

Outcome Statement



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

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Six pillars to build Africa's nature economy: What works, who's leading, what's next

Africa's vast natural capital holds the potential to power a thriving 'nature economy'*, as the basis for a development model that is economically competitive, ecologically regenerative and socially equitable. Turning this promise into everyday reality demands bold leadership; inclusive governance; and innovative, value-based partnerships built on Africa's priorities, shared interests and mutual respect.

GLF Africa 2025: Innovate, Restore, Prosper convened over 2000 participants and proposed six strategic pillars—rooted in the African continent's natural capital, lived experiences, science, cultural heritage and values—for a new nature-driven development model. Rather than a panacea, these pillars form a practical framework that can make the difference between success and failure in building the continent's nature economy and defining its leadership in contributing to the **New Vision for Earth**.

* The nature economy is a system that recognizes nature as the foundation of all economic activity and seeks to value, preserve, and enhance **natural capital** such as land, water, air, biodiversity, other natural resources and associated ecosystem goods and services while driving sustainable development. Source: **World Bank**

“ We need a shift from aid to investment-centred development. Africa is home to 6.5 trillion dollars in natural resources, and a population that is about to reach 2.5 billion by 2050. This is not a charity case. This is a compelling investment case that the world cannot afford to ignore. To attract meaningful capital, we must move beyond the language of need and start showing up with investable opportunities.



Sellah Bogonko
Co-Founder and CEO
Jacob's Ladder Africa

“ When nature is part of the plan, productivity goes up, climate risks go down and communities thrive. This isn't just a conservation story. It's an economic strategy. It's a political choice.



Maxwell Gomera
Resident Representative, UNDP South Africa,
Director, UNDP Africa Sustainable Finance
Hub UNDP

“ Before us is the opportunity to reimagine a future where Africa stewards its landscapes and shapes its own path, guided by science and traditional knowledge, and paired with good governance, meaningful partnerships, and ethical AI and technology.



Éliane Ubalijoro
Chief Executive Officer of CIFOR-ICRAF and
Director General of ICRAF.

“ The currency of nature has never been about money; its value is immeasurable. Now, more than ever, we must incorporate the true value of nature and ecosystems into how we think about development, wealth, and the future.



Maseke Rioba
Programmes Officer,
East Africa Futurelect

Pillar 1: Recognize, value and integrate Africa's natural capital into all development plans

Africa has an unmatched opportunity to shift from extractive and aid-dependent development paradigms to self-sustaining, dignified, regenerative, and inclusive models: specifically, by mainstreaming its rich natural capital into national accounting and development strategies. Such an approach can yield numerous positive outcomes, including the creation of green jobs, value retention, enhancement of biodiversity, reduction of land degradation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and inclusive development driven by the continent's natural capital.

Goal: Recognize, value, mainstream, and account for all of Africa's natural capital in the ecological, economic, and social dimensions of its development planning.

What's working

Across the continent, efforts to develop and conserve natural capital are gaining momentum. Initiatives like [Regreening Africa](#), [AFR100](#), and the [Great Green Wall Initiative](#) have made significant strides in restoring millions of hectares of degraded land, capturing carbon, promoting climate adaptation, and revitalizing rural economies. In Central Africa, the [Observatoire des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale](#) (OFAC) initiative is leading the charge in conserving the Congo Basin forests.

From youth-led cooperatives restoring Ghana's cocoa landscapes, to community-led conservancies in Kenya generating millions through eco-tourism, to South Africa implementing a robust bioeconomy strategy, and Rwanda mapping its natural capital to inform national investment and development planning, these examples show the power of responsive natural capital planning. Initiatives like [Farmworks Africa](#) are improving market access for farmers, while the [African Natural Capital Alliance](#) is helping mobilize the financial sector and policymakers to integrate nature-related risks and investments.

These early successes show that when governments, institutions and communities across Africa value and plan around their natural capital, they make space for nature, economies, and people to thrive. Now, it's time for this approach to become the norm.

