From Poverty to Prosperity: Harnessing the Wealth of Africa’s Forests

Coordinating convening lead author: Yemi Katerere
Convening lead author: Jennifer Clare Mohamed-Katerere

Forests in the Global Balance – Changing Paradigms
IUFRO World Series Vol. 17
Outline

Variable forest conditions  
(Slides 3-5)

Forests, society and environment  
(Slides 6-8)

On-going changes  
(Slide 9)

Challenges  
(Slides 10-12)

The way forward  
(Slides 13-16)
Uneven forest distribution and great differences in the extent of forests

Forest cover (%)
(number of countries)

- 80 – 100 (1)
- 60 - 79 (4)
- 40 - 59 (6)
- 20 - 39 (5)
- 8 - 19 (7)
- 4 - 7 (7)
- 1 - 3 (8)
- 0 - 1 (7)
Woodlands and forests

East Africa
- forests cover 21% of the land area
- savannah woodland and thickets constitute 63% of forests

Southern Africa
- forests cover 31% of the land area
- in wetter northern parts, closed canopy forests, in drier parts predominantly woodlands and savannah

North Africa
- forests cover 7% of the land area
- due to water stress and soil erosion, the trees’ environmental functions are more important than the productive functions
- only in Sudan, forestry contributes significantly to the national economy
Tropical forests and trees outside forests

Central Africa
- forests cover 44% of the land area
- contains the world’s 2nd largest tropical forests after the Amazon forest
- some of the poorest countries in the world
- lowest population densities in Africa (apart from Rwanda and Burundi)

West Africa
- forests cover 14% of the land area
- well over half of the forest area is other wooded land and trees planted by farmers on their land
Key drivers in the forest, society and environment interface:

• trade liberalisation, externally driven economic development and emphasis on market mechanisms
• under-performing economies and heavy indebtedness
• continuing population growth and ill health (HIV/AIDS, Malaria)
• policy and governance regimes, which exclude local perceptions about framing problems and defining solutions
• growing focus on democratisation, decentralisation and community participation
• social conflicts and wars.
The role of forests in local livelihoods

- 91% of Africa’s timber is used for energy as fuelwood.
- At least 60% of people obtain some of their subsistence from forests, and many people, especially poor women and children, rely on forests for food and medicines.
- Forest based activities contribute 15–35% of all household income in southern Africa;
  - in Tanzania about 58% of farmers’ cash income is derived from honey, fuelwood and wild fruits.
Africa accounted for over half of world’s forest loss between 1990 and 2000

- In countries with high value species, forests have been over-exploited since the colonial period.
- Poor agricultural yields and e.g. urban unemployment have resulted in expansion of agricultural lands.
- Conflicts related to land tenure undermine local rights and increase deforestation.
- Institutional and managerial shortcomings and inadequate regulation of forest industries result in failure to prevent illegal logging.
- Unrest, lack of social cohesion and lack of shared forest values undermine management and increase forest loss.
Increasing poverty and vulnerability

- Population growth and urbanisation increase demand for wood and non-wood forest products.
- Population growth and continuing poverty are likely to increase the demand for fuelwood.
- With the feminisation of poverty, women’s and children’s dependency on forest resources can grow.
- The relationship between poor people and forests is changing due to e.g. rural-urban migration and the impact of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria.
Local livelihood issues are often neglected

Global policy has focused on conservation, which has at times neglected livelihood issues and local priorities. National governments have prioritised commercial production over local use.

The main challenges are:

• to arrest growing poverty and create a path of prosperity
• to capture the economic value of non-timber forest products
• to secure local rights to forest resources.
Increase production, value-adding and diversification

- Expansion of plantation industry and increasing forest based production and trade is restricted by:
  - poor infrastructure
  - lack of investments
  - poor processing facilities
  - insecure tenure
  - undeveloped markets.

- The private sector, a potential actor in the forest sector, is still weak in most African countries, and has focussed on activities that have immediate benefits, such as logging.

- Skewed economic policies, such as the European Union’s and US’s agricultural subsidies, undermine Africa’s ability to engage effectively in the global market.
Investments in African research and extension are declining

• The lack of research capacity means that often international research and other external processes drive African policy.

• International research priority setting is often driven by development fashions, has little regard for localised priority setting and is not accountable to local constituencies.

• Research should be responsive to real world issues, including rights and equity considerations, and devise tools that measure the real impact of forests on livelihoods.
The continuing need for aid and foreign direct investments

• Africa is a marginal recipient of foreign direct investments (FDI).
• The donor sector has been a major driver of forest sector change. The relationship with external actors should be recast.
• Africa has to increasingly compete for development assistance with Eastern Europe, Afghanistan and Iraq as well as for agricultural subsidies paid to developed country farmers.
• NEPAD strategy is to try to increase development assistance and FDI.
Growing focus on multi-sector livelihoods

To support sustainable livelihoods and local entrepreneurship:

- institute enforceable secure rights to natural resources
- create legal and institutional framework for local level resource management
- promote sustainable fuelwood harvesting, investment in other forms of energy and modernisation of the wood energy sector
- improve smallholder productivity and efficiency.
Promotion of forest based production and trade

What is needed:

- infrastructure and communications development
- improved access to markets and finance
- debt relief
- increasing aid and foreign direct investments
- increasing investment in value adding, capacity building and training in skills
- technology development.
Enhanced collaboration for development

- African governments and international donors need to increase research and development funding.
- The science-policy interface needs to be redefined to respond more effectively to the unique challenges facing Africa.

- Regional cooperation is to be strengthened to promote trade, joint investments in infrastructure and to manage transboundary natural resources.