



Global  
Landscapes  
Forum

# GLF Africa

## Restoring Africa's Drylands Accelerating Action on the Ground

Online and around the world

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JUNE 2021

In June 2021, the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) will host the first global digital conference on Africa's drylands and how integrative restoration practices can secure the future of these landscapes, and the people and biodiversity that rely on them. Join [GLF Africa: Restoring Africa's Drylands - Accelerating Action on the Ground](#) to hear inspiring speakers, learn about the latest science, enjoy concerts, film screenings, virtual tours, networking – and the unexpected discoveries and voices that are part of every GLF event. The one-day conference will be packed with plenaries, interactive sessions, launchpads, networking opportunities, the latest research, learning journeys, break-out rooms and more. A dedicated media training session for journalists from across Africa and a social media bootcamp will develop capacity and maximize reach and impact.

Expect conversations on a new phase of the [Great Green Wall](#) for the Sahel and the Sahara Initiative, including a program for restoration of 100 million hectares of degraded land while creating 10 million green jobs by 2030. The Wall, launched in 2007 by the African Union, aims to develop a 7,000-kilometer barrier stretching from Senegal to Djibouti, to halt creeping desertification via a trans-continental mosaic of green, productive landscapes. The new phase involves USD 16.85 billion in international pledges for development of the Wall, which is just 4% complete.

### GLF Africa and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

GLF Africa will be held just before the official launch of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#), which runs from 2021 to 2030. The Decade calls on the international community, civil society, businesses, politicians, and individuals to [prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide](#). Africa is taking up the challenge, and aims to restore at least 100 million hectares of land by 2030. This ambitious target contributes towards the African Union Agenda 2063, the Bonn Challenge, the Sustainable Development Goals, UNCCD's Land Degradation Neutrality targets, and other targets set internationally and regionally. If successful, the [AFR100](#) will make Africa the champion of forest landscape restoration.



This is truly a state of planetary emergency. It is not only about existential risk – we are running out of time. This is the decisive decade for humanity's future on Earth.



**Johan Rockström**  
Director, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Professor in Earth System Science, University of Potsdam  
@ GLF Biodiversity 2020



Nature is not to blame for the COVID-19 pandemic. Our unsustainable interactions with nature have created the conditions for this situation.



**Elizabeth Mrema**  
U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity  
@ GLF Biodiversity 2020



The COVID-19 crisis may undo the development progress of the last few decades.

We must not let that happen.



**Maria Flachsbarth**  
Parliamentary State Secretary Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)  
@ GLF Bonn 2020

## Why the drylands?

Africa's drylands are remarkable landscapes: although the term 'drylands' evokes harsh images of dust bowls, skeletal trees, hard-scrabble cattle, the reality is nuanced. More than half a billion people live and work in Africa's drylands, among the most parched landscapes on the planet, and 43% of the continent. Smallholders nurture crops and graze livestock on land that is mostly rainfed – and rapidly degrading, due in part to the relentless, devastating force of climate change that threatens the rich biodiversity of these fragile landscapes.

That biodiversity provides essential ecosystem services for local communities: dryland forests offer shelter and moisture, charcoal, and reduce water runoff and erosion. Drylands are [particularly vulnerable to climatic variations and climate change](#) as well as human activities such as deforestation and overgrazing. That's because dryland soils have relatively low fertility and are particularly susceptible to erosion and nutrient loss. Still, dryland soils sequester tons of carbon every year, helping in the global fight against climate change and are essential to the health of the population.

**Restoring Africa's drylands is pivotal to securing the health, livelihoods, homes and futures for the 525 million people living in these unique landscapes while protecting their food and nutrition security.**

## COVID-19 impact

[Fast action by African governments](#) has prevented some of the extreme health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic seen elsewhere. Yet, the fragile economies of Africa's drylands have been among those hardest hit by the global pandemic, according to the [FAO](#) and other sources. The countries taking the hardest hit have faced a 30-50% decline in livestock exports, sharp declines in external remittance flows, an increase of 20-50% in imported food prices and a breaking down of valuable agricultural supply chains. The threat of famine has reappeared, and experience has proven the importance of accelerating the uptake of best practices, and restoration is even more essential. "The lessons from the 2014 Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa are clear," says FAO. "While health needs are an urgent and primary concern, we cannot neglect livelihoods and food security-related impacts or we will face a food crisis within the health crisis."



## Working across silos

Restoration work on the ground in drylands must coordinate efforts among multiple actors and across multiple activities. Convening local knowledge-holders, such as smallholder farmers, herders, pastoralists, youth and elders, civic organizations and local governments, is crucial to success in planning, implementing and monitoring restoration efforts. By meeting and working together, conflicts and divides across various interests can potentially be bridged. There is an enormous collective experience with drylands restoration, as there are many local and regional partners interested in sharing their successful practices, and wishing to co-invest.

