



African Forest Forum

A platform for stakeholders in African forestry



Securing the future of African forests

African Forest Forum Strategy

2015 - 2020



This document is based on a strategy development workshop held by the Governing Council at its meeting in Kigali, Rwanda on October 29, 2008. It was subsequently subjected to review and commentary by members of AFF and selected individuals for an additional period of 3 months. It was revised slightly in 2014. We acknowledge use of materials prepared by the Innovation Expedition to support the Challenge Dialogue process, which underpinned the strategy development workshop.

June 2014



1. The Expectation



The AFF Strategic Plan will:

- ▶ Cover short and medium term periods.
- ▶ Engender clear and strong commitment from and to all partners.



- ▶ Provide a clear financial approach and principles.
- ▶ Reflect clearly the opportunities that Africa's diversity presents for AFF and African forests.
- ▶ Incorporate elements of knowledge management and learning.
- ▶ Cover a wide range of areas that influence forests or are impacted by them, such as forest lands experiencing the impacts of climate change.
- ▶ Secure support of national authorities and leadership to AFF's programmes, projects and other activities.
- ▶ Incorporate research and appropriate approaches to adaptability requirements.
- ▶ Identify the key elements of the institutional strengthening process relating to systems and structures that arise out of the Strategic Plan.

2. The Context



Forest cover at the foot of Mt Kilimanjaro, Tanzania © Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 3.0

2.1 Background issues and events

Between 2003 and 2008 a project on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in Africa was implemented in two phases, and with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The African Forest Research Network (AFORNET) at the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), in collaboration with the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, together with many African institutions and individuals, as well as other international organisations, implemented the first phase of the project (SFM I). This sought to identify positive and negative

lessons from forest activities, programmes and projects that had been implemented in Africa since most countries became independent in the 40+ years preceding SFM I. It also sought to enrich its findings through analysing the relevance, to Africa, of lessons from Latin America, Asia and Sweden. In discussing the results of this work, many senior African “forest stakeholders” from national, regional and international bodies who were involved with the process expressed a strong conviction that mechanisms be put in place to sustain the momentum of getting quality science- and experience-based analyses to backstop African leaders in decisions concerning the management of national forest resources and in various global debates. In this context, there was an expressed desire by many participants, who discussed the

project's outputs to strengthen, institutionalise and sustain the independent, professional and open analytical way of working that was the *modus operandi* of the project.

Thus, one of the objectives of the second phase of the project (SFM II) was to establish an African Forest Forum (AFF) that could sustain the momentum of an independent and objective analysis, as well as provide sound advice and advocacy to backstop African leaders in decisions concerning the management of national forest resources and in various global fora.

In order to arrive at a consensus on the need for AFF, its structure, *modus operandi*, location of the Secretariat, and others aspects, an intensive consultative process was carried out in 2006/07, involving hundreds of senior people in forest research, administration, policy making, NGOs, private business, etc. throughout Africa and beyond. At sub-regional workshops organised by SFM II in Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Arusha, Douala, Bata (Eq. Guinea), Lusaka and Bamako, opinions on how to design a Forum were solicited. Also outside Africa, e.g. at side events at UNFF in New York and at COFO in Rome, as well as at a seminar on African-Nordic cooperation in forestry in Sweden, participants contributed ideas and suggestions on how to set up AFF.

2.2 Establishment of AFF

The following steps highlight the way AFF was formally established:

