



Global
Landscapes
Forum



Stories of Resilience GLF AFRICA 2023-2024

Building greener,
resilient and prosperous
landscapes in Africa



At the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) we are promoting and driving the landscape approach to center sustainable practices for people and nature. We are delighted to share a collection of stories of transformation across Africa's landscapes. Together, these stories showcase the transformative changes that can be achieved when the right resources are invested through right approaches.

These stories showcase the GLF's leadership as a global accelerator of holistic and rights-based approaches for the restoration, protection and sustainable management of forests and landscapes to maintain natural resources, improve food security and bolster local livelihoods.

Themes

The stories of impact coalesce around five themes:

1. Changing narratives and shaping discourses
2. Accelerating and scaling community-level landscape action
3. Strengthening youth leadership and inclusion
4. Enhancing landscape learning
5. Mobilizing sustainable finance for landscapes and people

1. Changing mainstream narratives and shaping discourses

At a glance



GLF Nairobi 2023

7,000 participants from **130** countries, **218** speakers, **121** partner organizations.

Reached **27 million people** via social and traditional media channels, with over **170,000** engagements and **81** media hits.



GLF Africa 2024

3,555 participants from **119** countries, **110** speakers, **69** partner organizations.

Reached **189 million people** via social and traditional media channels, with over **2.5 million** engagements and **107** media hits.

A significant majority of **the participants** in GLF Nairobi 2023 and GLF Africa 2024 were **local African communities**, with **women and youth** constituting **over 40 percent** and **60 percent** of the participants respectively in both events.



OFAC Hybrid Forum

117,000 engagements and **11** media hits across local and international media platforms. **Fifty-five percent** of participants came from within Africa.



14 GLF event watch parties hosted by GLFx chapters brought together over **600** participants across Africa in **Benin, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone** and **South Sudan**.



GLF Social Media Ambassadors program worked with **46** influencers from **19** African countries throughout 2023 and 2024.



“We urgently need a new vision for Earth where success metrics are adjusted to incentivize contributions to the planet and all people before financial profits, and all irresponsible acts against the Earth are criminalized and heavily penalized.”

Vivienne Yeda, Director General, East Africa Development Bank (EADB).



“We should leave no one behind. Everyone really needs to be at the table and everyone’s voice needs to be listened to if we are going to transform our food systems.”

Daniel M'Mailutha, CEO, Kenya National Farmers' Federation (KENAFF).

In an era defined by the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, land degradation and competition for resources, the risks and implications of destroying our planet’s landscapes are terrifyingly high. However, many people are holding dialogues, engaging in negotiations and hosting knowledge exchanges to create collaborative co-existence with resilient and healthy landscapes.

Since 2023, the GLF has sustained and advanced constructive dialogue and knowledge sharing on sustainable development and landscape practices among diverse African stakeholders. The space has been instrumental in a time when civic space and local voices are often marginalized and traditional and scientific knowledge are facing pressure from suspicious interests. Meanwhile, Africa is losing billions of dollars due to negative stereotypes that dominate international media coverage.

Between 2023 and 2024 the GLF convened intergenerational, cross-sectoral and multi-scale knowledge exchanges, providing a platform for local African leadership and stewardship. The GLF events in Africa showcased traditional and scientific knowledge systems and

practices, as well as the innovations and solutions Africa offers to the world. These events featured a range of participatory workshops and fora centered on regional and global discourse on the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and land degradation.

The GLF Nairobi 2023 Hybrid Conference: A New Vision for Earth hosted in Nairobi, Kenya, and online 11-12 October, 2023, united over **7,000 participants** to discuss how to create a fairer and more sustainable world ahead of COP28. The two-day global conference showcased some of the most innovative strategies to address the climate crisis and biodiversity loss across landscapes and food systems in Africa.

Interventions focused on promoting food system transformation and sovereignty, and landscape restoration on the continent. The conference culminated with the development of a New Vision for Earth, which named six ‘building blocks’ for a sustainable planet, paving the way for a just, safer and healthier world. This conference prompted urgency for sovereign African solutions for a sustainable and prosperous future for the continent.

Building blocks for a sustainable planet

1. **Restore Landscapes and Seascapes:** Redesign global food systems for resilience and unite for diverse, sovereign food production.
2. **Unite for Food and Seed Sovereignty:** Advocate coherent policies and subsidy redirection and scale regenerative agriculture for soil health.
3. **Transform Financial Models:** Adopt transparent models, redirecting capital sustainably.
4. **Build a Well-Being Economy:** Phase out fossil fuels, advocate well-being beyond GDP.
5. **Democratize Knowledge Creation and Access:** Promote free access, integrate diverse voices.
6. **Advocate for Rights in Decision Making:** Ensure fair access to resources, uphold Indigenous rights.



