

Concept Note



Global Landscapes Forum



Hybrid Conference

GLF Africa 2025: Innovate, Restore, Prosper

How can nature power Africa's present and future?

19 June
2025

Nairobi, Kenya
and Online

bit.ly/GLFAfrica2025
#GLFAfrica

Background

Africa's landscapes and communities face unprecedented challenges that threaten the continent's biodiversity, climate resilience, landscape productivity and socioeconomic prosperity. Currently, **65% of Africa's productive landscapes are degraded**, compounded by the climate crisis, insecure land rights, underfunded restoration initiatives, incoherent development policies and priorities and limited technology and data-driven solutions. At the same time, the global development landscape is undergoing a transition.

The traditional development model – largely shaped by multilateral funding and interests – is shifting, marked by a growing emphasis on technical capacity building, structural transformation and partnerships that attract private sector investment. A new global context is emerging, and Africa must define its path forward. Now is the time for Africa to lead with its natural capital, innovation and locally rooted solutions. **How can we drive forward a green economy grounded in natural capital that works for nature and supports the rights and livelihoods of landscape stewards? How can Africa build self-sustaining and prosperous landscapes and communities amid shifting global political and financial agendas?**

Over **60% of Africa's GDP depends on natural capital** – including forests, biodiversity, land and water – and up to **70% of communities in Sub-Saharan Africa** rely on forests and woodlands for their livelihoods. The continent's reliance on agriculture, forestry and land-use-driven sectors further amplifies vulnerability, yet these sectors also hold immense potential for development under a bioeconomy framework. This includes opportunities for sustainable agri-food and tree commodity value chains, regenerative agriculture, agroforestry, biomass utilization, green jobs and nature-positive agribusiness models.

Focusing on restoring Africa's landscapes with natural capital offers multiple entry points to unlock value chains across commodities and agri-business models and build resilient communities and economies. Investing in restoration and sustainable landscape practices yields strong ecological, social and financial **returns, with evidence showing over 600%** return on investment. The growing interest in Africa's natural capital and nature markets, in connection to sustainable finance mechanisms and societal well-being present immense opportunities for Africa to foster a robust, nature-positive and people-centred socio-economic and ecological development pathways. **How can we harmonize these opportunities along with the growing scientific evidence, policy frameworks, civil society engagement, local knowledge systems and practices, AI and data-driven innovations, and private sector involvement to catalyze landscape-scale transformation for a better Africa?**



Conference overview

The GLF Africa 2025 hybrid conference will combine in-person engagement at the CIFOR-ICRAF campus in Nairobi with interactive online participation.

Building on six successful editions of the GLF Africa Conferences, convening over 43,000 participants to date, this year's event will serve as a dynamic platform for advancing dialogue, facilitating knowledge sharing and prompting collaboration around Africa's nature-based economy. It will spotlight links between restoration, natural capital, supply chains, land rights and resilient livelihoods, emphasizing how Africa can lead inclusive, resilient nature-based economies.

By blending Indigenous and traditional knowledge, cutting-edge scientific innovation and research, digital tools and technology, sustainable finance and forward-thinking policies, the conference will chart pathways that support climate goals, social equity and economic prosperity.

Building on the outcomes of previous GLF Africa conferences, initiatives such as the AFR100, and events such as the Global Bioeconomy Summit held in Nairobi and the African Natural Capital Alliance, the conference will engage with existing narratives on landscape work, natural capital and development. The conference will connect with myriad partners to amplify Africa's voice and leadership in this space.

The GLF Africa 2025 conference aims to:

- Highlight Africa's most promising forest and landscape restoration initiatives and identify high-potential, low-risk investments to scale up a sustainable bioeconomy—one that is socially equitable, economically viable, and environmentally sound.
- Bring together governments, businesses, investors, civil society, youth, and local communities to collaborate, share expertise, and accelerate sustainable land-use practices that align ecological health with economic and social development.
- Create space for storytelling, traditional wisdom, and cutting-edge solutions to shape nature-based economies, ensuring diverse voices and knowledge systems drive Africa's restoration revolution.



Key themes to be explored



Forest and landscape restoration:

Globally, Africa has the highest forest and landscape restoration commitment through the AFR100 initiative. With five years left to realize the commitments, how can Africa's restoration and sustainable landscape movement drive impact from micro- to macro-economic and landscape level? What game-changing conditions, innovations and partnerships are required to scale impact? This theme will explore and promote high-impact, cost-effective and risk-mitigated restoration models for tapping ecological, social and economic opportunities for ecosystem recovery and community resilience across Africa's diverse landscapes.



