



 **NEW
GENERATION
PLANTATIONS**
platform
For PEOPLE, PLANET AND PROSPERITY

AFRICA'S SOCIAL PROSPERITY AND LANDSCAPE RESILIENCE

THINK PIECE

NGP ENCOUNTER 2019

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE, 19-20 NOVEMBER 2019

On the [Uganda study tour](#) in 2018, NGP focused on the challenges and opportunities of establishing sustainable plantations in the world's least developed countries. The multi-stakeholder group concluded that plantations can foster inclusive development in rural areas with limited economic opportunities – by providing forestry-related jobs, enabling smallholders to grow timber, supporting community programmes and building local capacity – and take pressure off Africa's beleaguered natural forests. This can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change mitigation and the restoration of nature.

There is plenty of suitable, fertile land across the continent to develop plantations in a balanced way, while growing economies fuel demand for timber products for construction and rural electrification as well as for energy and pulp and paper. Despite their numerous potential benefits, however, plantations have yet to be established at scale except in South Africa.

At the same time, African governments have made ambitious commitments to begin the restoration of more than 100 million hectares of land by 2030 under the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative ([AFR100](#)). The programme is far behind the plan, and it will take a colossal effort to make these ambitious pledges a reality.

NGP has demonstrated a concept of large-scale forest landscape restoration that works, showing that well-managed plantations in the right places can help conserve biodiversity and meet human needs, while contributing to sustainable economic growth and local livelihoods. So how can this concept be rolled out at scale across Africa? And how can landscape approaches and community development evolve hand-in-hand so that forest restoration and plantation development benefit everyone?



AFRICA OVERVIEW: DEFORESTATION, DEGRADATION, RESTORATION, PLANTATIONS

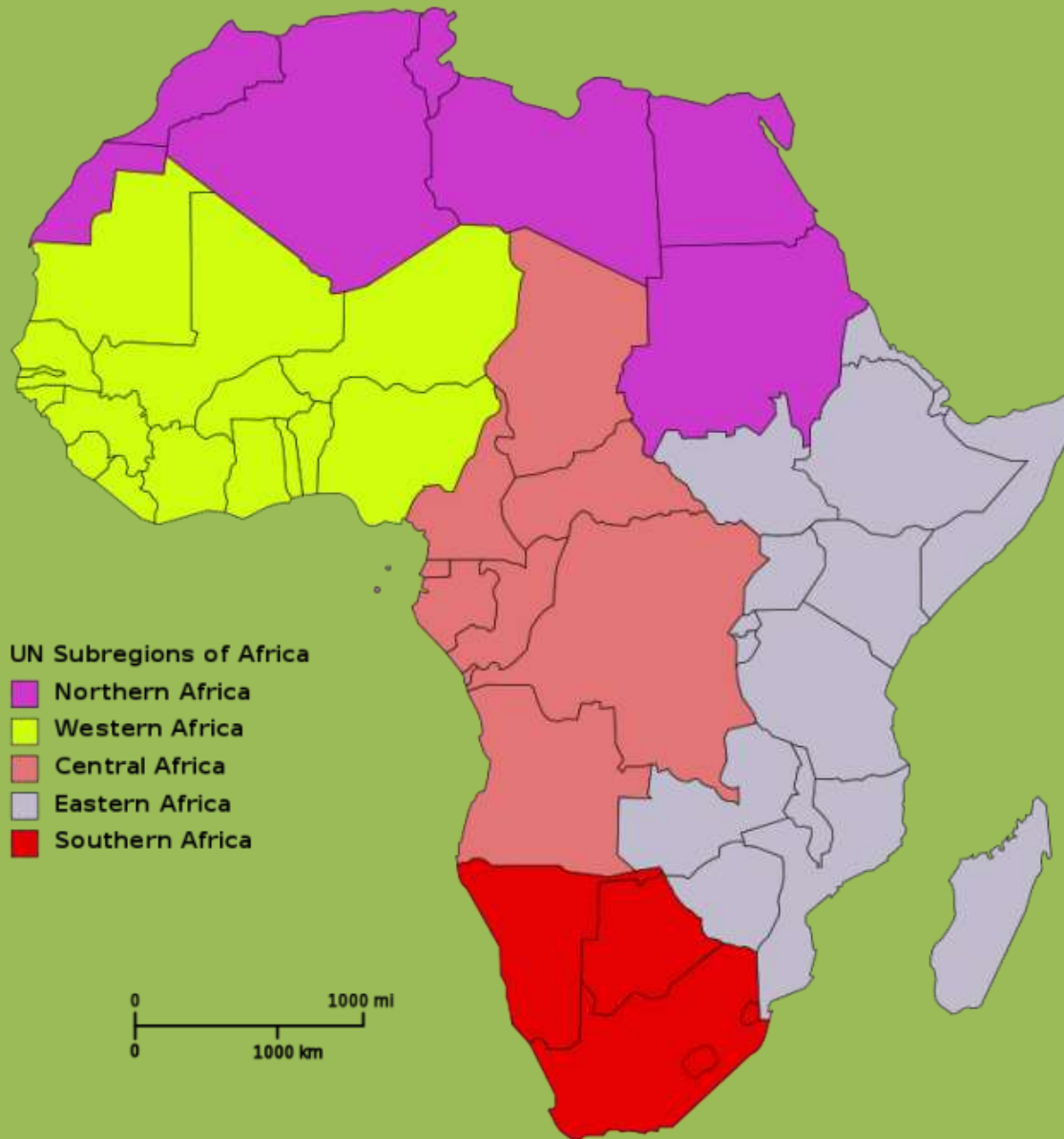
Over recent decades, Africa has lost forests at an alarming rate. Galloping population growth and economic development have led to large-scale deforestation and forest degradation. “Slash and burn” clearing and the expansion of commercial agriculture have destroyed huge tracts of ancient forest, while growing demand for timber and fuelwood has led to unsustainable levels of wood harvesting. This has wreaked havoc on the region’s biodiversity, increased human-wildlife conflict, deprived communities of vital resources and undermined opportunities for sustainable development. Land degradation threatens food security and the provision of vital ecosystem services.

