



# THE African Forest Forum

A platform for stakeholders in African Forestry

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## Message from the Executive Secretary



In this issue of our newsletter, I wish to report on a few interesting developments that have taken place since our previous edition of the newsletter. We have a new and exciting product, have made our website more robust and user-friendly, are engaged in some interesting pioneer forestry training programme, and are involved in other collaborative engagements. Training modules on forest based climate change adaptation and mitigation are now ready for use. The modules are a product of patient negotiations and input from a wide array of stakeholders including academic, research,

and civil society institutions, as well as from the private sector and youth. It is expected that the modules will help generate a critical mass of professional and technical experts on forest based climate change adaptation and mitigation to help cushion the continent against adverse effects associated with changing weather patterns. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is now an integral part of the development process. However, despite the opportunities that come with the proliferation of web-based information products and communication channels, challenges still abound with regard to disseminating the right information to the right audience at the right time using the right medium. Thus, for us to achieve our objectives as an organization, we must always strive to be at par with the latest paradigms in the realm of ICTs. Cognizant of this challenge, AFF has revamped its website to enhance online experience with its target audience. The new website is based on cutting edge technology and comes with special features that not only allow for professional packaging of information but also reaching out to our target audience more efficiently and effectively. It is my expectation that this tool will catalyze our processes and push us towards meeting our objectives by providing a platform for meaningful online interaction and sharing of information with our stakeholders. In 2014, we not only expect to consolidate gains made in 2013 but also engage in new initiatives in line with our strategic objectives. In this regard we shall continue to engage with the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) process that is being developed in East Africa. Presently the focus is on developing an East African FLEGT strategy that will, among other things enable

the region to effectively respond to socio-economic and environmental challenges and opportunities related to sustainable development of forestry and natural resources. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the winners of the AFF-HAFL scholarships who have already reported to HAFL for their studies. We hope that these vibrant and young professionals will become champions of forestry in Africa. I wish them well in their academic and professional endeavours. I also take this opportunity to congratulate Tolulope Daramola, one of our members, for winning the IUFRO student award for excellence in forest sciences. Finally, I also wish to inform that I am one of the 14 members of the XIV World Forestry Congress Advisory Committee. The XIV World Forest Congress will be held in Durban, South Africa from 7 to 11 September 2015. The World Forestry Congress is the largest and most significant gathering of the world's forest sector. The Congress is held every six years, and its objectives are to inform, orient and influence international action in forestry, elevate the sector's role in global development, and project a new vision for the future. This Congress is particularly important because it will be held at a time the world will be entering a new development era with the post-2015 sustainable development goals. I therefore encourage the participation of as many as possible African forestry stakeholders in this Congress.

## AFF in 2013

The year 2013 was particularly productive for AFF insofar as implementation of the “*African Forests, People and Climate Change Project*” is concerned. The project was launched in 2011, and by the end of 2013 AFF had made good progress in implementing the project activities with regard to its three focal areas, namely, promoting policy and advocacy, enhancing knowledge on forestry and building the capacity of stakeholders.

On the policy and advocacy front, AFF has been able to assess and document:

- ▶ the status of several regional initiatives related to climate change including climate change strategies and plans initiated by regional economic communities, i.e., SADC, COMESA, EAC, IGAD and ECOWAS;
- ▶ status of NAMAs and NAPAs in West, East, Southern African and Sahel regions;
- ▶ existing and trade potentials in forest products and services within and between regions as well as market distortions in different African regions;
- ▶ how women, youth and vulnerable groups feature in the forest based climate change programmes and plans in different eco-regions;
- ▶ the capacities (human, financial and physical) of public forest administrations in climate change in different eco-regions.

These activities were intended to provide a general overview of existing continental strategies and plans on climate change which could increase stakeholders’ understanding of how climate change issues related to forests and trees are being handled by different players on the continent. These include catalyzing improvements to those programmes and plans through information exchange in addition to informing policy advice on the same, as well as facilitating conceptualization and implementation of new projects in the forestry sector.

AFF also invested considerable resources in building the capacity of African stakeholders, specifically equipping them with skills and professional orientation to enable them perform their roles more effectively and efficiently. To kick off the process AFF,

in 2012, assessed and documented training, research and capacity needs for educational and research institutions in climate change as it relates to forests and trees in both Anglophone and Francophone African countries. Based on the training needs, AFF developed training modules for professional, technical and informal groups, the latter being extension agents and NGOs that deal with local communities. In 2013, these modules were improved on and validated in four sub-regional workshops held in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana and Tanzania. Also in 2013, AFF organised training events, based on the modules, for extension agents, staff from civil society organisations and other stakeholders on rapid carbon stock appraisal, carbon markets and trade, as well as developing a carbon project in Ethiopia, Zambia and Niger.