© Shaibu Hamza

“I took this picture and many more like it to tell authentic African stories, and to help people all over the world experience and appreciate the magic that goes on in these little-known communities that are tucked so far away that many people may never see them.”

Shaibu Hamza, 1st place winner.

Local storytelling

One of the overarching efforts of the GLF and the diverse landscape practitioners and partners we work with is the shift to storytelling centering the voices of local communities and sharing their nuanced perspectives of caring for landscapes.

The breadth of Africa’s resilience and opportunities for sustainable landscape solutions can only be tapped when the stereotypical narratives of extractivism are replaced with dialogues where all stakeholders get a seat at the table.

The GLF also amplifies local storytelling by hosting its annual [GLF Africa Photography Awards](#). Photographers from Africa and all over the world submit photos of local solutions being implemented to protect and restore landscapes. The photography awards also encourage young artists to explore dynamic, creative formats to express landscape issues. Moreover, by highlighting the resilience and beauty of community-driven efforts, the awards emphasize the vital role of local solutions in safeguarding Africa’s landscapes for future generations.



Strategic restoration dialogue

Connecting regional actors and local landscape practitioners is crucial to enabling transformative landscape restoration. This message was at the heart of the [Restoration Experiences Digital Forum](#), which brought together a range of local and regional projects to take stock of restoration results and synthesize lessons learned. This kind of strategic dialogue created pathways to support the long-term success and scalability of restoration efforts. One of the key takeaways from this dialogue was the importance of shifting restoration funding mechanisms to reflect long-term community models for lasting impact.

Building on the success of GLF Nairobi 2023, the [GLF Africa Conference: Greening the African Horizon](#), held on 17 September 2024 convened a diverse range of actors and stakeholders in Nairobi, Kenya and online. The event created a space to discuss and share knowledge on promoting locally-led landscape solutions and bolstering livelihoods in Africa. African communities convened to discuss the key outputs from the three Rio Conventions and other international policy commitments.

One of the key outputs of GLF Africa 2024 was the endorsement of six priorities for a resilient Africa. The post-Malabo era is here; the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration reaches half a decade, and Agenda 2030 progresses. The deadlines for the AFR100 target of restoring over 100 million hectares of land across the continent, the Bonn Challenge on restoration and the African Union's [Great Green Wall](#) initiative are nearing, underlining the importance of this conference and these six priorities. These priorities cut across cornerstone sectors and themes to outline how we can build a greener, more resilient Africa by 2030.



“Together, we can be the ancestors future generations look back to with gratitude. We have the collective and individual power to heal landscapes for food security, to stabilize climate, protect biodiversity and provide strong livelihoods in Africa and beyond.”

*Éliane Ubalijoro,
CEO, CIFOR-ICRAF.*

Six priorities for a green and resilient Africa by 2030

1. Accelerate landscape restoration and integrated landscape management
2. Center local communities for lasting solutions
3. Secure land rights and strengthen governance frameworks
4. Build a restoration economy
5. Leverage AI and open data
6. Foster partnerships and cross-sector collaborations

Africa's leadership on emerging landscape issues

The AI revolution

Artificial Intelligence is emerging as a powerful tool that could radically shift how African people relate to their landscapes and communities. The emerging technologies and digital transformation call for a shift away from imported western models to bottom-up, AI models that fit the specific context and needs of each community to ensure landscape work is useful and does no harm. In response to this need the GLF launched the Global AI Hub at GLF Africa 2024.

The first GLF AI Hub consultation session convened regional experts to explore challenges, gaps and opportunities in leveraging AI and emerging technologies for sustainable landscapes and data management. Discussions highlighted Africa's pressing need for access to open data and the importance of capacity development and meaningful policies to ensure ethical AI use. Participants emphasized the opportunities for community-driven AI solutions, cross-sector collaboration and resource-sharing to bridge silos and scale innovations.

Safeguarding the world's second-largest rainforest

Acknowledging the non-linear nature of knowledge co-production, in shaping narratives for sustainable landscapes amidst competing interests, the GLF also convened several hybrid and digital spaces between its flagship conferences in Africa, including [GLF Live events](#) and several other forums on critical themes for sustaining Africa's landscapes and forests.

A key highlight was the [OFAC Hybrid Forum: What is the State of Central African Forests?](#), which gathered experts, practitioners and policymakers in Bonn, Germany and

online, on 20 June, 2024, to explore using contemporary data-driven strategies to protect Central African forests from deforestation and the climate crisis.