Action points

- Governments must develop national and regional bioeconomy strategies that prioritize sustainable biomass use, circularity, and value retention. At present, African governments, companies, and communities capture only a small share of the potential value of their biomass resources, with most exported or used in raw form. Policymakers across Africa should work to ensure that at least 50 percent of natural capital value is retained within the continent.
- Practitioners and investors must scale regenerative agriculture and land use by investing in farmer- and community-led restoration initiatives that combine local knowledge with market access.
- Public and private sector actors should promote nature-based enterprises by creating incentives, facilitating market access, implementing public procurement schemes, and establishing innovation hubs that support restoration businesses, eco-tourism, and green supply chains.
- Public and private sector actors should collaborate to build value 'webs'—rather than value 'chains'—by integrating biotechnology, natural products and commodity development into restoration economies to reduce waste and capture a larger proportion of the value of Africa's natural capital.

“Africa's rich ecosystems, forests, savannas, wetlands must be recognized not as passive resources but as core foundations for economic resilience, climate adaptation and food security.”



Paul Garaycochea

Director, Sustainable Supply Chains, Agriculture and Food Systems, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

“Currently we only capture and value between 6% and 10% of the biomass with a nature-based economy largely around commodities from the forest, shrublands, trees and value chains like coffee, cashew, macadamia timber, other non-timber forest products and this is between 15 and 19% of Africa's GDP. We export everything raw and miss the value in the entire web.”



Peter Minang

Director, Africa & Global Coordinator
CIFOR-ICRAF

GLF Africa 2025 Session on nature economy-driven development

- Opening plenary: Powering Africa's future – the promise of nature-centred economies

Pillar 2: Build effective and responsive governance and policies for natural resource stewardship

To realize the potential of Africa's nature economy, we need to advocate for, support and develop effective, inclusive, and transparent governance systems. These should be characterized by policy coherence, stronger institutional accountability, enhanced nature economy governance, and nature-sensitive integrated development planning. Without accountable and inclusive governance, the nature economy will remain an idea, not a reality, and its potential to drive a new development model will remain out of reach.

Goal: Build coherent and responsive governance architecture to support ecological restoration, safeguard community rights and interests, mainstream nature-based solutions into national development planning and safeguard the value of Africa's natural capital.

“Africa can provide the resources needed for global decarbonization in terms of critical minerals. But if you come back to the continent, you'll find all the mineral resources that are important for a just transition have all been locked away for global corporations, who are exporting all those resources. Most of the countries that are producing these critical minerals have almost no stake in the sector.



Philip Kilonzo

Head of Policy, Advocacy and Communications Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)

“We must create policies that are working for the people and co-created by the people. Through this, we will be able to do more restoration work because the policies are also encouraging the people to take more action.



Melyn Abisa

INUKA project Coordinator
Youth4Nature

GLF Africa 2025 Session on stewarding Africa's nature economy

► Closing plenary: From vision to action –
A roadmap for Africa's nature economy

What's working?

Many actors within Africa have been taking important steps towards more sustainable governance of the continent's natural resources. While some actions remain reactive and the policy implementation gap is significant, a number of governments and initiatives are already showing how effective governance can be achieved. The Namibian government, for instance, has demonstrated how devolving **conservation rights to communities** can increase both biodiversity and income. Initiatives such as **Alliance for Green Infrastructure in Africa (AGIA)** are supporting governments to accelerate the development of green infrastructure projects and the integration of ecological infrastructure in development planning. Ghana's Ministry of Finance has developed a **Green Finance Taxonomy**, supported by incentives and subsidies to govern fast-evolving developments such as carbon and biodiversity markets. Across the continent, efforts toward deeper integration are gathering pace to ensure more value is retained within Africa. Now, public and private stakeholders must work together to scale such successes further, whilst bridging silos across key governance levels and spheres.

Action points

- Governments must adopt responsive, proactive, and inclusive governance systems that bridge silos across ministries—such as finance, agriculture, environment, and planning—and with other stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia, and local communities.
- Policymakers and development actors must integrate ecological infrastructure into development frameworks and recognize it as essential to economic and social sustainability.
- Governments should create policy incentives such as green tax credits, subsidy reforms, and support for multifunctional landscapes.
- Institutions at all levels must ensure policy enforcement and transparency in land restoration and the stewardship of biodiversity and natural resources.

Pillar 3: Secure the rights, and support the agency, of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and women

A functional, fully-realized nature economy can transform the livelihoods of Africa's communities and serve as an engine for rural development. To do so justly, sustainably and effectively, it must be community-centred and rights-based. The success of the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) on restoration, alongside multitudinous other projects, has proven that where communities lead, degraded landscapes can be reborn and people can prosper.