Natural capital and sustainable finance:

Considering the public finance deficit, how can Africa's restoration economy underpinned by a rich natural capital deliver the financial transformation needed to build resilient landscapes and bolster community livelihoods? What are the enablers, risks and safeguards? This theme will explore emerging models for mobilizing investments in climate-smart landscape initiatives, building adaptation capacity and strengthening community livelihoods through restoration efforts including carbon markets, biodiversity credits, sustainable commodity certification and blended finance instruments.

“ Our resilience is directly related to the way we protect and manage our landscapes. Landscapes provide us with a wide array of ecosystem services and are the backbone of agriculture.



Jochen Flasbarth

State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany

“ We have to create restoration models that pay for the ecosystem services that communities are generating through restoration, such as biodiversity, carbon, water, food security and lifting communities out of poverty.



Susan Chomba

Director of Vital Landscapes for Africa, World Resources Institute (WRI)

“ We need to look at landscapes in an integrated manner when approaching landscape restoration to achieve large-scale restoration in Africa – integrating different knowledge forms, interests and strategies.



Mieke Bourne

Stakeholder Engagement with Evidence and Regreening Africa Lead, CIFOR-ICRAF

“ We have existing solutions and the tools to develop new ones that the world truly needs. And if we come together, we can go beyond surviving – to thriving.



Éliane Ubalijoro

CEO, CIFOR-ICRAF; Director General, ICRAF

“ New financing and market-driven instruments are emerging for landscape finance, including green bonds, green finance and blended finance. These should be channeled to target local communities and farmers engaged in sustainable land use. We must look for commercial viability in landscape practices through identifying business opportunities in nature-based solutions and attracting investors and catalytic funding toward this.



Julius Ng'ang'a

Senior Director for East and Southern Africa, Rainforest Alliance

“ To attract investment and get the attention of policymakers, Africa's bioeconomy must shift from operating at a micro-level to making sense and bringing significant economic impact at a macro-level.



Peter Minang

Director for Africa, CIFOR-ICRAF



Land/tree-use rights and local livelihoods: Creating an enabling environment to promote locally-led participation in and ownership of restoration and sustainable land use initiatives is critical for creating valuable livelihood diversification opportunities. How can all actors from society, including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities be involved, so that everyone can shape the solutions and benefit from the opportunities? This theme will focus on how to secure communities' access to land and tree tenure, resources and capacity development, especially for local women, youth and Indigenous groups to better manage and benefit from their landscapes.



AI, technology and data for landscape intelligence: AI, data, and digital technology are emerging as tools that can be used to scale Africa's landscape restoration – but what are the latest innovations, data, and science in these fields to facilitate economy-wide adoption of the landscape approach and scale the restoration economy? This theme will focus on leveraging science, AI and data to map high-impact restoration and green economy opportunities coherent with local contexts. Participants will explore how to harness AI and use remote sensing, blockchains and other technologies for improved planning, monitoring, reporting and management of restoration initiatives and scaling the landscape approach.

“ We are deliberate about going to the community, staying with them, and connecting with them to understand the local problem and how it can be solved. Through this, we are able to approach mangrove restoration and livelihoods in a dynamic and adaptive way.



Levis Sirikwa
Co-Founder, Ceriops Research
Environmental Organization.

“ Communities are not just beneficiaries, but agents of change. We must remain committed to the principle of local leadership and ownership. Sustainable impact across landscapes can only be realized when communities are empowered to shape and own their agendas.



Arnold Kipchumba
Director Environment and Climate Action,
MaMa Doing good

“ 62 percent of Africa's GDP depends on natural capital that is mostly stewarded by local communities. Policy-making must be tailored to support the communities. Sustainability at the landscape level cannot happen when we don't engage communities.



Mary Njuguna
Principal Specialist, Capital Markets FSD
Africa

“ African developers should focus on learning from global AI advancements, sharing knowledge within the continent and developing expertise in customizing and deploying AI tools for local environments. By taking the lead in implementing AI solutions that address uniquely African problems, developers can create models that excel in tasks critical to local contexts.



Catherine Nakalembe
Associate Research Professor, Africa
Program Director University of Maryland,
NASA Harvest

“ We need to use technology to scale local projects, accelerate restoration and regenerative agriculture, build value chains and access different markets. For this, we need to build a reliable data infrastructure with evidence for decision-makers and investors.



Njeri Maina
Director of Business & Partnerships DEN

Expected outcomes

- Present a roadmap ahead of COP30 for scaling up nature-based economies to attract investments across Africa's landscape restoration movement through natural capital valuation and inclusive investment pathways.
- Policy and regulatory recommendations for governments and various actors to support climate-resilient and pro-people practices through a nature-driven economy and investments.
- Emphasize the importance of Indigenous and local knowledge systems in restoration efforts and landscape value chains, with a focus on gender, equity and social inclusion.
- Actionable insights on leveraging AI, technology and data for landscape mapping, planning, monitoring and development.
- Equip stakeholders with tools and frameworks to advance climate resilience, food security, biodiversity and socioeconomic development through sustainable finance mechanisms.