The Congo Basin hosts the world's second-largest rainforest, which is crucial for conserving biodiversity, maintaining planetary climatic balance and supplying ecosystem goods and services. Despite this contribution, the forests have not received enough recognition and support. This has exposed the forests to severe governance challenges, illegal logging, insufficient financing and data limitations, which inhibit planning, monitoring and sustainable forest management.

The OFAC Hybrid Forum emphasized the vital role Central African forests play locally and globally. Several key themes arose from the cornerstone role of data and governance to the importance of improving governance and enforcing regulations. Disseminating information to counter illegal practices and raising awareness about the importance of forests were other key topics of discussion.

The event also highlighted the need for innovative financial solutions to protect forests and support communities. The "Fair Deal" proposal emphasizes compensating Central African countries for the global environmental benefits their forests provide, such as carbon storage and biodiversity conservation. This mechanism would fund sustainable development projects that balance conservation with local community needs, making preservation economically competitive.

For more information about GLF events in Africa, please contact **Amos Amanubo**: A.Amanubo@cifor-icraf.org



“There is a need to decolonize how we do climate justice and land restoration. Whatever has happened on other continents, whatever the donors and the granters are saying might not be the solution for Africa. There is a need for Africa to come up with African solutions. There is a need for women to be involved in coming up with the solutions to land issues that are upon them.”

Deborah Oyugi, English Countries Manager and Safeguarding Lead, Youth Initiative for Land in Africa (Yilaa).



Leveraging social media to influence landscape narratives

Social media has become an increasingly powerful avenue for outreach and creating awareness of campaigns, events and activities for landscape restoration among African youth. To optimize this digital communications and outreach space, across 2023 and 2024, the GLF Social Media Ambassadors program worked with **46 influencers** from **19 African countries** – Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, The Gambia, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The program successfully served as an avenue for young African people to drive trending conversations on topics pertinent to the continent, such as food systems transformation, ecosystem restoration, green jobs and employment and sustainable development. By joining this program, local influencers gained access to a global platform where they connected with like-minded changemakers, collaborated with experts and spotlighted locally-led initiatives. With training and connections to leading organizations, these young volunteers received the skills and mentorship to use their voices to advocate for a more sustainable future.

With misinformation spreading and competing claims on landscape resources, it is more critical than ever to amplify local voices. We must come together to discuss meaningful solutions steeped in local realities. Through its events in Africa, the GLF remains committed to advancing digital and in-person dialogues, where stakeholders can convene to share pertinent, and contested issues across African Landscapes and the impacts on local livelihoods.

For more information on the Social Media Ambassadors Program, please contact **Jackline Kimathi**: J.Kimathi@cifor-icraf.org

2. Scaling and accelerating landscape action



At a glance

22 local organizations in **15** African countries actively participate in the GLFx network.

4 GLFx Chapter Exchanges were held in 2024, involving

14 GLFx chapters, facilitating valuable knowledge exchange on critical landscape topics.

4 Chapters actively participated in global policy processes, such as the Conference of Parties under the Rio Conventions in 2024 (GLFx Baringo, GLFx Yaounde, GLFx Maasai Steppe and GLFx Lilongwe).

Chapters in **DRC, Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria** and **Tanzania** have planted over **thousands of trees**. **6,000** tree seedlings produced in tree nurseries in the **DRC** and **Cameroon**.

370 community members have been trained on different topics such as beekeeping, tree planting techniques, forest management practices with **women reporting increased income** from the sale of products developed from the jackfruit value chain in Uyo, Nigeria.

A total of **EUR 90,000** has been granted to chapters to implement ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management in **eight African countries**, including grants to enhance their administration capacity.

3 Chapters leveraged the **GLFx network** to raise over **EUR 85,000** in funding from other sources (GLFx Nkambe, GLFx Uyo and GLFx Yaounde).

At **GLF Nairobi 2023** and **GLF Africa 2024** conferences, the GLF convened a 'Pavillion' space, for chapters, stewards and local and grassroots organizations to connect and share knowledge.



“Addressing landscapes means addressing land rights. With our special initiative for the transformation of agriculture and food systems, we are supporting Indigenous peoples and local communities in securing their land rights and their opportunity to use it.”

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

In 2024, the number of GLFx chapter networks increased to **22 local organizations in 15 African countries**, each actively engaged in knowledge exchange, resource mobilization, on-the-ground landscape restoration and policy advocacy and engagement.

In addition to actualizing the landscape approach, the GLF, with support from its funders, awarded seed and accelerator grants, amounting to EUR 90,000, to chapters in five African countries to

implement ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management.

