

RESILIENT AFRICA

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April 2024



EMPOWERING AFRICA'S DECISION-MAKERS

African-led Conservation in Action



BUILDING A FUTURE WHERE
PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE THRIVE



LEADERSHIP IS AN EXPONENTIAL BUILD

Africa’s population was less than 400 million people half a century ago. Today, it has more than tripled to 1.4 billion. Projections indicate that by 2050, Africa will be home to as many as 2.5 billion people—more than 25 percent of the world’s population. This explosive growth forces Africa to answer questions such as: What will we use for energy? How will we feed people? How will people and goods be transported? Most importantly, can development balance nature and progress, or will it compromise Africa’s ecosystems and the essential functions they provide, including fresh water and climate resiliency?

These questions will be answered by our leaders, from heads of households making decisions for their families and heads of villages navigating the needs of their communities to heads of state steering their countries into the future. They will be answered by county officials defining the path of local development and by businesspeople and entrepreneurs creating new opportunities and innovation. One thing is clear: **the decisions made today will define our future as a continent and influence the outcomes of global compacts on climate change and biodiversity loss.**

AWF’s approach to supporting African leadership understands that leadership is an exponential build. It involves not only directly investing in individuals as change-makers. It also involves empowering networks of stakeholders to amplify and scale their voices. Networks such as the Africa Protected Area Directors (APAD), which serves as a conduit for leaders managing protected areas across Africa, representing an impressive 14% of the continent’s landmass. Through this platform,

stakeholders converge to prioritize collective agendas and devise actionable conservation solutions (we’ll share more insight into APAD in this newsletter). Or the African Civil Society Organizations Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA), a pan-African network representing the interests of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, youth groups, local nonprofits, and minority groups. Or the African Global Youth Biodiversity Network, the official youth negotiation group to the Convention on Biological Diversity representing young conservation leaders from more than 20 African countries.

AWF, in partnership with these networks and others across Africa, is part of defining conservation as a cornerstone of a prosperous and stable future for the continent. We see how **African-led conservation prioritizes partnership and stakeholder dialogue.** It looks at Indigenous Peoples and local communities, youth, and women not as passive “beneficiaries” of conservation but as full partners in co-creating conservation approaches that work in their best interests. When people understand the linkages between their long-term well-being and conserving healthy ecosystems, they make decisions that value nature as part of a sustainable future. And when our leaders and global partners consult and collaborate with each other and communities on the ground, together we can drive transformative change.

Kaddu Sebunya
AWF Chief Executive Officer

Resilient Africa is a newsletter from the African Wildlife Foundation exploring how Africa is defining and meeting conservation challenges on the continent.

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Defining Leadership, Respecting Agency

A conference organized by Africa’s protected area leadership in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, this March marked a significant milestone in African conservation efforts. The second Africa Protected Area Directors (APAD) conference was designed to encourage collaboration and dialogue among key stakeholders, uniting protected area directors, Indigenous people, local community organizations, NGOs, and others to address urgent conservation challenges in Africa.

APAD began as a leadership network to help directors of Africa’s official protected and conserved areas address impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Today it has evolved into a powerful coalition driving the conservation agenda across the continent, promoting inclusivity, dialogue, and collaboration in decision-making processes. The primary takeaway from the recent conference was a focus on expanding the conservation narrative to include Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who have been traditionally left out of policy-level conservation and development conversations.

19 PROTECTED & CONSERVED AREA LEADERS, PICTURED ABOVE, WERE AMONG OVER 150 PARTICIPANTS AT THE AFRICA PROTECTED AREA DIRECTORS CONFERENCE IN VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE.



THE FINAL DAY OF THE APAD CONFERENCE FACILITATED CRUCIAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS AND PRODUCED A HIGH-LEVEL COMMUNIQUE TO GUIDE THE FUTURE OF PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS



Fred Kumah, Vice President of Global Leadership, leads AWF's efforts with networks such as the Africa Protected Area Directors. We recently spoke with him to better understand what African conservation leadership looks like and its pivotal role in defining the future of Africa.

Fred, can you define leadership? When we talk about leaders, what do we mean, especially in conservation?

Leadership is perceived as working with people to provide guidance and make decisions that benefit them. From a conservation standpoint, African-led conservation not only advocates for conservation interests but also champions the concerns of people who coexist with wildlife or biodiversity, pushing for decisions that safeguard both. That can be at any level of the decision-making ladder, from individuals within a specific community to local officials or ministers and heads of state.

What makes networks like the Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN), Africa Protected Area Directors (APAD), and the African Civil Society Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) important examples of leadership?