“ GLF is exceptional at connecting us with the key partners and institutions we need to talk about scaling our Food Forest project, and with landscapes leaders who are eager to join us in restoring landscapes, which family farmers depend on.



Gerald Nkusi

GLFx Virunga (Uganda) chapter coordinator

“ Most importantly, our work is fostering a sense of community ownership over land restoration. Restoration is a community effort, it requires all of us to take responsibility and work together towards a more sustainable and resilient landscape.



Sydner Kemunto

Drylands Restoration Steward 2025

“ Perhaps the best words to describe the way the Restoration Stewards program makes me feel is like a part of something much larger. A tiny, but essential cog in the intricate, complicated system of the universe.



Steve Misati

Oceans Restoration Steward 2024

Conference features

The conference will feature keynote addresses from global and African experts and thought leaders as well as interactive and solution-oriented panel discussions and dialogues, case studies showcasing best practices and emerging opportunities in restoring and managing Africa's landscapes and natural capital. Additionally, there will be skills labs and capacity-development workshops for youth and community leaders, and sessions for networking and investment matchmaking. For more information on the conference, please reach out to Amos Amanubo (a.amanubo@cifor-icraf.org).

Community and action

The GLF Africa 2025 Conference will take place within the first GLF Africa Community and Action Assembly. This assembly will convene several youth and local partner representatives, including Restoration Stewards, the Youth in Landscapes Initiative, the GLFx Steering Committee, and GLFx chapters.

The assembly is co-organized by the GLFx network, the GLF Youth Program, the GLF Social Media and Learning teams, and CIFOR-ICRAF's Capacity Development Unit and other partners across the GLF network.

This two-week assembly will advance community-led restoration efforts across the continent. Running from June 16–24, the event will feature the youth-focused GLF Africa Landscape Leadership Camp 2025 and the intergenerational GLF Africa Restoration Week. These activities will create a collaborative space for hands-on training, forward-thinking dialogues, expert-led workshops, and immersive field visits. The goal is to strengthen capacities, highlight the cultural and ecological value of landscapes, and foster regional collaboration to address climate change, land degradation, and the priorities of African landscape communities. For more information on community and action activities, please reach out to Ana Yi Soto (a.yisoto@cifor-icraf.org) and Eirini Sakellari (e.sakellari@cifor-icraf.org).



Outreach and campaign

Building on past successful editions of the GLF Africa conferences—reaching 188 million people in 2024 alone through social media and media coverage—the 7th edition of GLF Africa will be the continent’s most influential conference on sustainable land use. GLF Africa 2025 is designed to maximize impact and engagement beyond its 200 in-person participants, bringing together thousands more online from across the world. The GLF’s network of ambassadors and influencers, with a reach of over 2.4 million people in more than 12 languages, will ensure the reach of diverse audiences.

And this is just the beginning. The event will drive meaningful engagements, contests, discussions and digital storytelling to elevate critical voices, feeding directly into the campaign toward the 2025 UN Climate Change Conference in Belém (COP30). The outcomes of GLF Africa will actively shape dialogues and decision-making at COP30, ensuring Africa’s priorities and innovations take center stage in global climate action.

Target audiences

GLF Africa is targeted toward policymakers and government representatives, scientists and researchers, Indigenous leaders and community groups, development organizations and nonprofits, private sector actors and investors, philanthropies and youth advocates and innovators.

Sponsorship and partnerships

Sponsorship options are available, offering a unique opportunity to help shape the GLF’s flagship regional event in Africa and leverage our campaign’s momentum toward COP30. By sponsoring GLF Africa 2025, you can showcase your leadership in sustainability and gain exceptional visibility. The annual GLF Africa Conference reaches over 170 million people across 185 countries. You will connect with a diverse network of stakeholders, from youth and local communities to policymakers and those in the private sector. Sponsors also benefit from substantial exposure across our digital channels and media partnerships. For more information, please reach out to Marina Brunale (m.brunale@cifor-icraf.org).





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About Global Landscapes Forum

The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihoods, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), in collaboration with its co-founders UNEP and the World Bank and Charter Members.

Charter members: CIAT, CIFOR-ICRAF, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, Ecoagriculture Partners, The European Forest Institute, Evergreen Agriculture, FAO, FSC, GEF, GIZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, The International Livestock Research Institute, INBAR, IPMG, IPAM Amazonia, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, Rights and Resources Initiative, SAN, SouthSouthNorth, TMG-Think Tank for Sustainability, UNCCD, UNEP, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation part of Wageningen Research, World Farmer Organization, World Bank Group, World Resources Institute, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL)

Funding partners



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