



CONCEPT NOTE

REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON SHARING INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCES

ON:

FOREST AND TREE-BASED ECOSYSTEM SERVICES FOR SOCIO-  
ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN AFRICA

03 – 07 JULY 2023 | NAIROBI, KENYA

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The African Forest Forum (AFF) is a pan-African non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. It 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 the socio-economic wellbeing of its people and for the stability and improvement of its environment. The purpose of AFF is to provide a platform 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 gender equality, and economic and social development.

To this end, AFF, with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) is implementing a project titled "*Strengthening management and use of forest ecosystems for sustainable development in Africa*". The project seeks to generate and share knowledge and information through partnerships in ways that will provide inputs into policy and decision-making options and capacity building efforts, for improved forest management that will better address climate change impacts as well as contribute to poverty alleviation and environmental protection in Africa. The project's specific objectives include: (i) improving knowledge and capacities of African stakeholders in responding to adverse effects of climate change through better management and use of forest ecosystems and trees outside forests; and ii) identifying and promoting opportunities for protecting and sustainably managing the forest resource base on the continent as well as the supply of its ecosystem goods and services.

To pursue these objectives, AFF facilitated research fellowships and experts' studies in different ecosystems (Sahel parklands, moist forests, mangroves, and woodlands) on:

- a) assessment of the impacts of climate change on forests, tree-resources, and associated ecosystem services, as well as coping mechanisms in selected African countries;
- b) assessment of gender responsive resilience of forest related biophysical and socio-economic systems to climate change impact in selected countries; and
- c) evaluation of the approaches, technologies, and other means to increase efficiency in the sawn timber value chains in different forest types in selected countries in Africa.

The studies involved 03 MSc, 15 PhD students from 10 countries and 6 experts from 6 African countries and covered different forest types in the four sub-regions of sub-Saharan Africa.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

Climate change is one of the major current environmental challenges. There is growing evidence that climate change is impacting on forests and forest ecosystems in Africa, and therefore on the livelihoods of forest dependent communities as well as on national economic activities that depend on forest and tree products and services.

Some negative effects of climate change on forest ecosystems include frequent bush and forest fires that directly affect their composition, net primary production (NPP), migration of wildlife, and increased shifts and emergence of new pests and diseases affecting plants. The shifts in rainfall patterns and temperature changes can result into increased water scarcity and severe prolonged droughts that in turn directly affect agricultural production, food and nutritional security, as well as markets and trade potential of forest dependent population.

In this regard, climate change and variability continue to create serious challenges to the sustainability of biophysical and socio-economic systems on the continent. The continued erosion

of such systems is slowing down socio-economic development and jeopardizing the environmental stability of most of the African countries, especially in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa Agenda 2063, among other national and regional development aspirations.

It is also evident that among the African people, women, youth, and marginalized groups who depend on fragile critical ecosystems for their livelihood are the most affected by the impacts of climate change and variability. This makes consideration of gender and other marginalized groups critical in planning for, as well as assessing responsiveness of the African countries to the impacts of climate change. African governments in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and other regional and national processes, have pledged to increase their focus on building resilience of biophysical and socio-economic systems as one of the means to strengthen adaptation capacity of people and plants to the adverse impacts of climate change. Some of the undergoing work on the African continent in this regard include restoration of degraded lands, reforestation, and afforestation in different forest types and farmlands, promotion of non-timber forest products' value chains, awareness creation, various types of trainings and skills development. Much as these efforts have potential for addressing the impacts of climate change and variability and building coping mechanisms, they have to be gender-sensitive with a clear focus on women, youth, and marginalized groups.