- ▶ The Steering Committee (SC) of the SFM II project, at its second meeting on January 25-26, 2007, facilitated the establishment of 16 Founder Members who held their first meeting on January 26, 2007 and formally established the African Forest Forum, as provided for in the Charter.
- ▶ Following establishment of AFF, a process of registering it in Kenya, as an independent, not-for-profit international non-governmental organisation was initiated. This followed a consensus reached electronically and through sub-regional workshops, by many stakeholders, on the location for the AFF Secretariat, its Charter and Guidelines for its operations. The registration necessitated re-working all the Charter and sections of the Guidelines into a Constitution to meet the Kenyan NGO registration requirements. AFF is also registered in Tanzania and Niger.
- ▶ The second meeting of the Founder Members (July 25, 2007) nominated members to the Governing Council of AFF.
- ▶ The third meeting of Founder Members (October 15, 2007) nominated the Chair and Vice Chair and more members to the Governing Council.
- ▶ The Governing Council met for the first time on October 15-16, 2007, and this marked the commencement of the operations of AFF, as provided for in the Constitution.
- ▶ The Governing Council, at this first meeting, appointed the first Executive Secretary of AFF, and constituted an Executive Committee, which first met on October 16, 2007.
- ▶ The second meeting of the Governing Council was held on February 27-28, 2008 and appointed more members to the Governing Council.

2.3 AFF today

Today (2014), after seven years of successful operations, AFF has a membership of 855 individuals from all over Africa and beyond, a representative Governing Council, a well-functioning Secretariat in Nairobi, and has implemented a very active and appreciated programme. The annual budget is c. USD 3 million.

3. The framework



Boabab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) in the Kruger National Park, South Africa © Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 3.0

3.1 Definition, Vision, Mission, Goal & Purpose

Definition

The African Forest Forum (AFF) is an association of individuals who share the quest for and commitment to the sustainable management, use and conservation of the forest and tree resources of Africa for socio-economic wellbeing of its peoples and for the stability and improvement of its environment.

Vision

AFF seeks to be the leading forum that links and unites stakeholders in African forestry within and outside the continent.

In AFF's understanding, becoming the 'leading forum' implies being a recognised entity for uniting stakeholders on the conservation and management of African forests to meet the social, ecological and economic needs of present and future generations.

Mission

To contribute to the improvement of the livelihoods of the people of Africa and the environment they live in through sustainable management and use of tree and forest resources on the African continent.

Goal

The **goal** of AFF is to galvanise a common African voice and opinion, and mobilise resources that are required to address forestry and related issues that cut across countries and regions with a view of

enhancing the relevance and contribution of forestry to the people of Africa and their environment.

Purpose

The **purpose** of AFF is to provide a platform for information sharing and create an enabling environment for independent and objective analysis, advocacy and advice on relevant policy and technical issues pertaining to achieving sustainable management, use and conservation of Africa's forest and tree resources as part of efforts to reduce poverty, promote economic and social development and protect the environment.

In short, AFF seeks to influence and facilitate organizations and people to take actions that lead to forestry compatible development. This is done through convening, advocacy, partnership and knowledge brokerage, facilitating capacity development and catalysing R&D which support sustainable forestry and tree resources management.

3.2 Strategic operating values and principles

Operationally, AFF will be engaged in the development and implementation of programmes, projects and activities that are relevant to the promotion of SFM in Africa, and in close cooperation/collaboration with its wide range of stakeholders.

AFF's partners share a common understanding and are bound together by a core set of values that are fundamental guiding principles that determine their continued association and actions.

The core values of AFF, not listed in order of priority, are:

- ▶ Transparency in all that AFF does.
- ▶ Accountability to the AFF constituency.
- ▶ Integrity that ensures that AFF can be trusted in all aspects of its work.
- ▶ Honesty in handling resources, implementing AFF activities and reporting.

- ▶ Professionalism in all that AFF does.
- ▶ Respect for others, including those who depend on forest and tree resources and AFF stakeholders.
- ▶ Observance of ethics in all aspects of the work of AFF.

In all AFF does, it is guided by the following principles:

- ▶ Benefiting humanity and the environment.
- ▶ Equitable access to and use of forest and tree resources.
- ▶ Applying the best available knowledge in the management of tree and forest resources.
- ▶ Increasing the forest cover.
- ▶ Intersectoral integration and synergy.
- ▶ Working in partnership with relevant stakeholders.
- ▶ Observance of rights and privileges of people residing in and around forests.