Despite the staggering landscape finance deficit in Africa, the GLF has demonstrated the impact of small grants can help communities develop high-impact low-cost community and landscape development models.

Below, we share successful examples of GLFx chapters and their constituents scaling landscape work, increasing self-organization and influencing policy.

Scaling

Through funding from the [GLFx network](#), five GLFx chapters in Kenya, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, and Cameroon scaled their local initiatives and practices to landscape-level action.

In Cameroon, the **GLFx Yaounde** chapter trained 45 smallholder farmers on improved agro-forestry techniques. They planted over 1,700 trees and worked closely with 90 community volunteers. They also strengthened beekeeping skills among 30 community members, including those from the Indigenous Mbororo community. Thanks to their restoration efforts, a *Perodicticus potto*, a protected native primate, was observed at their forest restoration site close to the Tubah Upland Forest Reserve. This primate had not been spotted in the landscape for about 15 years.

In Kenya, the **GLFx Nairobi** chapter worked closely with a local Community Forest Association (CFA) and other stakeholders to enhance community participation in the management of the Oloolua Forest, an important urban forest in Nairobi. Through consultations with 35 CFA members, they created a platform for addressing key issues in forest governance and management, thus laying the groundwork for participatory forest management in Oloolua Forest.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the **GLFx Kivu** chapter established two community nurseries in the Ruzizi Plain in collaboration with two majority-women local cooperatives. The nurseries host 6,000 trees that will be planted to restore degraded land. This effort reflects community-driven environmental stewardship of the Ruzizi Plain. The chapter also strengthened its fundraising strategy, thanks to expanded networks from participating in GLFx activities.



In Nigeria, the **GLFx Uyo** chapter trained at least 200 key community members on forest management practices, including the jackfruit tree. As a result, at least 38 women-led households in the community have reported increased income from selling products from the jackfruit value chain.



Bush mango harvesting in Nigeria under the STIM-D project by GLFx Uyo.

In Tanzania, the **GLFx Maasai Steppe** chapter is working closely with the local environmental committee to restore and manage the areas along the Terrat River. They have brought together at least 15 teachers from local schools and trained them in tree-planting techniques, knowledge that these teachers can bestow upon their school children.



Mazingira training conducted in Tanzania by the GLFx Maasai Steppe.

Increasing self-organization

Creating sustainable and resilient landscapes and thriving livelihoods means creating an environment where local landscape actors and stewards can self-organize to act, co-produce and share knowledge, tools and best practices for scaling landscape action.

Alongside flagship GLF conferences, chapter members have been pivotal in sharing their knowledge on landscape restoration and associated landscape-level solutions across various platforms in Africa.

Maimuna Jawara of The Gambia's GLFx Banjul chapter shared her experiences in land restoration during a dialogue that was part of a consultation led by Regreening Africa consultation, a UN Decade Flagship Project, and in the Transformative Partnership Platform on Agroecology (Agroecology TPP) second Annual Members Forum Meeting in 2024.

Monica Yator of Kenya's GLFx Baringo chapter shared her experiences in community mobilization with community trainers from Somalia as part of the OASIS project – a collaboration between CIFOR-ICRAF and Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRICs), which is funded by the European Union.

Emem Umoh of Nigeria's GLFx Uyo chapter shared her experiences at the Conference on Agriculture, Biodiversity and Food Security (Quebec, 2024) and at the 'Unlocking Women's Potential for the Great Green Wall' event under the [Knowledge for Great Green Wall Action \(K4GGWA\)](#) Programme.

Various chapters were also featured on national and international news platforms. For instance, GLFx Kivu was featured in a [Mongabay story](#) about NGOs committed to restoring landscapes in regions devastated by war in the DRC. GLFx Yaounde in Cameroon was spotlighted in a

[Guardian Post Cameroon story](#) on beekeeper training for sustainable income generation, and in a [World Environment Day feature](#).

Work by GLFx Harare in Malawi on harnessing data and technology for reforestation in the Mutare District was featured in a blog by environmental commentator Perseverance Javangwe. The GLFx Harare's chapter Coordinator, Darlington Mafa, has also published several [opinion pieces](#) on topics ranging from agroecology to human-wildlife conflict in Zimbabwe. Additionally, GLFx Maasai Steppe's work in restoring tree cover in Tanzania and offering alternative livelihoods in the face of the climate crisis was [featured by Mongabay](#).

Policy influence

GLFx chapters have also actively engaged in policy influence and advocacy. In 2024 chapters boosted their policy advocacy by organizing side events at various United Nations global conferences.