Pan-African networks like these are crucial because historically, Africa's voting in international forums was influenced by colonial interests and external funding. In recent years, Africa has voted as a bloc, largely due to the existence of pan-African groupings and collective investment in these networks. While Africa's 54 countries, individually, may not wield significant influence in negotiations against more powerful counterparts, when countries

unite, they become a formidable force. By pooling their voices and resources through networks like AGN, APAD, and ACBA, Africa can influence global agendas. Not only that, they become powerful mechanisms for driving collaboration and sharing learnings within Africa, which you can see from the recent APAD meeting in Zimbabwe.

How does the intersection of leadership and conservation play out in Africa?

We have not collectively succeeded on this continent, or even globally, with conservation because we have focused on conservation activity, rather than conservation decision-making. AWF's strategy focuses on leadership as a way of bringing African society fully on board with decision-making that benefits both people and nature. To be frank, Africa has been struggling for a long time with defining progress for people in ways that allow space for wildlife. In some cases, land use decisions only benefited people at the expense of nature. Decision-makers did not understand that the development choices they make interfere with species' survival and ecosystems that both people and wildlife depend upon. We believe if our politicians and decision-makers are well-informed about consequences and options, they will make decisions that value nature and benefit people. In that

respect, I think leadership is perhaps the most important area of intervention for conservation to succeed in Africa in the long run.

What is the future of African conservation leadership?

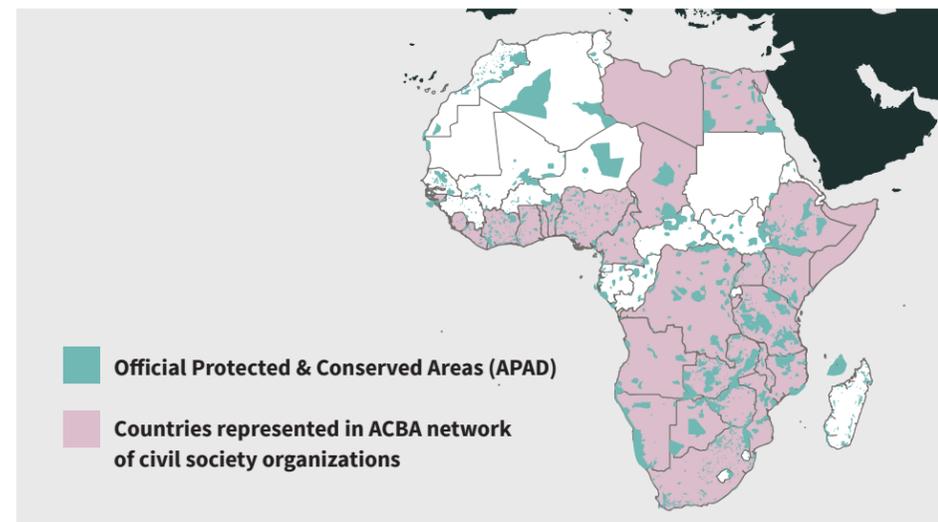
Investing in young people needs to be a top priority. I'm saying that because, by and large, existing leadership is now locked into certain ways of thinking. Young people are open to ideas. They see things differently. We need that perspective; we need more intergenerational dialogue. If we strategically invest in young leaders, we can challenge, transform, and transition existing leadership, while respecting the value existing leadership has to offer.

The other essential piece is technology. Today's technology gives us access to information we couldn't have dreamed about even ten years ago. But Africa is not using the power of information as well as we could, as there are still gaps in understanding and using data-based tools like GIS. And there is a gap in getting them into the hands of Africa's decision-makers. Mapping where resources are and evaluating their availability against the needs of people and wildlife can inform evidence-based decisions that prioritize and optimize allocation in transformative ways.

We've talked about the potential of conservation leadership. What are the challenges?

There are a few challenges that come to mind. The tension between our current pressing needs for people and conservation is significant. If you go to a community and tell them not to use a resource they need today to feed their families, and instead ask them to conserve that resource for posterity, it's difficult for them to understand why that choice is a good one for them. How do we manage that tension between current needs and the needs of posterity?

For example, in Kenya, the government has greenlit a 52-kilometer road that will traverse Aberdare National Park. This park is a critical ecosystem home to wildlife, and it also supplies 90% of Nairobi's



water. The proposed road is expected to reduce travel time between two regions from an hour to just 15 minutes, eliciting substantial interest and backing from local communities. However, there are legitimate concerns that constructing the road through the park could disturb its fragile ecosystem, endanger wildlife, and threaten tourism and water supply to downstream communities. The politicians are supporting the road without explaining alternative options that may well be available for communities to consider. If politicians make decisions without thinking through all the options and educating the communities, then we have a problem.