Goal: Support increased agency for local communities, promote social cohesion, reduce conflict over land and resources, and facilitate greater local ownership and equitable sharing of the benefits associated with an African nature economy.

What's working?

For Africa's nature economy to thrive, it must move beyond colonial command-and-control models and embrace community-led, self-determining pathways. Although top-down approaches continue to dominate community engagement, bottom-up, rights-based, and community-led models are reclaiming space. In West Africa, for instance, community-led forest governance is **thriving** through self-organised, formalized local management charters that guide the development of forest management tools and other best practices. While this is a strategic community engagement move, it is also a derisking investment strategy.

Across Africa, initiatives like the **Climate Justice Torch of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance** have mobilized local constituents, coalitions, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and others to drive agendas grounded on their realities, experiences and aspirations. The **Rights and Resources Initiative**, for instance, advocates for legal, policy, and market reforms to secure land, forest, and resource rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Youth across the continent are also leading initiatives like the **Inuka program**, which funds and supports youth-led ecosystem restoration initiatives across Africa to enhance their impact and create sustainable livelihoods.

Action points

- Policymakers must institutionalize community-informed development planning that respects the diverse values of nature, including spiritual, cultural, and socio-economic connections.
- Restoration and nature economy actors must promote inclusive participation of youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples in their initiatives: as designers, implementers and beneficiaries.
- Development actors should combine peace-building initiatives with community-led development models to unlock the potential of Africa's nature economy, especially in fragile and conflict areas such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.
- Policymakers and civil society actors must protect and formalize land tenure—especially customary tenure—to avoid displacement and ensure local stewardship.

“Land rights are the foundation for Africa's nature economy. If you look at the critical minerals that we have been talking about today, more than half of all such projects are located either near or on Indigenous and community lands. If we invest in communities, Africa will really start seeing that the local economy will bring the national economy to a certain level and scale to the continental economy.



Solange Bandiaky-Badji
Coordinator & President, Rights and Resources Initiative

“Local ownership and leadership is key in whatever we do: we must drive our own development



Lilian Macharia
Africa Capital Hub Director,
The Investment Bank for Earth

“A just nature economy values our traditional and natural heritage, whilst ensuring development does not come at the cost of the environment or the rights of future generations.



Maryam Kwajaff
Coordinator, Sierra Leone Environment Matters(SLEM)/GLFx Kenema

GLF Africa 2025 Community engagement sessions:

- ▶ **The land beneath: Confronting challenges to secure rights, land restoration and livelihoods**
- ▶ **Scaling up farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR): Action in Ethiopia and Kenya**

Pillar 4: Deliver sustainable finance to the last mile

Despite its rich natural capital potential, Africa faces a steep sustainable finance deficit. The continent cannot green its economies if over 95% of climate and green finance bypasses its farmers, Indigenous stewards and women, who could serve as key players in locally-led, high-impact nature economy investment.

Public finance for nature economy development in Africa is currently overstretched, and private investment has been limited to date, due to real and/or perceived investment risks, as well as perceived limited returns on investment. Given dwindling development aid, governments and restoration actors must mobilize domestic and blended finance at scale and guide the private sector toward risk-informed investment that prioritizes long-term ecosystem returns.

Goal: Restructure financial mechanisms and scale nature-positive finance to benefit both communities and ecosystems through impact investments, rather than focusing solely on profit-driven returns.

What's working?

Models like Kenya's **Livelihoods Fund** and the green bond markets in Ghana and **Nigeria** show what's possible when finance reaches the frontlines. Institutions like **African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association** are working to build the capacity of financial institutions to lend affordably and sustainably to the agricultural sector. Meanwhile, venture builders such as **The Catalyst Fund**, **Le Groupe Crédit Agricole du Maroc**, and **Tamwil El Fellah** are investing intellectual and financial capital in entrepreneurs, innovators and farmers across the continent. Initiatives such as the **W+ Standard** of the **Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN)** have also emerged to generate women-focused credits to direct more resources to women for adaptation, while institutions such as **Barka Fund** are engaged in building pre-investment readiness and aggregating small producers and farmers to meet the market demand. At the digitalization-finance interface, FinTech solutions such as **M-PESA** have also emerged to facilitate financial inclusion, traceability, and transparency.

