

Dates / Location	Title of event
17-20 May 2016 Abuja, Nigeria	Sub-regional workshop on strengthening forest law enforcement and governance and trade in West Africa
30 May-3 June 2016 Conakry Guinea	Rapid Carbon Stock Appraisal (RaCSA) training workshop
13 to 17 June 2016 Niamey, Niger	Training workshop for African forestry practitioners in forest related multilateral processes for African Francophone countries
20-24 June 2016 Accra, Ghana	Short training course on forest certification for West and Central Africa sub-regions
18-22 July 2016 Rome, Italy	COFO 23. FAO Committee on Forestry - 23rd Session
3-7th April 2017 Dehradun, India	19th Commonwealth Forestry Conference

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