The second challenge is the perception in Africa that conservation is an externally driven agenda serving only the interest of wildlife protection. This perception ignores the concept of coexistence with nature that is deeply rooted in African culture. But because of this perception, the moment a conservation agenda is introduced, people push back against it. If there's a perception that conservation is foreign, that it doesn't recognize the importance of coexistence with local people, we have a big challenge. The conservation vision in Africa needs to be led by Africans and owned by Africans in order to get true buy-in from African society.

The third challenge is funding. At the moment, most of the funding driving conservation comes from people who think

about protecting nature and wildlife from people, rather than conserving nature and wildlife with and for people. You have that tension, always. Even as we speak about the beautiful ways conservation and development can complement each other, the bulk of the money to stave off biodiversity loss goes to protection, and not necessarily to local people. Finding more win-win opportunities where resources coming in actually serve local communities and conservation will be a game changer.

Can you share an example of where high-level leadership and community partnership have driven successful conservation action?

Rwanda is a compelling example of strong local and national leadership driving conservation efforts. In the vicinity of Volcanoes National Park, local communities, in collaboration with other agencies, initiated conservation activities in the '90s amid extensive socio-political instability. Through community-led enterprises and tourism initiatives—some of which AWF is proud to have contributed to—they not only safeguarded habitats but also generated economic benefits. Coupled with supportive government policies, this proactive approach led to significant increases in the mountain gorilla population and prosperity for local people. In 2022, gorilla tourism generated US \$113M, about 25% of Rwanda's overall tourism revenue.

IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, COMMUNITY PRIORITIES ARE SHAPED BY LIVING IN CONFLICT ZONES

Promoting Peace as a Conservation Tool



In many countries, peacebuilding and conflict management are crucial for conservation success. AWF has adopted a rights-based approach with a grievance mechanism on the ground to allow communities to raise complaints and concerns regarding conservation authorities. PeaceNexus, a Swiss non-profit promoting peacebuilding, is helping us train staff and engage communities to tackle conflict in its local context. We leverage additional resources to train AWF teams on conflict sensitivity, enabling them to navigate the complex realities of landscapes like the Bili Uele and Maringa-Lopori-Wamba landscapes of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

These communities in the DRC, some of the poorest in Africa, face immense challenges. They are isolated, caught in civil unrest, threatened by illegal extractive industries, and face threats to personal safety. “Understanding the context is vital

AWF CHARLES WALL FELLOW LEADS CONSERVATION POLICIES FOR KENYA’S “ELEPHANT COUNTY”



Taita Taveta, a county in Kenya, spans 62% of the Tsavo ecosystem and boasts Kenya’s largest population of elephants. Here, **Grantone Mwandawiro**, an AWF Charles Wall Young African Policy Fellow in 2023, is making strides in championing inclusive conservation policies.

“In 2022, I became the Environment Minister for Taita Taveta county government. Despite my environmental science degree, I needed stronger policy knowledge to achieve my goals. The AWF Charles Wall Policy Fellowship was transformative, enabling me to establish a county-wide mechanism coordinating water, conservation, climate change, and natural resources. This has promoted

collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and local communities.

“In addition, I learned the importance of community



14,879 elephants inhabit the Tsavo Ecosystem, representing **41%** of Kenya’s total elephant population of **36,280**.



IN FEBRUARY, DODO MOKE, SENIOR SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS OFFICER (RIGHT), AND ANTOINE TABU, COUNTRY COORDINATOR (LEFT), RAISED AWARENESS FOR RIGHTS-BASED CONSERVATION AMONG 730 LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN MARINGA-LOPORI-WAMBA

in any conflict,” says Dodo Moke, a Senior Environmental and Social Safeguards Officer at AWF. “Previously, we delegated conflict resolution to the government, but that was not always effective. Now, we are working directly with communities to find solutions through our grievance mechanism, fostering peacebuilding—a cornerstone of successful conservation.”



ownership in conservation. Previously, locals felt excluded from the benefits of protected areas. I have facilitated a county-wide forum for constructive dialogue, leading to more inclusive conservation practices. As a young minister, I faced challenges navigating leadership complexities, especially with the older generation. The fellowship boosted my confidence and equipped me with strategies to bridge the generational gap. My interaction with other young African leaders during the fellowship underscored the power of collective action and youth leadership in driving change. The fellowship molded me into a confident, knowledgeable conservation leader.”