Sunday Geoffrey Mbafoambe of GLFx Yaounde chapter in Cameroon co-organized a side event focused on climate change adaptation at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29). Steve Makungwa of the GLFx Lilongwe chapter in Malawi also attended COP29 and presented catchment management initiatives in the upper Lilongwe River, and showcased progress on Lilongwe's ecosystem restoration activities.

Monica Yator of GLFx Baringo, who also serves as the current chair of the Agroecology Coalition, participated in the UN Biodiversity Conference in Cali, Colombia, and emphasized supporting pastoralism and agroecology to meet global targets.

The GLF supported chapters with tools to widen their policy influence, from sharing opportunities for accreditation to encouraging applications for additional funding and hosting specific policy and advocacy workshops. To achieve stronger policy leverage, in 2024 the GLFx and the National Land Coalitions built closer working relations, facilitated by a memorandum of understanding between the GLF and the International Land Coalition (ILC). This collaboration will promote knowledge and capacity exchange to accelerate policy advocacy at the intersection of landscape restoration and people-centered and rights-based land governance in Africa.

Participation

At GLF Nairobi 2023 and GLF Africa 2024 the GLF hosted side pavilions to give space to GLFx chapters, Restoration Stewards and local grassroots organizations to share about their work and hold workshops.

Transformational change across landscapes must be co-created with local communities. This not only enhances local ownership, and financial efficiency but also ensures that landscape developments are aligned with

the needs, values, knowledge and rights of local communities. The success of the GLF's work with the local communities provides a blueprint for what can be achieved through holistic community leadership including meaningful engagement for restoration, livelihood improvement, knowledge production and policy influence. The GLF will continue advocating for and grounding the landscape approach in local leadership.

For more information on the GLFx program, please contact Ana Yi Soto: A.Yisoto@cifor-icraf.org or Adrian Leitoro: A.Leitoro@cifor-icraf.org



3. Youth and Restoration Stewards (RS): Strengthening youth leadership and inclusion

At a glance



The GLF has sponsored **8 Restoration Stewards in Africa** since 2021 (out of 26 total stewards).



6 young Africans were recognized by the GLF for their powerful storytelling at the 2023 and 2024 African Youth Storytelling Contests.

EUR 40,000 was granted to implement and scale youth-led projects in ecosystems across four African countries (EUR 25,000 between 2023 and 2024).



11 mentors connected with the Restoration Stewards to provide expertise for project management since 2021 (8 mentors between 2023 and 2024).

More than **45 young African experts** attended the **2023 Landscape Leadership Workshop**, including members of the Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL).



1 field visit (Kenya) in 2023 with the Wetland Restoration Steward and his local team and GLF staff ([Article](#) | [Flickr Album](#)).

More than **60 young African experts** attended the **2024 Landscape Leadership Camp**, including members of the YIL (**greater than 50 percent of these participants** were partially or fully sponsored by the GLF and the non-profit SouthSouthNorth).



4 Restoration Stewards attended the **2023 Landscape Leadership Workshop** and the GLF Nairobi 2023, while **4 Restoration Stewards** attended the **2024 Landscape Leadership Camp** and GLF Africa 2024.



More than **70 young African professionals and activists** contributed to the **GLF Africa Youth Project Team**.

These working groups shape and implement projects and activities for the GLF Youth Program and YIL, advising and informing the work of the broader GLF in Africa.



“In Africa, and especially in my country today, the average farmer is sixty years old. And yet, our nation is fairly youthful. That begs the question - who is going to feed us? We need to shift this narrative of going to the cities to get white collar jobs and expose the opportunity in agriculture.”

Jenice Achieng, Kenya Country Representative, Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD).

As the planet’s ‘youngest continent’, with over 400 million people between the ages of 15-35, the sustainability of Africa’s future relies significantly on supporting its youth to steward their landscapes. The GLF’s youth program, in collaboration with the [Youth in Landscapes Initiative \(YIL\)](#), has supported motivated youth to drive and inspire landscape action through restoration and policy advocacy in their landscapes.

Restoration Stewards program

Between 2023 and 2024, the youth-led Restoration Stewards (RS) program took on five new African Stewards. During this period, the stewards were awarded accelerator grants totaling EUR 25,000. They were given mentorship and had the chance to participate in landscape leadership capacity development programs.

Along with being featured on regional and global platforms, they have also received other awards and recognition for their work.

Tahina Roland from Madagascar became the Drylands RS in 2023. Tahina leads the [Taniaia Regenerative Camp](#), which focuses on restoring degraded land through regenerative agriculture and agroforestry. His team established over 10,000 tree seedlings and expanded agroforestry practices, addressing soil degradation from slash-and-burn farming. Tahina’s work promotes ecological resilience and fosters local economic benefits. The camp has become a model of climate-resilient agriculture and community-led environmental stewardship.