3.3 Knowledge management

AFF recognizes that progress in African forestry can be accelerated only if systems approaches are applied to these very complex entities.

One of the key functions of AFF is to share relevant information among stakeholders in African forestry. To do this AFF has to facilitate activities that generate knowledge that is science-based, collect and collate information, analyse and synthesize information to meet various ends dictated by stakeholders' needs, and disseminate the same widely.

AFF views it as a comprehensive approach (process) for linking

- ▶ people skills,
- ▶ information base,

- ▶ operational (business) process, and
- ▶ information and communication technologies in order to deal successfully with the critical challenges that AFF has taken on for itself and its mission, vision, goal and purpose in the face of increasingly complex, discontinuous, and constant change.

AFF will work with the following key aspects of knowledge

1. *New knowledge*, generated to help create comparative advantage and better understand situations.
2. *Accessing* valuable knowledge from local and global sources.
3. *Using* accessible knowledge in decision making and in learning processes.
4. *Embedding* knowledge in processes, products and services – using “expert” systems and effective knowledge management practices.
5. *Representing* knowledge in documents, databases and software.
6. *Facilitating* the growth of knowledge through culture, teamwork, incentives and systems.
7. *Transferring* knowledge from one organization to another – a process of knowledge transfer and sharing.
8. *Measuring* the value of knowledge assets or/ and the impact of knowledge management on organizational performance.

AFF has developed, and will continuously update and improve, an information management system, in addition to a website, that facilitates sharing information within the institution and between institutions and other interested parties. Of course there will be other avenues for sharing information, for example through training courses, seminars, conferences and workshops.

AFF has a website - <http://www.afforum.org/> - as a key tool for knowledge management. This will continue to be developed with the aim of providing a useful information, knowledge and action portal for all stakeholders in African forests.

Training institutions will be another avenue for dissemination of AFF-produced material. Such institutions are often severely short of relevant forestry information reference materials and therefore form a ready crucial target for receiving information.

AFF recognises the importance of building a collaborative culture for high performance that requires not only new strategies but also new structures, new support systems, new skills, and new shared values. This will require:

- ▶ Advancing learning in skill sets such as negotiation, brokering, and team development.
- ▶ Identifying natural allies with whom to build strategic alliances.
- ▶ Identifying options for creating synergy within newly formed collaborative groups.

3.4 AFF as a platform for facilitating change in the forestry sector

a) AFF as a partnership platform

Partnership is AFF’s ‘way of working’ and is embedded in all its interventions, primarily through: convening meetings on specific issues as well as for on-going sharing, learning and co-creation of solutions among the AFF membership – at continental, regional and national levels; the creation of strategic teams tasked to generate scalable solutions to specific challenges; and brokering collaboration through ‘match-making’ to create partnerships that bring together complementary resources and/or skills and enhance effectiveness and probability of success in delivery of interventions at regional or continental levels.

b) AFF’s role in influencing policy

- ▶ Providing a platform for policy advocacy.
- ▶ Raising profile of forests and trees in economic development.
- ▶ Generating evidence for policy making.
- ▶ Facilitating and influencing political action on forest resources management.

- ▶ Assisting in analysing links between international and national forest policies.

c) **AFF as a knowledge broker**

- ▶ Collating and synthesizing information.
- ▶ Translating information and knowledge to generate evidence.
- ▶ Connecting people to relevant information and evidence for decision making – in various forms and through its various platforms.
- ▶ Helping to facilitate the generation of information and knowledge to fill critical gaps.

d) **AFF as a resource mobilizer**

- ▶ Identifying and mobilizing physical, human and financial resources to support strategic interventions which have potential for scaling for greater impact.

e) **AFF as a facilitator of Africa's participation in international forums**

- ▶ Facilitating participation of African countries in international forums, including provision of crucial technical information, mentoring, and better coordination of participation, helping Africa to speak with one informed voice on common positions.