## Four goals

GLF Africa will be built on the 2020 [GLF Biodiversity conference](#), which attracted 5,000 people to the digital venue with an additional 9,000 stream online from 148 countries. It established the link between ecosystem health and human health, and the importance of communities to guard against future pandemics and achieve optimal health for people, animals and the environment. GLF Africa will continue that focus on cross-disciplinarity while providing:

- Evidence that dryland restoration can be successful, if carefully designed and implemented in a coherent and participatory manner;
- Deeper insights into knowledge gaps, technical and institutional hindrances that hamper progress on the ground;
- Practical guidance to public and private actors supporting dryland restoration, to accelerate action;
- Policy recommendations to inform strategic design and implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and relevant policy frameworks on dryland restoration in Africa.

### Themes:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcasing successful restoration technologies</li> <li>• Measuring success</li> <li>• Thinking about scale</li> <li>• Access and ownership of farmland, grazing land and trees</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full inclusion of women and youth</li> <li>• Novel landscape arrangements and partnerships</li> <li>• Restoration business and finance</li> <li>• Restoration education for all</li> </ul> |
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## Youth

By 2030, it is expected that the youth population in Africa will reach 1.3 billion, with 60% of the population under 25. Young people are not only one of the largest demographics in Africa, but also bring the greatest enthusiasm, creativity and potential to innovate.

GLF Africa will strengthen the capacities of Africa's youth living in drylands environments by highlighting job opportunities in restoration and facilitating education around restoration actions with the [Youth in Landscapes Initiative](#) (YIL) and partners. This builds on work that began with [GLF Accra](#) in Ghana in late 2019 and [GLF Nairobi](#) in 2018, which rallied young leaders concerned with restoration issues from across the continent and around the world.



We have lands, we have water, and we need to change the way we do business with smallholder farmers. We need to see agriculture as opportunities... opportunities for jobs, for women and closing the gender gap, and for youth particularly.



**Amath Pathe Sene**  
Environment and Climate Lead for West and Central Africa, UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)  
@ GLF Accra 2019



99.9% of humanity knows that reconnecting with nature is the only way to overcome the challenges we face. Nature is the lifeblood of society, the core of society.



**David Nabarro**  
Special Envoy of WHO Director General on COVID-19 World Health Organization (WHO)  
@ GLF Bonn 2020



We're beginning to see young people across the world really lobbying and advocating for change in their communities. They're saying, 'You're either with us, or just get out of our way.'



**Musonda Mumba**  
Director, Rome Centre for Sustainable Development Nature, Climate and Energy, UNDP  
@ GLF Biodiversity 2020

## Why GLF

Founded by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the World Bank and UN Environment Programme (UNEP), with [30 leading development organizations](#) as Charter Members, the GLF is the world's largest and fastest-growing knowledge-led platform on sustainable land use. It seeks to create a movement dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum has connected nearly 10,000 organizations, over 200,000 participants and reached more than one billion people from 185 countries.

GLF is also a member of the Consortium of the [UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration](#), joining UNEP, the International Union of Conservation for Nature (IUCN) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN FAO). This offers us a unique opportunity to help shape the to help shape The Decade.

The Forum is a key implementing partner in the FOLUR Global Knowledge to Action Platform. This operates under the mandate of the Global Environment Facility 7 (GEF-7) Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program (FOLUR). The program seeks to promote sustainable integrated landscapes and efficient food value chains for the world's major commodities in 24 countries.

## Sponsor GLF

Partner with GLF to scale and support critical contributions to positive change while receiving global exposure and recognition for sustainable practices, supply chains and investments. GLF events leverage the communication and digital marketing capacity of GLF, CIFOR-ICRAF, plus 30 GLF Charter Members, engaged partners, and networks of outstanding speakers and participants. The [GLF Biodiversity](#) event, the largest digital conference on biodiversity in 2020, reached 35 million people via social media channels and an estimated 300 million through global media such as The Guardian, Sydney Morning Herald, BBC and CBC.

Together, the GLF partnership will boost awareness among the public of the crisis facing Africa's drylands, and show solutions, while leading into and contributing to the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#), which formally begins after GLF Africa.



Landscape restoration is much more than just planting trees. It is about the right to land, and the right to decide which is the best tree and the best place to plant.



**Latif Abdulai Alhassan**  
The Green Republic  
@ GLF Accra 2019

## Contact

For information on sponsorships and other opportunities to support the work of the Global Landscapes Forum, please contact:

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### Global Landscapes Forum

The Global Landscapes Forum, having reached almost 1 billion people across the world and with the backing of its founders – the World Bank, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) – is well-placed to facilitate and help guide these discussions and share knowledge in interactive digital spaces, leading the way for the conferences of now and the future.

**Charter Members:** CIAT, CIFOR, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, EcoAgriculture Partners, EFI, Evergreen Agriculture, FSC, GEF, GIZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, ILRI, INBAR, IPMG, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, RRI, SAN, UN Environment Programme, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, part of Wageningen Research, WFO, World Agroforestry, World Bank Group, WRI, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative

### Funding partners