Levis Sirikwa from Kenya became a Wetlands RS in 2023. As an RS, Levis and his team engaged with local communities in [conserving and restoring mangrove ecosystems](#) along Kenya’s coastline. Their team’s long-term goal is to restore one million trees.

Levis’s project strengthens local livelihoods by integrating sustainable practices that protect and revitalize the coastal ecosystem which in turn provides ecosystem goods and services to sustain their livelihoods. Through collaborative efforts with local communities, Levis’s work serves as a vital model for coastal restoration in Kenya, combining ecological preservation with economic opportunity.

Steve Misati from Kenya became an Oceans RS in 2024. A marine conservationist, Steve founded Youth Pawa, a nature restoration and ocean conservation organization based in Mombasa, Kenya. Misati’s work is driven by a deep love for the ocean and he is now nurturing 10,000 mangroves.

The organization’s flagship project, the [Mangrove Eco-Restoration Project](#), aims to restore over 50 hectares of degraded mangrove forests in Kenya by 2030. Steve has been recognized for his work by the Iris Project Stem Award and the WeNaturalists People of Nature Award for Conservationist of the Year. He is currently part of the Iris Project Advisory panel and a mentor for other restoration practitioners.

Anna Akpe from Nigeria became a Wetlands RS in 2024. Anna is a conservationist and a member of the [Biodiversity Rescue Club \(BRC\)](#), which focuses on involving students and young people in restoration activities in Calabar, Nigeria. The club’s mangrove restoration project revives mangrove forests in the Esierabom community, in the Calabar South local government area of Cross River State. The project seeks to enhance biodiversity, local livelihoods, carbon capture and water quality.

Claudine Kamanzi from Rwanda is an agriculture enthusiast with a background in conservation agriculture. Claudine became the 2024 Drylands RS and is one of the founders of the Forest4Life initiative,

which revives drylands in the Kayovu Model Village in Rwanda's Bugesera district. Alongside three other young people, Claudine has been working to increase biodiversity, improve soil fertility and promote sustainable land management practices. Forest4Life helps create a resilient and productive landscape through capacity development with the local community and implementing reforestation and agroforestry systems using native Indigenous trees.

Youth-led knowledge co-production for landscape policy and practice

Through the GLF youth program, young Africans have demonstrated their potential to develop substantial knowledge products to inform sustainable landscape practices, guide landscape actors and influence policy. At the 2024 UN Desertification Conference (UNCCD COP16) YIL made a notable contribution to the Youth Position Statement. The GLF held an event titled How are young visionaries rewriting the future of Africa's landscapes? The event featured insights from landscape leaders and local innovators across Africa, showcasing successful restoration stories, pressing challenges and bold opportunities for transformative change based on recent regional consultations.

The best-practice guide Local ecological knowledge (LEK) in mangrove conservation and restoration (2023) was designed by RS Levis Sirikwa to assist mangrove researchers and practitioners in incorporating LEK. This guide encompasses the knowledge, practices and beliefs acquired through extensive observation and interaction with local ecosystems. The LEK demonstrates the critical



"If there is something mangroves have taught me, it's that nature takes every obstacle, every impediment, and works around it – using it for its purposes and incorporating it into itself. That's why we will keep on conserving and fighting for these ecosystems."

Steve Misati, Founder and Director, Youth Pawa.

role of youth and young professionals in accelerating momentum for sustainable landscapes across Africa.

Meanwhile, the guide [Unlocking funding success: Insights for project developers and restoration initiatives](#), developed in collaboration with RS Tahina Roland, explores key strategies for securing funding for landscape restoration projects. The publication highlights the importance of partnerships, innovative financing models and effective storytelling. It also discusses the challenges faced by restoration efforts and provides actionable recommendations to enhance funding opportunities.

Building youth landscape leadership

In 2023 and 2024, the GLF youth program organized a [Landscape Leadership Workshop](#) and a [Landscape Leadership Camp](#) that collectively brought together over 100 passionate young landscape leaders and changemakers to deepen their skills and drive transformative impact in landscape restoration. Held in Nairobi, the landscape

leadership programs fostered a space for hands-on learning, field visits, collaborative sessions and knowledge exchange for restoring ecosystems and uplifting communities across Africa.

The programs were co-developed by the Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL), the GLF and the [Climate and Development Knowledge Network](#) (CDKN) to envision justice rooted in self-determination and diversity. Collaboration with the CDKN in recent years urges synthesizing and promoting locally-led action in policy spaces as part of the road to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2025.