It's within this context that the AFF facilitated research fellowships for 18 students who conducted studies to deepen understanding of the complex relationships between a changing climate and forests and tree-resources to enable those in the forestry sector to develop appropriate mitigation and adaptation responses to address the impacts of climate change and variability for the forest sector and the people who depend on these resources. Specifically, the students' work covered the following areas:

- Forest cover dynamics, forest ecosystems goods and services, impacts of climate change and other anthropogenic drivers on livelihoods, and gender-responsive adaptation strategies of rural communities;
- Dynamics of fruit trees, ecosystem services and reduction of the vulnerability of populations to climate change;
- Hydraulic vulnerability and adaptation of tropical trees species to climate change;
- Contribution of coffee and cocoa agroforests in adapting to climate change;
- Climate change and climate justice: a gender analysis of REDD+ piloted site;
- Socio-economic and environmental impacts of assisted natural regeneration in agroforestry parks and community adaptation strategies taking into account gender in the face of climate change;
- Carbon sequestration in the soil through reforestation for better land management

Further, due to the vulnerability of forest dependent communities and their increased reliance on forest resources for their resilience, sustaining the management and use of forests and trees outside forests is an indispensable task for humanity. Ensuring that forest resources sustainably deliver the needed goods and services requires that the management and uses, and the technologies applied for value addition are efficient and adapted to their state and contexts. To this end AFF conducted studies on efficiency of utilization of forest resources in different forest types in selected African countries for the sawmilling industry, approaches and technological applications with the view to inform the design of strategies for securing sustainability of the forest resources.

In its annual work plan of activities for 2023, AFF is organizing a regional workshop that will incorporate a media event, aimed at sharing the study findings and recommendations as well as information, knowledge, and experiences among the African forestry stakeholders. The outcome of these events will enable AFF and its stakeholders to develop a strategy to: (i) provide a forum for dialogue to enhance collaboration and mechanisms of sharing experiences in the African continent on processes, methods and tools to capitalize on forests and tree-based systems for climate change adaptation and mitigation; (ii) deliberate on findings from the studies to contribute to evidence-based policy formulation and implementation in order to enhance interest in, and better inform stakeholders in the forest sector; (iii) promote and facilitate development of policies and strategies that enhance forest based climate change adaptation and resilience for better socio-economic development in Africa; and (iv) fine-tune and consolidate the identified capacity building needs and related suitable approaches to adopt in order to address the challenges facing sustainable resources management.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP**

The overall objective of the workshop is to share findings from studies undertaken through an AFF project on “Strengthening management and use of forest ecosystems for sustainable development in Africa.” Specifically, the workshop has been designed to:

- (a) provide a forum for dialogue to enhance collaboration and mechanisms of sharing experiences on processes, methods and tools on climate change adaptation and mitigation in forests and tree-based systems;
- (b) promote and facilitate development of policies and strategies that could enhance adoption of forest-based climate change adaptation and increasing resilience for better socio-economic development;
- (c) deliberate on findings from various studies undertaken on (i) climate change impacts and resilience measures, and (ii) efficiency of sawn timber value chains;
- (d) collect information on capacity building needs and related suitable approaches to address various challenges in sustainable resources management.

### **4. EXPECTED RESULTS AND OUTPUTS OF THE WORKSHOP**

- i. Enhanced exchange of experiences and skills among stakeholders on opportunities that forests, and tree-based systems offer in addressing impacts of climate change on communities (economies, livelihoods, resilience, etc.),
- ii. Exchange of information on status and required policies and strategies that support sustainable resources management on the continent in the context of climate change;
- iii. Capacity building needs and related appropriate approaches for improving climate change policies and strategies identified by forestry stakeholders; and
- iv. Future research interests (knowledge gaps) identified and discussed with forestry stakeholders.

### **5. VENUE AND DURATION**

A face-to-face workshop is planned in Nairobi, Kenya for a duration of 5 days from 03 to 07 July 2023.

### **6. PARTICIPANTS**

The workshop will bring together 70 invited African forestry stakeholders from government forest administrations, non-governmental organizations, research, academia, private sector, media as well as youth and women-based organizations from selected African countries, namely: Benin; Burkina Faso; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Côte d’Ivoire; Ethiopia; Kenya; Niger; Nigeria; Republic of Congo; Rwanda; Senegal; South Africa; Tanzania; Togo; Zambia; Zimbabwe.