As a response to rising deforestation and forest degradation, African countries have made ambitious restoration commitments. To date, 28 African countries have pledged to restore 113 million hectares of forest by 2030 under AFR100, part of the global Bonn Challenge. However, they have a very long way to go to meet these commitments, and there is no programme in place to monitor and verify their progress.

While conserving, restoring and reconnecting natural forests is vital, other types of forestry also need to be part of the picture. Industrial forest plantations, smallholder plantations and agroforestry can all help African countries meet their commitments to forest landscape restoration, while also supporting socio-economic development, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

By taking a landscape view, it’s possible to combine commercial forestry operations with natural restoration, conservation, smallholder agriculture and other land uses. This approach can generate a wide range of co-benefits, including increased biodiversity and significant new rural employment opportunities, especially for women, improving quality of life and increasing resilience by diversifying the economy.





EASTERN AFRICA

Between 2000 and 2012, East Africa lost around 6 million hectares of forest, and WWF projects that the region will lose 12 million hectares between 2010 and 2030 if current trends continue. The coastal forests of Tanzania and Kenya have been reduced to just 10% of their original extent, although precise figures are hard to calculate; Mozambique and Zambia have also suffered significant forest loss.

In addition to outright land conversion, the region's forests are under pressure from over-harvesting for timber and fuelwood and slash-and-burn agriculture. Global demand for the region's abundant and often undervalued natural resources has resulted in trade that is not only unsustainable but sometimes also illegal.

The bulk of commercial plantation development on the continent this century has taken place in East Africa. However, following an active period of planting during the last 10 years ago, commercial afforestation in East Africa has ground to a halt. Much of the commercial planting in East Africa has aimed to follow NGP principles by restoring whole landscapes, using a mosaic approach to combine different land uses. However, there is a long way to go to implement this approach at scale.

CENTRAL AFRICA

The Congo Basin holds the world's second largest rainforest, and supports the highest biological diversity in Africa: over 400 mammal species and more than 1,000 bird species. It is the last stronghold for forest elephant, gorilla, forest buffalo, bongo and okapi. But deforestation is on the rise, and unrelenting timber demand means the forests are being harvested at unprecedented rates. Often, this is done unsustainably or not in accordance with local laws. Road building by logging companies has also opened up remote areas of forests to poaching and illegal logging.

The growing demand for timber and energy (fuelwood) in domestic, regional and global markets is a serious threat to natural forests in the Congo Basin. Sustainable forest plantations could help fill the gap, lifting the pressure off natural forests and helping conserve their rich biodiversity, while creating opportunities for local communities and indigenous peoples.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa has relatively limited areas of dense forest; wooded savannahs are the dominant type of vegetation. These provide important resources for local communities, including fuel, building materials and a variety of non-timber products.

South Africa has by far the largest area of commercial plantations on the continent. The government began extensive plantation development in the 1930s, and today the country has a thriving forest products industry which contributes about 1% of GDP. Plantations of exotic species – eucalyptus, pine and acacia – cover around 1.25 million hectares. While large commercial companies (Mondi and Sappi) dominate the sector, the government also promotes community-led afforestation projects.