“ The W+ Standard is a framework for designing and monitoring results within projects to generate W+ credits that quantify and verify units of improvement in women's conditions from the baseline, which are then sold into the market to generate our resources for women.



Annabell Waititu
Core Associate,
WOCAN

“ We need to drive Fintech innovations in Africa and provide a scalable and inclusive platform for climate and nature-based finance. By combining financial access, digital transparency and partnership ecosystems, we can make a tangible contribution towards Africa's green transition.



Owen Ombima
Senior Officer, Environmental
Management Safaricom PLC

“ We know that private capital doesn't like risk, and they want predictable returns. But natural conservation involves uncertainty, long timelines and complex outcomes. Blended finance and genuine partnerships can be the key to bridge these two realities and unlock the scale we need.



Robert Nasi
Director General, CIFOR; Director of
Science, CIFOR-ICRAF

GLF Africa 2025 Sustainable Finance Session:

- **From risk to resilience: Financing frontline action for climate, nature and livelihoods**



Action points

- Governments should develop innovative financing instruments such as incentive-based risk sharing, blended finance platforms, and green bonds linked to restoration outcomes.
- Public and private sector actors should promote financial inclusion by expanding insurance and local microfinance for smallholder farmers, digital savings tools, and climate resilience credit lines.
- Such actors must also ensure transparency in financial flows by tracking, auditing, and redirecting harmful subsidies towards green innovation and incentivizing nature-aligned investment portfolios.
- Policymakers should establish green finance taxonomies and investment pipelines that align investor criteria such as science-based targets, Indigenous rights, additionality with community-led project design.
- Development banks must ensure free, prior and informed consent in all nature-sensitive investments.
- The private and financial sector should promote patient and intelligent capital to unlock the long-term potential of nature-based MSMEs.



Pillar 5: Optimize AI and emerging technologies for Africa

Artificial intelligence and emerging digital innovations can help Africa to leapfrog into a more resilient, prosperous and data-driven nature economy. Through smarter and more data-driven approaches, governments and civil society actors can enhance restoration outcomes, improve service delivery to rural communities, promote youth participation in AI and digital agriculture, and deconcentrate AI ownership. However, there is also a risk of widening the digital gap and entrenching inequalities, whilst enacting new forms of digital colonialism.

Goal: An inclusive and localized digital infrastructure that is grounded in local contexts, fully optimizes local knowledge and data—to the extent that local knowledge-holders wish to do so—and links human, natural and digital capitals.

“Only 2% of Africa’s data gets processed on the African continent—the remaining 98% of our data is actually outside. This digital capital can play a pivotal role in unlocking a level of transparency that can restore trust in our ecosystem, as we’re still operating in a place where trust is expensive. Data creates transparency, transparency creates trust and trust, accelerates investments.



Kate Kallot
Founder & CEO,
Amini AI

“AI is for all of us, and as Africans, let us be concerned about being included in solutions that are built. Let us be concerned about also producing data that can also be used in developing solutions for ourselves.



Mary Seiwah Afram
Advisor for FAIR Forward: Artificial
Intelligence for All Initiatives, GIZ

“A core enabling condition is partnerships with people who have compute power that can make sure that once your platform is successful, it’s working. Whether they’re in rural areas, urban areas, or any areas. If we can have partnerships with private sector, government and different funders that can give us compute power, then we can scale up any AI solution.



Chido Dzinotiwei
Co-founder & CEO,
Vambo AI

GLF Africa 2025 AI Session:

- **Innovation meets impact: How Africa is leading agri-tech transformation**

What’s working?

From AI-powered EW4ALL early warning systems in Mozambique, to blockchain-based land tenure and drone technologies for crop yield prediction and pest diagnosis in Ghana, people across Africa are already making extensive use of digital innovations to transform and expand the nature economy. In Kenya, agri-food system actors are using AI to overcome supply chain bottlenecks and improve soil testing. Institutions like the Kenya Space Agency are making data more accessible to their partners by expanding cloud computing power and improving access to data.