3.5 Key partners and collaborators

AFF works with a variety of partnerships, formal and informal, within and outside the continent, and with forestry and non-forestry bodies including:

- ▶ African Union Commission (AUC),
- ▶ African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE)
- ▶ Forest Research Network for Sub-Sahara Africa (FORNESSA)
- ▶ World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)
- ▶ Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
- ▶ International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO)
- ▶ Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- ▶ East African Community (EAC)
- ▶ Southern African Development Community (SADC)
- ▶ Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- ▶ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- ▶ Inter States Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)
- ▶ Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall for the Sahel and Sahara Initiative (PAGGWSSI)
- ▶ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- ▶ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- ▶ Bern University of Applied Sciences
- ▶ African Development Bank (AfDB),
- ▶ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO),
- ▶ African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC),
- ▶ African Academy of Sciences (AAS),
- ▶ United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF),
- ▶ New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)
- ▶ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- ▶ World Conservation Union (IUCN)-Eastern Africa Regional Office,
- ▶ Commission des Forêts d' Afrique Centrale (COMIFAC),
- ▶ Royal Swedish Academy for Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA)
- ▶ International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO)
- ▶ Many African forestry research, education and development institutions and networks.

4. The Strategic Plan

4.1 The Short and Medium Term Strategic Plan of AFF (5-15 years)

In this Strategic Plan, AFF has set out a strategy that will create an enabling environment in which independent and objective analysis, advocacy and advice could be given, by AFF, to relevant stakeholders, on relevant policy and technical issues pertaining to achieving sustainable management, use and conservation of Africa's forest and tree resources. This has to be done with poverty alleviation and promotion of economic and social development, and protecting the environment in Sub-Saharan Africa being central to AFF's activities. AFF has people and their environment at the centre of its work.

AFF will work with a wide range of stakeholders through various programmes, projects and activities in implementing this strategy.

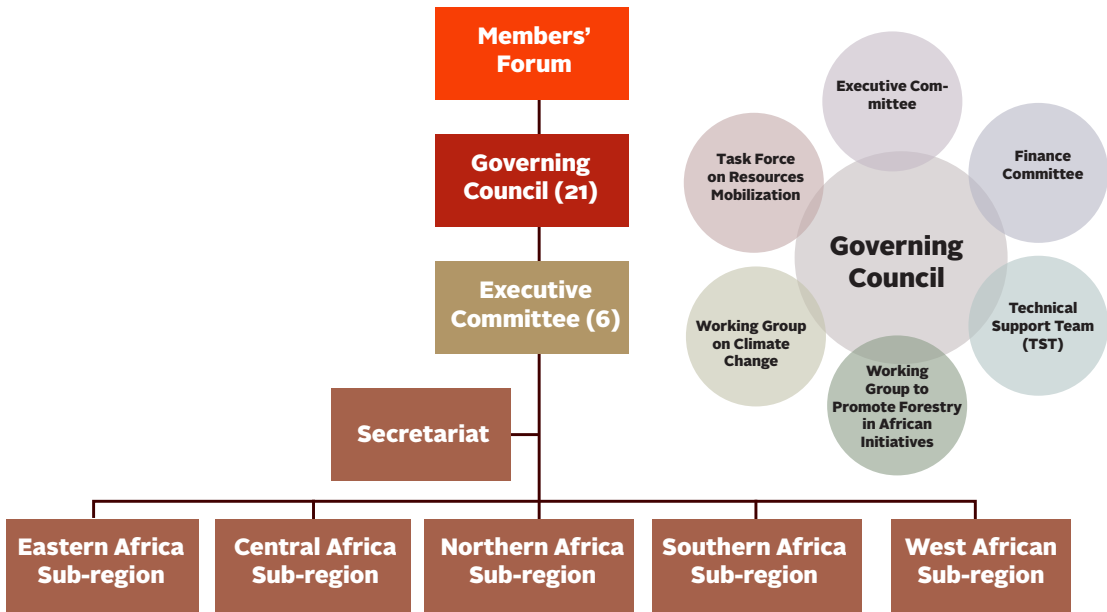
The four key strategic objectives of the AFF in the Short and Medium Term (5-15 years) are:

1. Build and strengthen networking among the many and varied stakeholders in forestry in Africa.
2. Develop, solicit funding for, and implement specific programmes, projects and activities that address already identified priority issues and opportunities in African forestry.
3. Raise the profile of forestry, highlight threats to forest resources and the environment, and champion better management of African forests.
4. Undertake an institutional organizational development of AFF, including its Secretariat and governance structures.

The following diagram places these four strategic objectives in relation to key activities and expected results and outputs:

Networking	Programming	Advocacy	Organisational development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder meetings • Thematic dialogues • Knowledge synthesis • Knowledge sharing • Building partnerships • Intergovernmental consultations • Documentation issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest management • CBFMR & market • Climate change • Forest rehabilitation • Forest-water relations • Forest institutions and governance • Information management • International relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues identification • Raising the alarm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information capacity • Partnership development • Staff capacity

4.2 AFF's operating model



4.3 Key operating processes

AFF works through its members and the Secretariat. Networking through electronic media is the main mechanism for exchanging information, ideas and views. The Members Forum, the Governing Council, the Executive Committee, and the Secretariat are the key organs of the Forum. There are also committees of the Governing Council: the Executive Committee, the Technical Support Team (TST) to International and Regional Negotiations, the Working Group to Promote Forestry in African Initiatives, the Working Group on Climate Change, the Task Force on Resources Mobilisation, Finance Committee, and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The Governing Council and its committees have been established with specific purposes and also have terms of reference to guide their work.

AFF has regular mechanisms for information exchange, decision-making and interactions. The Governing Council and its committees hold electronic and virtual meetings as the situation and agenda may require.

In executing its projects, programmes and activities AFF will employ one or more of the following approaches:

1. Constitute permanent and ad hoc task forces, think tanks and committees mainly from among its membership to analyse and give advice on specific issues, problems and potentials.
2. Commission experts and institutions to carry out studies and research tasks to generate knowledge in general or for specific institutions and organizations on request.
3. Organise workshops, seminars and conferences, as and when appropriate.
4. Be represented at relevant international and regional meetings on forests.
5. Initiate and implement pilot projects, normally in collaboration with African and/or other partner institutions.
6. Issue reports, publications and other relevant material emanating from its work.
7. Provide a systematic information base on forests and trees in Africa, and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for developments relevant to these resources.

4.4 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

AFF will develop a 'balanced scorecard' type approach to meeting its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) needs, recognizing that M&E is the cornerstone for a learning organization. The balanced scorecard is a practical approach to make measurement work in support of improved performance.

4.5 Generating funds to sustain AFF

A Task Force on Resources Mobilisation has been established within AFF. It is a committee of the Governing Council and therefore reports to the Governing Council. Its members are recruited by the Governing Council as well as their manner of replacement.

Apart from other instructions the Task Force might, from time to time, receive from the Governing Council, the specific mandate of the Task Force is to:

- ▶ Assist the Governing Council in ensuring sustainable funding through the following activities:
 - ▶ Explore the policies, priorities and processes of different funding agencies with an interest in natural resources in Africa.
- ▶ List the proposals that AFF needs to identify funding for, and assist the Secretariat in identifying specific donors for funding.
- ▶ Develop, and regularly up-date, a funding strategy for AFF, including
 - ▶ Endowment Fund
 - ▶ Membership fees
 - ▶ Other funds
 - ▶ Develop a strategy to engage the private sector in supporting the AFF.
- ▶ Develop a strategy to show that AFF has substantial support from within the African Region, including support from:
 - ▶ African Development Bank.
 - ▶ Regional bodies such as AU, COMIFAC, ECOWAS, EAC, SADC, etc.
 - ▶ Regional Banks e.g. the East African Development Bank.
 - ▶ Commercial banks with an interest in supporting green initiatives e.g. Standard Chartered Bank of South Africa
 - ▶ Multi-lateral agencies such as the United Nations, FAO, World Bank, etc.