WESTERN AFRICA

West Africa has lost most of its rainforests. In 2005, Nigeria had the worst deforestation rate in the world, Côte d'Ivoire's forest area has fallen from 8 million to 1.5 million hectares, while Ghana's forests – which covered 8.8 million hectares in 1900 – now amount to little more than 1 million hectares.

Today, forests and woodlands cover about 72.1 million hectares or 14% of the region's land area, but they continue to decline at an alarming rate. Rapid population growth, urbanization, palm oil and cocoa plantations, fuelwood, uncontrolled logging, bushfires, extensive livestock rearing, land-use conflicts and climate change are all driving deforestation and forest degradation, exacerbated by political, legal, institutional, technical and cultural challenges.

Restoring forest landscapes in the region is crucial in order to restore ecological processes, combat desertification and act on climate change, as well as to protect the remaining natural vegetation. Millions of trees have been planted as part of the [Great Green Wall](#) project, which aims to create an 8,000km buffer along the southern edge of the Sahara desert.

Plantation forestry is well established in West Africa, and commercial planting continues in countries like Ghana and Sierra Leone. However, there is an urgent need to increase the planted forest area to meet future needs for timber, wood energy and other woody and non-timber forest products which people and national economies depend on.

SPOTLIGHT ON MOZAMBIQUE



Biologically and culturally diverse, Mozambique is rich in natural resources. Fertile soils in the northern and central areas support varied and abundant agriculture, and the great Zambezi River provides ample water for irrigation as well as hydropower. Mozambique has an important role in the maritime economy of the Indian Ocean, while the country's white sand beaches attract a growing tourism industry. Most of the country's large cities and economic development are clustered along the coast.

Yet Mozambique's turbulent recent history has kept its people from fully enjoying these natural advantages. After gaining independence in 1975, Mozambique was torn apart by internal conflict which displaced at least four million people and resulted in the death of perhaps a million more to violence, famine and disease. Violence and disunity hindered economic development, especially the broadening of tourism, and discouraged foreign investment. The conflict formally ended in 1992, but its lingering effects are many.

Mozambique is an overwhelmingly agricultural country, with more than four-fifths of the labour force engaged in farming; only about a third of the population lives in urban areas. Mozambique's rate of population growth is lower than in most African countries, though high by world standards. The population is young – more than two-fifths of Mozambicans are under 15 and almost three-quarters under 30. The country's infant mortality rate is among the highest in the world, and its life expectancy among the lowest.

The forest sector is a large employer, and was worth around US\$185 million in 2018 according to the National Statistics Institute. Forests provide goods and services to local communities, including food, energy, medicine, construction materials and furniture. In some rural communities, miombo woodlands contribute almost 20% of household cash income and 40% of subsistence (non-cash) income.

However, rapid deforestation is threatening rural ecosystems and livelihoods, with almost half the country's forest cover already lost. Logging in Mozambique is often conducted with a lack of proper planning, regulation or management. This places excessive pressure on protected and valuable animal species and leaves large swathes of land susceptible to fire – an increasing risk as climate change brings hotter, dryer weather.

Recently, though, deforestation in Mozambique has been decreasing. An agreement with the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Carbon Fund unlocked US\$50 million in results-based payments to support ongoing efforts to reduce carbon emissions from the forest sector. Meanwhile, more than 30,000 hectares of plantations have been established in northern Mozambique over the last decade, attracting more than US\$200 million of private investments.

KEY QUESTIONS

During the 2019 Encounter, we'll be asking the overarching question:

How can **landscape approaches and community development** evolve hand-in-hand, to support a better and more sustainable forestry business for everyone?

This is supported by four sub-questions:

1. What forest sector **opportunities and solutions, including finance solutions**, are emerging in Africa?
2. What new ideas do innovative African landscape-based projects on **community development** offer to the forestry sector?
3. How can we best promote sustainable plantations for a **wood-based bioeconomy** in Africa?
4. What opportunities can we co-create for implementing **landscape stewardship strategies** for projects in Africa?



1. What forest sector opportunities and solutions, including finance and operational issues, are emerging in Africa?

Africa has huge potential to support a thriving plantation industry, while fulfilling the ambitious forest restoration commitments of AFR100 offers tremendous socio-economic, environmental and climate benefits.

The challenge of investing in African plantation forestry is to combine public finance support and commitment with private sector investment and entrepreneurial ability, for the benefit of as many people as possible – not least for the local communities in rural areas who are often marginalized and disconnected.

Existing forestry companies in Africa may offer the quickest and lowest-cost way to expand forests, often on under-utilized areas adjacent to or within their own land holdings. A recent [study by the African Development Bank](#) identified around 500,000 hectares of land readily available for plantation establishment in African countries – places where significant up-front project development work has been completed and much of the enabling infrastructure is already in place. The study also points to operational and managerial lessons learnt that will make future commercial afforestation and landscape restoration projects more successful and cost-effective than in the past.