Across the continent, people are harnessing AI and digital technologies to tackle core development challenges. Initiatives such as the Women in STEM Leaders Network are breaking gender barriers in the tech space. In Southern Africa, Vambo AI has built an AI infrastructure trained in over 200 African languages, dialects, and accents—without relying on third-party Application Programming Interface. Meanwhile, in West Africa, the Fairforward Artificial Intelligence for All programme is advancing AI democratization by supporting inclusive policy frameworks, building local innovation capacity, and promoting access to open, locally relevant datasets. Deep-tech startups such as Amini AI are also building end-to-end environmental and geospatial data infrastructure to deliver hyperlocal, actionable insights on soil, weather, water, crops, and climate to smallholder farmers, insurers, agribusinesses, and governments. All of these types of applications must be scaled and democratized.

Action points

- Governments and academia must invest in AI education and infrastructure, including curricula in schools and partnerships with AI developers.
- Tech companies must build inclusive, multilingual, farmer-centric tools using AI and mobile platforms tailored to local knowledge systems.
- All involved stakeholders must foster open collaboration between tech innovators, local leaders, and knowledge holders to develop AgTech solutions that address real needs and support data sovereignty.
- Governments and restoration/development actors should make use of AI, geospatial technologies and satellite data for better land use planning, restoration monitoring, identifying degradation risks, and tracking project outcomes.

Pillar 6: Harness and integrate Africa's plural knowledge systems

One of Africa's strategic strengths is the plurality of its knowledge systems, which enables the possibility to optimize both traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge. To shape resilient landscapes, we must harness both types of systems—through evidence-based decision-making, democratization of knowledge generation and access, and recognition of diverse knowledge systems as equal foundations of natural resource management and policy.

Goal: Institutionalize the integration of traditional, Indigenous, and scientific knowledge systems into natural resource governance frameworks.

What's working?

On-ground evidence has shown that combining various sources of knowledge can deliver significant outcomes for the development of the nature economy, including facilitating ownership of restoration initiatives, promoting the kind of passion that is vital for stewardship, benefit sharing, and supporting efficient decision-making. Across sub-Saharan Africa, the **Regreening Africa initiative**, Knowledge for Great Green Wall Action (**K4GGWA**), and the GGWI have invested in and applied tailored approaches, such as dialogue and iterative learning, to stakeholder engagement. These groups are using evidence to unlock and blend multiple knowledge sources—such as scientific knowledge and community insights and practitioner experiences—to inform decisions, practices and evidence-based adaptive management. In Tanzania's Masai landscapes, **Afriscout**—an AI-based technology developed through a co-creation with the local communities at the forefront—is helping livestock keepers make evidence-based decisions on grazing, and digitalizing the traditional grazing system of rotation.

Action points

- Universities, community groups, policymakers, and practitioners should build partnerships to institutionalize spaces for knowledge co-creation.
- Community members and researchers could digitize and document traditional ecological knowledge to preserve and integrate it into modern restoration science and planning.
- All stakeholders involved in knowledge generation and use should invest in and develop participatory learning and data platforms and dashboards with community validation and access.
- Landscape actors should promote long-term trust building and iterative learning in landscape restoration, prioritizing safe dialogue spaces for evidence sharing.

“ In many instances, what is being used as evidence is basically focused on scientific methods, and to a certain extent on just a handful of technologies. In contrast, there's much less evidence being collected through Indigenous and local knowledge and experience: through more diverse sources of evidence. The proposal to broaden the evidence base and include multiple stakeholders is something which is integrated in the Great Green Wall Strategy, and projects like Regreening Africa.



Leah Wanambwa Naess

Senior Policy Officer, Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy, African Union Commission

“ When knowledge systems clash, you may have inappropriate policies, practices, laws, and regulation that can misplace or even ignore people's agency, and this can deliver unjust and unsustainable resource management, ineffective restoration efforts, and unjust benefit sharing schemes. Knowledge co-creation is really a matter of social justice, a necessity to advance and address complex environmental and human challenges.



Mawa Karambiri

Policy and technical engagement specialist for the Sahel, CIFOR-ICRAF Burkina Faso

GLF Africa 2025 Session on Knowledge Systems:

- ▶ **Whose knowledge counts? Bridging knowledge domains for inclusive landscape restoration**

For more information about GLF Africa 2025, please contact the GLF Africa Regional Coordinator, **Amos Amanubo** (A.Amanubo@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 (SDGs), Paris Climate Agreement and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and committed to the landscape approach. 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)

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