Annex 1

SWOT Analyses

SWOT analysis of the African forestry sector

Strengths of the sector

- ▶ Large areas with renewable forest resources;
- ▶ Existence of institutional infrastructure in most African countries for forest management;
- ▶ Existence of a corps of professionals in forestry in Africa;
- ▶ Forestry interfaces with many other sectors of the national economies;
- ▶ Strongly related to livelihoods and environment;

Weaknesses of the sector

- ▶ Weak governance institutions;
- ▶ Lack of/limited political awareness and support to the forestry sector;
- ▶ Insufficient and patchy distribution of human capacity in the sector;
- ▶ Lack of information on the value and contribution of forest resources in household and national economies;
- ▶ Lack of/Insufficient regulation of cross- border trade among African countries;
- ▶ Weak enforcement of forest policy, laws and regulations;
- ▶ Sector is poorly developed and organized;
- ▶ Sector is underinvested, therefore requires much more investment than available at present;
- ▶ Fragility of the forest ecosystem complicates management of the resource;
- ▶ Unclear land, forest and tree tenure constrains good management and investment in the sector.

Opportunities for the sector

- ▶ High potential to improve the generation of economic benefits of forest and trees;
- ▶ Increased global awareness/recognition of the role of forests and trees to people and their environmental (climate, water, biodiversity issues);
- ▶ Multi-functionality of forests increase their roles and potentials for socio-economic development;
- ▶ Development of tree resources outside the forest compliments the goods and services from forests.

Threats to the sector

- ▶ Illegal harvesting and trade of forest resources;
- ▶ Over exploitation of the forest resources, resulting in unwanted deforestation and degradation;
- ▶ High population pressure raising demand for forest goods and services as well as for forest land leading to conversion of forest lands into agricultural lands, and degradation of the resources;
- ▶ Inappropriate pricing of forest products and services (denying sellers and governments revenues), some do not even have a market price;
- ▶ Unplanned use of forest resources;
- ▶ Failure to develop agricultural productivity as a way of reducing pressure on forest land.

SWOT analysis of AFF

Strengths

- ▶ Membership is voluntary and members are willing and committed to forestry development (i.e. volunteers, willingness and commitment);
- ▶ Independent and non-political;
- ▶ The membership contains considerable expertise, both in width and depth;
- ▶ Diversity of memberships (professional, geographical and linguistic);
- ▶ Growing recognition of AFF and its work;
- ▶ Accountability of AFF to its membership and other stakeholders like development partners is very good;
- ▶ Achievements of AFF are widely known and appreciated;
- ▶ Strong and growing partnerships with relevant international and regional institutions.

Weaknesses

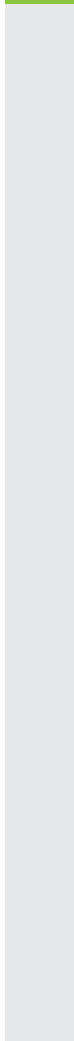
- ▶ Understaffed Secretariat;
- ▶ Young organization;
- ▶ Dependence on others for funds and facilities;
- ▶ Weak representation from private sector.

Opportunities

- ▶ Growing recognition and increased resources for its planned activities will increase impacts;
- ▶ Replicate the success of TST at UNFF in other organizations;
- ▶ General goodwill in and outside the AFF.

Threats

- ▶ Existing and potential competitors dealing with the same issues, collaborators/stake-holders and donors;
- ▶ Potential vulnerability to division based on language barriers in Africa, viz. across Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone divisions;
- ▶ Sustainability of funding.





African Forest Forum

A platform for stakeholders in African forestry



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