Blended finance, which uses development and philanthropic funding to mobilize private capital, can be seen as part of the solution. Donor funding could focus particularly on extension and outreach work, and combining agricultural and forestry investment and land-use models could provide some return on investment in a shorter timeframe.

Restoring degraded land with a mosaic of native forests and new plantations, if done well, should deliver a wide range of public and private goods – including socio-economic development and enhanced ecosystem services as well as commercial returns. However, investors and donors are often interested in funding particular aspects rather than in wider landscape-level solutions. Blended finance could enable projects to get off the ground on a scale that matters – for example, by combining NGO investment in forest restoration and conservation, with investment from development finance institutions in community development through smallholder agroforestry, and private finance for commercial plantation development.



2. What new ideas do innovative African landscape-based projects on community development offer to the forestry sector?



Community participation and development should be at the heart of plantation development in Africa. This is reflected in the NGP principles that sustainable plantations are developed through effective stakeholder involvement process and contribute to economic growth and employment.

Increasingly, NGP participants are seeking ways to make a contribution to people's wellbeing and prosperity, not just through creating jobs and corporate responsibility but by "creating shared value". This means finding business opportunities in solving social and environmental challenges, adding value to both the business and society. It also creates opportunities for communities to be active participants in areas such as landscape restoration, better agriculture and business development, rather than passive beneficiaries.

For a company, a key test of whether a creating shared value approach is whether it becomes more attractive to external investors. Does such a company demonstrate a better understanding of risk and reward when working in a developing country like Mozambique?

Forest management certification could also have a role to play. For example, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) ought to provide assurance that a company not only manages its forests and treats its workers responsibly, but also works and collaborates with communities effectively. Is there enough consumer demand for certified products to provide a market pull to incentivize this?

New models could also be explored to give local people greater control over their forest resources. How can local communities move from being stakeholders to stockholders and have tangible investment in plantation development?

3. How can we best promote sustainable plantations for a wood-based bioeconomy in Africa?

If it is a fact Africa's economy is lagging behind other regions of the world, we can look at this from a positive angle: the region has the opportunity to leapfrog towards a 21st century bioeconomy without repeating everyone else's mistakes. Just imagine...

Africa is the place where fastest urban development is happening and will happen. These new cities could use more wood instead of steel and cement, with huge climate benefits. Most building components can be made from wood, and technological advances are opening up new opportunities. For example, engineered wood products like cross-laminated timber panels (multiple layers of wood glued together at right-angles to form super-strong panels) allow for larger and taller wooden buildings.

Modern bioenergy will be a vital part of a future low-carbon, fully renewable energy mix, particularly for functions not so easily filled by other renewable energy sources like wind and solar power – including heat, baseload electricity and transport fuel. While wood will continue to be burnt in home stoves and power stations, new thermo- and bio-chemical processes are opening up possibilities for producing liquid fuels from wood products. Some companies are already producing biodiesel from tall oil and black liquor, residues from the pulp-making process. In future, biorefineries will be able to use wood and other biomass to make everything we currently derive from petroleum – not just fuels, but paints and adhesives, asphalt and detergents, and various types of plastic.

How can we put a new generation of plantations that benefit people and the environment at the heart of a future bioeconomy, enabling Africa to leapfrog into a vibrant, sustainable and resilient 21st century economy?



4. What opportunities can we co-create for implementing landscape stewardship strategies for projects in Africa?



Landscape stewardship is a novel governance mechanism that brings stakeholders together to co-develop a vision and strategy for their landscape. This can then be broken down into its constituent parts to create manageable projects within the overall landscape – of which plantation forestry can be an important part.

Forest landscape restoration projects and other landscape approaches have exceptional potential to deliver change on a scale that matters. They can generate economic and social development for local communities, conserve and restore biodiversity, and support climate change mitigation and adaptation, while generating positive financial return for investors.

In other parts of the world, the NGP platform has demonstrated that well-managed forest plantations in the right places can support large-scale forest landscape restoration, helping to conserve biodiversity, support local livelihoods, foster sustainable socioeconomic development, store carbon and enhance other ecosystem services. WWF's new Forest Impact Facility aims to help implement the NGP concept in new places, leveraging investment and creating shared value.

African plantation forestry will only be successful if it is inclusive, supported and valued by its wide groups of stakeholders. This Encounter brings many of them together.

JOIN US TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE AND COLLECTIVELY IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICA'S SOCIAL PROSPERITY AND LANDSCAPE RESILIENCE.

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