Mainstreaming the expertise of the young professionals helps inform and advise on the broader work of the GLF in Africa. These leadership workshops and camps enable young people to better co-create and progress toward a future that values their perspectives – a core tenet of intergenerational justice.

Investing in young people remains one of Africa's greatest hopes and resources for a secure future. Capacity development for Africa's youth is as critical as providing fair access to financial resources. We must create space for young people to share their knowledge

and experiences and further influence policy and governance. The powerful restoration and community strengthening stemming from youth in Africa is a testament to why investing in youth leadership should be a core development priority.

For more information on the GLF youth program, please contact Eirini Sakellari: E.Sakellari@CIFOR-ICRAF.org



“Youth is important for the present, but also for the future. So, we need to be intentional in how we support youth-lead actions and how we integrate them in the broader interventions that are existing.”

Simangele Msweli, Senior Manager, Youth Leadership Programme, African Wildlife Foundation.



4. Enhancing landscape learning

At a glance

59 partner courses promoted on the Landscape Academy.

Launched New digital learning platform, **Digital Campus**.

Held the second edition of the **Restoration Education Summit and training workshop** on facilitation and blended learning.

Five African universities that are part of the Restoration Education network from Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi and Rwanda.

Trained **247** students under the Pan-African Restoration Education Curriculum.

Five young people participated in internships with **two** local organizations doubling as GLFx chapters.

Given the dynamic nature of the landscapes across Africa and the ever-evolving demands placed upon them, it is critical to facilitate continuous and accessible learning for people to connect positively with their landscapes. With a growing number of ecosystem and landscape restoration programs emerging across the continent, there is

increasing demand for professionals and practitioners skilled in restoration. There is a scarcity of colleges and universities that offer landscape restoration curricula, and even scarcer opportunities for students to practice field-based application and develop competency in implementing landscape restoration.

To this end, in 2023, the GLF piloted the new Landscape Restoration Dynamics blended course: the first to be developed through the GLF's Restoration Education program, and the first to pilot the digital learning platform CIFOR-ICRAF-GLF Digital Campus. Delivered by the University of Ibadan, in collaboration with five African universities, International



Union of Forest Research Organizations and Wageningen University and Research, the course enrolled **35 participants** and **certified 20** from a pool of **over 100 applicants**. The course covered the basics of landscape restoration, the role of landscape actors in restoration practices, socio-economic models for landscape restoration and more.

Later, the GLF Nairobi event held in 2023 was foregrounded by the 2023 Landscape Leadership Workshop, in which **45 young landscape leaders** were selected to participate from over **700 applications** across **15 African countries**.

During GLF Nairobi, a second edition of the Restoration Education Summit was held, followed by a training workshop on facilitation and blended learning on 13-17 October, 2023, which was collaboratively designed with an external expert and brought together two members from each of the GLF's five African university partners.

These events followed the GLF Learning Team's involvement in the Landscapes for Our Future Global Summit and Knowledge Exchange. Both summits involved consultative evaluations of the Pan-African curriculum

with participants, landscape practitioners, educators and project implementers.

With co-financing from the UNCCD, the GLF's five African partner universities further developed content for the restoration curriculum. Further funding from the International Model Forest Network consortium (IMFN) allowed for the development of four in-person courses, run by the African partner universities in Ghana, Nigeria and Rwanda, training over 200 students.

The Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) and the GLF also collaborated to expand the Landscape Academy through the development of the aforementioned Digital Campus – a digital learning and community platform that aims to provide learners with needs-based and science-backed learning opportunities using innovative and interactive learning methodologies. The Digital Campus also offers learners and alumni community spaces to continue sharing knowledge.

The Landscape Academy continues to source and curate courses to increase access to restoration education. The Digital Campus will also work with external partners

to co-create self-paced and blended courses to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaborative product development for the Restoration Education network.

To blend digital learning with its practical, on-the-ground counterpart, **nine young people participated in internships** with **four local organizations** in 2023 and 2024, after signing letters of agreement with local organizations doubling as GLFx chapters. These interns were involved in gaining practical knowledge on seedlings, tree nurseries and landscape planning; conducting research on the economic viability of landscape restoration; participating in discussions with policymakers and contributing to outreach efforts.

For more information on the GLF's landscape learning program, please contact **Kimberley Merten: K.Merten@cifor-icraf.org**.



5. Sustainable finance for local landscapes and people

At a glance

2 sustainable finance sessions held at international GLF conferences (GLF Nairobi and GLF Africa),

attracting **546** and **2,122** participants respectively.

