



African Forest Forum

A platform for stakeholders in African forestry

CONSULTANCY SERVICES

ON

**MAPPING OF THE SCIENCE-MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND AN
ASSESSMENT ON THE CAPACITY NEEDS OF SCIENCE JOURNALISTS IN
REPORTING FORESTRY AND RELATED ISSUES
(ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE AFRICA)**

AUGUST 2024

1. BACKGROUND

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.

AFF has secured funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to implement the project entitled *“Transforming the African Forest Forum to enhance its capacity to improve livelihoods and environmental stability through better management of African forest and tree resources.”* The overall goal of the project is *“to ensure sustainability of AFF for continued generation and sharing of knowledge that enhances management of forests and trees outside forests, in the context of climate change, for improved human wellbeing and environmental protection in Africa.”* One of its specific objectives is to strengthen the capacity of science reporters to better understand and effectively report on forestry and related issues.

African forests, livelihoods and environment

Africa is very rich in forest resources and other forms of tree cover. The 2020 Global Forest Resources Assessment Report prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) reports that Africa has 637 million hectares under forests: about 16% of the global forest area, and 23% of the land area of the continent. Further, Africa has 446 million hectares classified as “other wooded land” that make up 31% of the global wooded lands.

The forests are good sanctuaries for wildlife, offer opportunities for beekeeping, support many important ecosystem services and goods, and are home to many genetic resources. They are catchments to many rivers that are essential to the economic development of the continent. They generate considerable biomass that supports an overwhelming majority of Africans with their energy needs, mostly as wood fuel (AFF, 2019)¹.

Furthermore, the natural forest resources are increasingly receiving global attention because of their share in biological diversity, potential for industrial timber exports, capacity for mitigating global climate change, livelihood 'safety nets', and literally support all key pillars of rural development. African forests and trees outside forests also support the bulk of its people to adapt to the adverse effects of climatic change (AFF, 2019b)².

¹ <https://afforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/THE-STATE-OF-FORESTRY-IN-AFRICAweb.pdf>

² As above

Conversely, deforestation and degradation are accelerating at alarming rates in many parts of Africa, mainly caused by the conversion of forest land into agriculture and other uses. Some deforestation can also be attributed to the non-sustainable exploitation of wood for fuel, timber and other products, leading to a situation where forest management and utilisation are increasingly seen as causing negative impacts on forest-dependent people, climate, biodiversity and water (Kowero, 2023).

According to the report titled, “*State of the World’s Forests 2024: Forest-sector innovations towards a more sustainable future*”³, the rapid pace of change, and the urgency of addressing these challenges, demand inventive solutions that are diverse, flexible and adaptable and can be scaled up quickly. It is imperative, therefore, to tap into human creativity and embrace innovation, including in the forest sector.

The role of the media in promoting sustainable forest management in Africa

The media can be an effective catalyst for change regarding the sustainable management of trees and forests in different landscapes. Thanks to the prominent role they play as watchdogs, gatekeepers and agenda-setters, media can get audiences to rethink their choices, adopt innovative solutions, and maintain forestry issues high on the development agenda of African nations. Further, they ensure that accurate forest science information becomes duly and strategically integrated into the public domain.

There is growing global awareness of the crucial need for better science reporting both as a practice and profession as tools for sustainable development in society. However, the journalism industry has suffered significant losses (Friedman, 2015⁴; Pew Research Center, 2016⁵), resulting in newsrooms whose reporting staff bring a much-reduced breadth of expertise (Pew Research Center, 2013⁶). The challenge of providing news coverage that is simultaneously accurate, contextualized, and compelling is especially salient with regard to environmental stories. Reporters must navigate scientific research, sorting out areas of consensus and debate, and weigh scientific perspectives along with those of affected communities and political agendas (Friedman, 2015).

³ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/c11c251d-b204-4abc-ab48-ecfa33fe7eff/content>

⁴ Friedman, S. (2015). “The changing face of environmental journalism in the United States,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication*, eds. A. Hansen, and R. Cox (New York, NY: Routledge), 143–155.

⁵ Pew Research Center. (2016b). *Civic Engagement Strongly Tied to Local News Habits*. Available at: <http://www.journalism.org/2016/11/03/civic-engagement-strongly-tied-to-local-news-habits/>

⁶ Pew Research Center. (2013). *The State of the News Media 2013*. Available at: <http://assets.pewresearch.org.s3.amazonaws.com/files/journalism/State-of-the-News-Media-Report-2013-FINAL.pdf>

In line with the *AFF Knowledge Management Strategy (2021-2025)*⁷ and in the context of the institution's transformation phase, AFF recognizes the need to support journalists in the hard task of interpreting complex issues key to its work. Through a combination of fact- and value-based messaging, AFF's proactive approach to news and media has been designed to inform, explain, engage, and mobilize resources for effective reporting.