AFF also initiated activities towards developing and testing an approach for monitoring and reporting compliance by various actors to international processes on forests and climate into African national plans and programmes. This exercise will provide guidance on how to monitor, document and report on implementation of various international environmental related agreements as well as subsequent decisions taken at national level.

Finally, AFF initiated a study to determine how climate change features in forestry curricula at professional level. This study will provide guidance to relevant African forestry training institutions on how climate change aspects can be incorporated in their curricula.

Information management and communication are an important component of any development initiative. For this reason, AFF developed a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure forestry stakeholders in Africa get the right information, in the right format and at the right time. In line with the strategy, AFF has also produced a number of policy briefs, fact sheets, working papers as well as brochures and flyers with relevant information on its activities. The website has also been upgraded and re-organised to make it more effective.

With respect to information generation, collation and sharing, AFF reviewed available information on climate vulnerability of biophysical and socio-economic systems in different African forest types, and also assessed REDD-plus activities being implemented in African countries.

## AFF member wins IUFRO student award for excellence in forest sciences

Tolulope Daramola, a member of the African Forest Forum has won the IUFRO student award for excellence in forest sciences.

He won the award for outstanding achievements in research in his Master’s thesis “*Assessment of nitrogen fertilization on growth yield and carbon storage in above-ground biomass of a managed Douglas-fir forest stand in the Pacific Northwest and the application in sub-Saharan Africa*”.

The award consists of a certificate and the most economical cost of air travel to attend the XXIV IUFRO World Congress to be held from 5-11 October, 2014 in Salt Lake City, USA where he will be presented with the award in a special sub-assembly session. He will also be given the opportunity to highlight the results of his research at the Congress.

Daramola will participate in a panel discussion where the winners of the ISA and IUFRO Outstanding Doctoral Research Award present experiences gained during their Master’s thesis research.

“We hope that this award will encourage you to conduct further research in your chosen field, make further contributions to forestry and other related fields, and inspire other young scientists to undertake forestry research” reads part of a letter signed by Prof. Niels Elers Koch, *IUFRO President* and Prof. Shirong Liu *Chair, IUFRO Honours and Awards Committee*.

He is also expected to play an active part in IUFRO’s research activities in future.

AFF takes this opportunity to congratulate Daramola for this outstanding achievement which will inspire other young researchers in this field.

## Modules on forest based climate change adaptation and mitigation ready for use

The training modules on forest based climate change adaptation and mitigation are now ready for use. The modules have been specifically designed to match the needs of professionals, technical experts and informal groups such as civil societies and local communities in Africa.

In tandem with its mandate of building the capacity of stakeholders in this subject field, the African Forest Forum (AFF) took the initiative to develop the modules which are expected to facilitate processes that enhances knowledge and skills that could eventually promote advocacy on key issues related to climate change and forests and also craft appropriate policies and plans to safeguard the roles of forests and trees in the context of climate change. Essentially, the modules are expected to contribute towards building capacity and developing skills that supports African people and their institutions to positively manage the impacts of climate change.

The modules were developed on the premise that the continent needs to acquire new and relevant knowledge on climate change issues, in addition to seeking ways to improve how Africa manages and shares knowledge and information on the relationship between forests and climate change.

Publication of the modules is a culmination of a process dating back to November 2012 when AFF organized a workshop on capacity building and skills development in forest based climate change adaptation and mitigation in Nairobi, Kenya, which drew participants from 22 countries, namely Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Zambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zimbabwe. It was also attended by staff from FAO and ICRAF.

The workshop identified training needs required to address the relationship between forests and climate change for educational and related forestry based training institutions at all levels, and based on agro-ecological regions of Sub-Sahara Africa. These are arid and

semi-arid regions, including the Sahelian belt; the savannas and woodlands of West, Eastern and Southern Africa; and the rainforests of West and Central Africa. Separate analyses were done for Anglophone and Lusophone countries as a block, and for Francophone countries as another block, given the different educational systems in these two language blocks.

The modules are divided into three components: Professional, Technical and Informal Groups (i.e. civil society and local communities). In each of the components, a brief introduction is provided followed by an overview, aim, objectives and chapters. In each module, a chapter overview is provided to introduce the reader to the issues addressed in it. This is followed by learning outcomes and contents of the chapter.