ZIMBABWE’S PATIENCE GANDIWA IS A DRIVING FORCE FOR CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP



One of the greatest champions of the Africa Protected Area Directors network is Professor Patience Gandiwa, the Director and Technical Advisor for International Conservation Affairs at Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks). Professor Gandiwa advocates for the urgency of addressing critical issues, particularly in funding, acknowledging the need to have inclusive spaces that represent a whole-of-society approach. Professor Gandiwa’s conservation journey started at AWF almost two decades ago as a research intern in Zimbabwe. It is a journey she remembers fondly and keeps close to her heart as she mentors young conservationists, particularly young women passionate about leading in various sectors.



“Women are at the heart of conservation, and I am always encouraged when I go to the field and interact with women who are leading in their spaces to elevate their local and regional economies. Young African girls are now considering conservation as a career they could pursue which brings us closer to the deliberate ownership and sustainable conservation we are collectively seeking to achieve,” Professor Gandiwa argues.

GEOSPATIAL TOOLS DEMOCRATIZE DECISION-MAKING



Wildlife authorities across Africa are conversant with GIS monitoring (GIS stands for geographic information systems, computer-based tools used to store, visualize, analyze, and interpret geographic data). Handheld devices and training provided by organizations like AWF allow rangers and scouts to monitor wildlife movement patterns and note potential poaching or other incursions to parks and conserved areas. But GIS tools are also essential to a less well-known aspect of conservation—land-use planning. Land-use planning can generate a compelling, sustainable vision and chart a path to reach it that maximizes synergies (and minimizes conflict) between stakeholders. Spatial analyses and comparisons of satellite-based datasets help AWF offer community planners and local civil authorities a rich perspective on everything from macro degradation trends in a landscape to local-level pressures and drivers.

Case in point? AWF’s work in Kilombero, Tanzania, where we defined a sustainable land use plan across a watershed slated for heavy agricultural development and implemented a reforestation project as part of SUSTAIN, a partnership with



RIGHT: MICHAEL CHAMBALO, EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF MOFU VILLAGE IN TANZANIA, WITH A HAND-DRAWN LANDSCAPE MAP IN 2016. GIS TOOLS AND ANALYSIS SUPPORTED A LAND-USE PLAN FOR TANZANIA’S KILOMBERO WATERSHED THAT BALANCES AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT WITH SPACE FOR WILDLIFE MOVEMENT AND ESSENTIAL FOREST.

IUCN, Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI), and the Kilombero Sugar Company Limited (KSCL). Rwanda is another example of how spatial tools help large-scale planning. There, government planners are using GIS and other resources to understand how to manage human settlement and gorilla habitat in the face of climate change pressures and limited space.

Spatial tools also play a role in risk management. Conflict monitoring in the Bili Uele landscape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has improved authorities’ understanding of the movements of seasonal herders and rebel groups, and generated intelligence leading to a marked decline in violent confrontations and better conditions for socio-economic investment and conservation.



TOP: DR. ALBAN KISIFE OF BMUV AND AWF CEO KADDU SEBUNYA AT THE 2024 APAD CONFERENCE.
 ABOVE: SIMON MUCHATIBAYA, AWF TECHNICAL ADVISOR IN ZIMBABWE (LEFT), JOINED DAY 2 OF THE APAD CONFERENCE.

Africa Protected Area Directors (APAD) Create Space for Cooperation for Achieving African—and Global—Conservation Ambitions

The second official conference of the Africa Protected Area Directors, held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe from March 5–8, included more than 150 participants from 31 African countries, comprising directors of protected area authorities, government representatives, youth, Indigenous Peoples representatives, local community representatives, civil society organizations, and development partners and donors, as well as experts from Zimbabwe.

Hosted by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) with support from the African Wildlife Foundation (APAD’s secretariat) and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), the gathering was a powerful example of how African-led conservation is building bridges across diverse stakeholder groups to find common ground and create pathways for

policy implementation. Topics addressed included the importance of multidirectional capacity building, improving sustainable financing for protected and conserved areas, enhancing governance and management effectiveness, tackling climate change as an African imperative, building on the importance of existing local and customary knowledge and institutions, and taking integrated landscape management approaches that factor in stakeholders across an ecosystem.

Present was Dr. Alban Kisife, Policy Officer for BMUV, who gave a keynote address on the opening day, saying, “Germany... recognizes the urgent need for us all to join forces, share best practices and promulgate knowledge exchange in the fight against the three planetary crises [biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution], in a whole of government and whole of society approach.”

AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

2023 Annual Report

Read our 2023 Annual Report to learn how the African Wildlife Foundation is building a future where people and wildlife thrive:

[ANNUALREPORT.AWF.ORG](https://annualreport.awf.org)



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