One of the biggest challenges facing the African continent is ensuring the sustained flow of climate and landscape finance to local communities for landscape restoration activities.

Africa experiences a sustainable finance deficit of USD 400 billion annually and only receives 3.6 percent of global climate finance. Africa is also challenged with making finance widely accessible despite competing stakeholder interests.

The GLF flagship Investment Case symposium platform is the only forum on sustainable finance in the Global South. These annual dialogues push conversations on mobilizing and directing sustainable finance for communities and landscapes in Africa and worldwide.

At GLF Nairobi 2023, the GLF held a sustainable finance session, Funding climate adaptation: African sovereign strategies and

allocation priorities, which was attended by 546 people. This was followed by a session on Scaling up nature-based solutions: Bridging the finance gap in Africa at GLF Africa 2024, which engaged 2,122 participants. Both of these sessions raised awareness of the critical need to enhance sustainable finance in Africa and helped point stakeholders towards opportunities to meet such a need.



In addition to driving conversations on sustainable finance, in 2024 the Sustainable Finance innovation launched an initiative to identify projects for tailored support packages, and for crowdfunding support among African chapters and stewards to boost bankability. The GLF awarded Restoration Stewards and selected GLFx chapters seed and accelerator grants to scale their landscape restoration solutions.

Another benefit of small grants from international platforms such as the GLF, is the trust earned from other entities who can then keep funding these locally-led projects. Endorsements from the GLF have helped many RS and GLFx chapters secure competitive funding from entities such as the G20 Land Initiative, UNDP Small Grants Programme, the Heritage Management Organization and the Mellon Foundation.

In 2024 the GLF also launched its private sector engagement strategy for the continent. This was a major development toward bringing private sector finance and investment into the activities

within the GLF community. This engagement strategy also spotlights opportunities for the private sector to invest in sustainable landscapes at large. The purpose of the strategy is clear: public finance alone is not enough to drive landscape action and sustainable development – the private sector must be onboarded as a landscape actor to drive finance and resource mobilization to scale landscape action.

The sustainable landscape finance deficit in Africa continues to grow. Public finance is still the main source of funding, yet it falls short of what is needed. Despite this, the return on investment for finance in landscape restoration has continued to grow considerably. The GLF, through its local chapters, will continue to show how low-cost high-impact funding models can greatly benefit community-led landscape action.

For more information about the GLF's sustainable finance program, please contact **Ludwig Liagre**: l.liagre@cifor-icrf.org. For partnership opportunities, please contact **Marina Brunale**: m.brunale@cifor-icraf.org.





Institutional message from the CEO of CIFOR-ICRAF

Africa stands at the crossroads of extraordinary opportunity and critical urgency. The post-pandemic era has revealed a pivotal moment to rebuild responsibly, tackling the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and food insecurity. At the heart of this transformation are Africa's landscapes – natural treasures that sustain life locally and balance ecosystems globally – and the resilient communities that call them home.

Across the continent, communities have risen to the challenge, blending their deep-rooted knowledge with bold, innovative solutions to protect and restore their landscapes. Recognizing their unparalleled leadership, the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) has doubled down on its mission in Africa, serving as a force multiplier of locally led action and solutions.

Since establishing a presence in Africa, the GLF has become a catalyst for change – bridging

divides, amplifying voices, and driving action. Through dynamic platforms for dialogue and knowledge exchange, we have unlocked the potential of communities to shape their destinies with credible knowledge as the foundation. By championing community-led practices, nurturing local leadership and forging transformative partnerships, we have witnessed the power of ground-up action to deliver scalable, sustainable impact.

The momentum is undeniable. Women and youth are emerging as trailblazers. Communities are embracing solutions that combine resilience with prosperity. Stakeholders across sectors are rallying behind locally driven approaches. Together, we have shown that sustainable change is possible when local actors are provided with the right support and resources – and it is happening now.

But this is only the beginning. The pace of the challenges

we face demands an urgent scaling of our efforts. To reverse landscape degradation, safeguard biodiversity, combat the climate crisis and secure livelihoods, we must further enhance capacity and resources to the right place. This progress made thus far would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners. To BMZ, RBSG, BMU/IKI, GEF, the Government of Canada, the IMFN, and others – we extend our deepest gratitude. Your financial and technical contributions have been instrumental in this journey.

As we look to the future, the GLF remains committed to connect, share and learn across African landscapes. We call on partners, allies and visionaries from every corner of the globe to join us. Together, we can build a future where Africa leads the world in sustainable land use and green transformation – a future powered by Africa, for Africa and with Africa.

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)

All photos by the GLF community

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