Modules for professionals seek to strengthen their capacity to understand, explain, and work with the linkages between forests and climate change, particularly taking actions that could strengthen the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The training module for the technical component focuses on understanding the basic science of climate change, adaptation, mitigation, and carbon markets and trade. The component for informal groups training has specific themes that will be handled in the form of short term training sessions, workshops and seminars, among other modes of delivery.

The modules are developed in both English and French languages.

## East Africa needs Strategy on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance

The East Africa region needs a strategy on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) to effectively respond to socio-economic and environmental challenges and opportunities related to sustainable development of forestry and natural resources. This was the strong message that came from a meeting of forestry experts when they met in Moshi Tanzania, on January 13th – 14th, 2014. They also emphasized that the strategy will not only define challenges and opportunities confronting the region but

also provide an implementation framework for the FLEGT process.

To guide the process of developing the strategy, FLEGT stakeholders and experts made a number of key presentations. AFF has been an active participant in the FLEGT process in the East African region and was represented at the meeting by the Executive Secretary, Prof. Godwin Kowero, who also made a presentation on 'Development of an East Africa FLEGT approach'. Dr. Phosiso Sola of CIFOR emphasized the need for regional coordination especially with respect to trade issues. She also presented an overview of the SADC FLEGT Strategy which can help inform the development of the EAC strategy. The Chairman of the Forest Society of Kenya, Mr. Jamleck K. Ndambiri, highlighted the role of professional foresters in the FLEGT process and how their expertise can be tapped to enrich the strategy. Finally, Mr. Benson Owuor Ochieng, the Director of the Institute for Law & Environmental Governance (ILEG) based in Nairobi, Kenya, enlightened participants on key strategic issues that must be considered when developing the strategy.

Apart from the initiating of the first steps in developing an East African FLEGT strategy, participants were also briefed on progress made on this process with EAC and also participated in developing the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the development of a Regional FLEGT Strategy.

Prof. Kowero highlighted key issues that need to be taken into account for the strategy to be implemented successfully.

Participants resolved that LVBC/EAC Secretariat, partner states and relevant stakeholders should start working on the following issues immediately:

- a) domesticate the Yaoundé (2003) Ministerial declaration and its subsequent adoption by the Council of Ministers of the East African Community;
- b) develop the Regional East African Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (EAC-FLEGT) Strategy to guide implementation of the EAC-FLEGT process;
- c) adopt and approve the strategy for implementation by the EAC Council of Ministers; and
- d) mobilize resources for the implementation of the EAC-FLEGT Strategy.

## AFF-HAFL scholarship winners announced

The winners of the joint African Forest Forum (AFF) and the School of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences (HAFL, Bern University, Switzerland) scholarships are:

Jacob Amoako, 24 years old, from Ghana; Carolyne Kyalo, 31, from Kenya; Nesibu Yahya Kedirkan, 26, from Ethiopia and Fifonsi Ayélé Dangbo, 27, from Togo.

A total of 41 candidates from 14 African countries applied for the scholarship: Cameroon (2), DRC (1), Ethiopia (18), Ghana (3), Guinea (1), Kenya (3), Mali (1), Nigeria (1), Senegal (3), Swaziland (1), Tanzania (1), Togo (2), Uganda (3), and Zimbabwe (1).

The scholarships are awarded to young professionals who possess the highest ability and potential, and those that have already presented an interesting research proposal for their master's thesis. It covers all expenses including the research project costs.

Applicants were subjected to a two-level selection process. The first step was based on a selection criteria developed by AFF-HAFL scientific experts where 10 candidates were shortlisted. The successful candidates were then taken through interviews and aptitude tests in compliance with admission requirements of HAFL. Finally, the top four candidates were selected.

The AFF-HAFL scholarship programme aims to build and strengthen African capacity in forest-related policy and management by providing opportunities for young professionals from Africa to undertake master's degree studies at HAFL. Those benefiting from the scholarship are expected to become future champions in these areas.

For one to be considered for the scholarship, the topic of his/her master's thesis must fall within one of the following three broad thematic areas:

- policies, responses to and impacts of climate change,
- forest governance, livelihoods and trade in forest products and services,
- stakeholder capacity to respond to climate change.

The profiles of the successful candidates:



**Jacob Amoako**, a Ghanaian national with a BSc in Natural Resource Management from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. He is already working on REDD+ issues in Ghana and has shown a strong desire to advance his engagement in this area. He is keen on forest governance and its implications on carbon stocks and livelihoods.



**Carolyne Kyalo**, a Kenyan, has a BSc in Biotechnology from the University of Nairobi. She is interested in honing her research ideas in agroforestry and would like to conduct research on potential of agroforestry systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



**Nesibu Yahya Kedirkan**, an Ethiopian, has a BSc in Forestry from Mekelle University. He is currently working at the Ethiopian Institute for Agricultural Research as a researcher.