To-date a series of eleven (11) media roundtables have been organized by AFF and partners. These events took place in Lomé, Togo (2016); Entebbe, Uganda (2017), virtually (2021), Mombasa, Kenya and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (2022) as well as Nairobi, Kenya (2023). Such roundtables have enabled scientists to break down jargon and train journalists to become more discerning translators of scientific information. This in effect has helped raise the profile of forestry, highlight threats to forest resources and the environment, and champion better management of African forests and tree resources.

As a result, the demand for this type of interaction between journalists and scientists has been significant. It is for this reason that for its 2024 annual plan of work, the African Forest Forum (AFF) is recruiting two (2) regional media experts to provide an overview of the science-media landscape in Anglophone Africa and Francophone Africa respectively, point out capacity needs for intervention and develop guidelines for effective reporting.

2. PURPOSE OF THE WORK

Undertake a mapping of the various media (institutions and outlets) that exist in Anglophone and Francophone Africa and to assess their capacity needs in reporting forestry and related issues, then develop a guide for scientific reporting on biodiversity, climate change, landscape and forest management as well as renewable energy, for media professionals.

3. SPECIFIC TASKS

The specific tasks for the media mapping assignment could usefully address the following topics and questions, which are indicative and not exhaustive.

(i) The state of the science media landscape in Africa

- Conduct a desk study/literature review and informant interviews with key players in the media industry to describe the science media landscape in the respective regions.
 - What are the main channels used for disseminating science news? How has the science media landscape changed over the past decade? What are the latest developments, trends and regulations that have affected the science media and journalism practice in Africa?

⁷ <https://afforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-AFF-KM-STRATEGY.pdf>

- Who are the main science media actors? Who are the new/emerging players in the sector versus long standing media and what do they bring to the table?
- In Africa there are environmental media networks linking smaller media organisations and or individual journalists (for example Pan African Media Alliance for Climate Change , PAMACC). Identify the main media networks and their focal points.
- Provide profiles of the key media development actors/donors (e.g. Japan International Cooperation Agency- JICA, European Commission, Bloomberg Philanthropies) & an insight into their strategic focus.

(ii) Challenges for journalists reporting on forests in the context of a changing climate

- Based on either an online survey from existing databases, informant interviews and/or dip-stick research:
 - Describe the challenges and prospects facing the science media industry in the region.
 - Identify the capacity needs of science journalists in reporting on forestry and related issues.
 - Explain the mechanisms required for increasing access to accurate, objective information and facilitating informed public discourse on critical forestry related issues

(iii) Bridging the knowledge gap on forest related issues among science journalists

- Based on the findings of the capacity needs assessment above, develop a guide for scientific reporting on forest related issues including biodiversity, climate change, landscape and forest management as well as renewable energy, including best practices.

4. DURATION

The tasks in these TORs are for a one-and-a-half-month workload.

5. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

The selected experts are expected to submit the following deliverables:

- 2 media mapping reports (Anglophone and Francophone Africa respectively)
- A guideline document on scientific reporting on African forestry for media professionals

6. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS

This consultancy is meant for media experts demonstrating the following education and skills.

- Have, at least, ten years of proven experience in working within the media sector, preferably at senior editorial level within the newsroom.
- A Master of Arts degree in Journalism or Communication

- Ability to write clearly and concisely showcased through media articles, magazines and publications.
- Demonstrable experiences reporting on scientific issues in general and forestry related matters, in particular.
- Membership to a local public relations/media association would be an added advantage.
- Have demonstrated research and analytical skills.

7. HOW TO APPLY

Each application should contain the following:

- Cover letter stating how you meet the above qualifications and experience requirements.
- Curriculum vitae.
- A technical proposal of a maximum of 2 pages detailing how you intend to undertake the tasks, describing the Key Result Areas, and also listing your previous involvement in similar assignments.

All these should be submitted as email with attachment, indicating in the subject line:

Consultancy no 03- 3.3.1.1: Expert to map the science-media environment and assess their capacity needs in reporting forestry and related issues (Anglophone/Francophone Africa). The mail should be addressed to: (d.gitonga@cifor-icraf.org), with copy to d.mutta@cifor-icraf.org and d.dayamba@cifor-icraf.org, Application deadline is **3 September 2024**. Activities will commence no later than **17 September 2024**.