He is interested in developing his skills in the field of forestry and development, specifically in relation to how land use change (forest clearance) and climate change impact on rural livelihoods.



**Fifonsi Ayélé Dangbo**, a Togolese, with a BSc in Environmental Sciences and a Master's degree in Environment, Water and Health from University of Lomé. She is interested in deepening her knowledge in forestry and its relationship with climate change and the economic value of forest products.

## AFF part of Sustainable Land Management programme

The African Forest Forum (AFF) participated in a consultative forum on current practices for sustainable land management programmes, and policies in Africa. The meeting was held on January 22, 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya

More than 30 participants drawn from government bodies, research institutions, extension and civil society groups and international organisations attended the meeting. Participants were taken through key presentations on sustainable land management practices blended with case studies mainly from Kenya and which elicited rich discussions on the subject.

The AFF representative underlined the need for better coordination and a result-based approach on SLM in Africa.

This initiative will be implemented by Sustainable Environmental Development Watch (SUSWATCH) Kenya, which is the focal point for the Anglophone African civil society organisations engaged in the Regional Sustainable Land Management programme of TerrAfrica, under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Participants highlighted key issues that need to be taken into account if the initiative is to succeed, key among which is effective coordination of key activities. It also emerged that land use institutions had not been involved and should be included in subsequent meetings as they are key players in this process.

In addition, delivery of research results emanating from the initiative must be prioritised; hence the need for a well-established research – extension liaison office for efficient delivery of research results to farmers. Some of the challenges likely to hamper effective implementation of the projects were also mentioned. Key among them includes financing of CSO working on SLM and gender mainstreaming. Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) is coming up in the SLM discourse.

Participants recommended that CSOs be engaged in documenting best SLM practices and share them with all stakeholders. There was also a felt need to compile and share information on all actors involved in SLM in the country.

The coordinator of SUSWATCH Kenya agreed to hold further discussions with AFF on this matter, in addition to exploring how the two organizations can collaborate on areas of mutual interest.

## AFF stakeholders set for a greater online experience

The internet is undoubtedly a powerful tool of global communication with unlimited potential for both individuals and organizations. However, for organizations to fully exploit its potential, they must invest in the right technology, use the right approaches and develop relevant and appropriate content.

For this reason, AFF has revamped its website to enhance online experience with its target audience. The website is now easy to navigate, more interactive and offers an effective online communication platform between AFF and its stakeholders. It is compliant with cutting edge technology including Web 2.0, W3C, Valid XHTML and RFC.

The new website also comes with a login access intranet services with access privilege assigned by the administrator. Intranet services include online application management for membership

and vacancies, creating and maintaining a comprehensive profile, newsletter subscriptions, conference/meeting management, file sharing, bulletin board and image database.

Due to the additional features, the new website offers more content and diverse options for interacting and sharing the same with a wider audience. Users will now enjoy more options, including an opportunity to respond to polls and surveys as well as making comments on and/or rate articles. The site also allows for social network integration with the possibility of sharing web page on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn.

In addition, the website allows for online subscription and distribution of AFF newsletters and supports a wide variety of content: books, working papers, reports, and policy briefs. It also allows for online application management (online application, list data management, data export, auto alerts, and customizable workflow), membership search, statistics and graphics display, member profile self-update, file sharing with restriction to member category, member newsletter, member polling, member messaging, full website integration.

Finally, the site can display summary information on our membership and benefits, and displays interactive

graphics of members by location and other selected fields in addition to collating conference information, online registration/cancellation/confirmation and generating related reports and information.

## More people visiting AFF's website

Statistics from the AFF website indicate that in 2013, the site registered impressive growth in terms of the number and diversity to the site. There was a 35% increase in the number of visitors in 2013 while 65% of those who visited the site earlier returned. This is an indication that AFF has interesting information that makes people to visit the site again. It is also an incentive to AFF that it can increasingly rely on cyberspace to reach more people in future and in a more cost effective manner.

In terms of diversity, the website was accessed from 112 countries, with most visits having emanated from Kenya (35%). Other countries with significant visits to the site included the United States, United Kingdom, India, South Africa, Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania, Germany, Burkina Faso and France.

With enhanced features, we expect the website to have more impact in our endeavor to reach out and engage our stakeholders in our activities.



African Forest Forum  
P.O. Box 30030 00100 Nairobi GPO KENYA  
Tel: 254 20 7623900  
Fax: +254 20 30677-00100  
www.afforum.org