Initial Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Sustainable Forest Management

African States

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Background Paper prepared for the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat

In order to have a broad overview of the impacts of COVID-19 on forests, forest sector, and forest dependent people, and to assess the potential of forests to diminish the adverse impacts of the pandemic, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), at its fifteenth session, requested the UNFF Secretariat, in consultation with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and with input from members of the Forum, to compile an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on: (i) sustainable forest management (SFM), (ii) the forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, (iii) forest financing and international cooperation, and to present this assessment to the Forum at its sixteenth session in April 2021. To initiate this assessment and collect information, the UNFF Secretariat commissioned five assessments to be conducted on a regional basis.

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List of Acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AU	African Union
COVID-19	Corona Virus Diseases
COC	Chain of Custody
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GhaFFaP	Ghana Federation of Forest and Farm Producers
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PA	Protected Area
PEFC	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
UNFFS	United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat
WHO	World Health Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WB	World Bank

Executive Summary

Background

This report provides an assessment of the impact and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on forests and forest dependent people in Africa. It also sheds light on the potential of forests to diminish the adverse impacts of COVID-19 pandemic; the role and opportunities provided by forests in a post COVID-19 recovery and its potential contribution to inclusive and long-term sustainable development.

This Africa report is one of five other regional studies covering Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and other groups, North America and Latin America. These studies are in response to paragraph 14 of UNFF 15 omnibus resolution (E/2020/42-ECN.18/2020/9) adopted at the fifteenth session of United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF15) on 30th June 2020.

Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods approach comprising of a literature review, structured online questionnaires (that could be adapted to the specific context in a sub-region), and key informant interviews; The assessment framework for the review of impacts and assessment of implications of COVID-19 in the forest sector in Africa was framed around the three pillars of SFM, namely economic, social, and environment.

COVID-19 in Africa

The trend of COVID-19 infections, globally and in Africa, has been on the increase since the first reported incidence. Regarding the COVID-19 situation in Africa, as at 6th December 2020 the number of confirmed cases was 2,261,589, deaths 53,853 and recoveries 1,927,697. Southern and Northern Africa had the highest reported cases with 894,700 and 753,900, respectively. These two sub-regions account for 75% of COVID-19 cases in Africa as at 3rd December 2020 (Africa CDC, 2020).

Contrary to other regions, Africa has witnessed high rates of recovery from COVID-19 – the continent has therefore not encountered the high degree of pressure on its health systems that had initially been feared. However, stakeholders in many African countries have been forced to implement a variety of measures and responses to curb the spread of the pandemic in their respective jurisdictions. These measures have had direct negative economic impacts in Africa, especially for the most vulnerable, and those in the informal sector and forest communities.

The responses of African governments or public sector institutions to the COVID-19 pandemic have included:

- Border closures and suspension of domestic and international flights;
- Economic relief/stimulus measures for public and businesses;
- Lockdowns (partial and total);
- Social distancing/mandatory mask wearing; and
- Restrictions to market access.

Similarly, private sector stakeholders have been actively involved in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 through community sensitisation efforts and the contribution of resources, such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and sanitary materials. Additionally, NGO/CSOs have undergone adjustments to their operations, with many leveraging the use of ICT and social media tools to conduct

institutional work. Though many NGO/CSOs have seen significant cuts to funding due to the pandemic's global economic impact, some have been able to pursue support measures to protect the livelihood of forest-dependent communities in Africa.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Forest Sector-Key findings

The key findings on the impacts and implications of COVID-19 measures on the forest sector in Africa include:

- Movement restrictions and measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 have had negative outcomes for sustainable forest management and forest protection efforts in Africa; The measures have resulted in the postponement, and in some cases outright cancellation, of forest management activities that may have short term rather than long term effects.
- Funding challenges triggered by the pandemic have been a major contributory factor that could impact on forest management and protection in the short term. It also has the potential for a longer term effect if the pandemic exists beyond 2020/2021.
- National forest institutions are likely to struggle maintaining their staff due to a decline in funding for forest protection activities and may result in job losses if the pandemic continues to spread;
- Illegal harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) has been on the increase due to reduced monitoring by the public sector forest agencies;
- Ecotourism, especially in East and Southern Africa has grounded to a halt by the pandemic due to the ensuing movement restriction measures;
- Communities dependent on forest-based tourism for jobs and livelihoods experienced decline in their incomes and risk their engagement in illegal activities such as poaching and illegal timber production;
- The vulnerability had pushed many indigenous communities to retreating deeper into forests for food, fuel, and shelter, and to protect themselves from the risk of COVID-19 infection;
- Increase in sexual and gender-based violence in the communities due to the fact that perpetrators feel frustrated as a result of the restrictions and use this as a way to overcome their anger;
- Impact on youth was mainly in the area of job losses due to the COVID-19 measures;
- Supply chains were adversely affected impacting on exports of timber and imports of forest products, spares and machinery due to COVID-19 measures/restrictions;
- Manufacturing Industries have experienced increase in their cost of production;
- Governments and development partners have been forced to reallocate funds from the forest sector to healthcare due to the urgent need to curb the spread of the pandemic;
- Holding of virtual meetings has enabled international and regional cooperation on forests and forestry issues to continue to good effect;

Conclusions

The pandemic has had a negative economic impact on forest sector firms, besetting these businesses with difficult burdens relating to employment, supply chain and trade as well as the lack of investment capital. Also, due to governance and financing weaknesses within Africa's forestry agencies, the pandemic has contributed to an increase in the incidence of illicit activities, such as illegal logging and

poaching, and has hindered efforts to promote SFM, afforestation, silvicultural practices, and conservation initiatives. Likewise, the livelihoods of indigenous communities, women and the youth in forest communities have been threatened by the pandemic. Nonetheless, COVID-19 has brought to the fore the importance of forests to post-pandemic recovery efforts, especially in relation to the sustainable management of forests and development.

Recommendations

Considering the findings from the study, the following recommendations are suggested for forest sector stakeholders:

- The forest sector is critically important in "building back better", building resilience to any disaster and responding to COVID-19 in both the short and long terms;
- As a long-term strategy, policymakers should partner with the private sector to promote sustainable investment by mainstreaming sustainable forest management into national and international investment policies;
- There are opportunities for forests to contribute to sustainable pathways through job creation, improvement in livelihood, prevention of future pandemics, and contributions towards economic growth;
- The zoonotic origins of COVID-19, coupled with its socio-economic challenges has highlighted the importance of developing initiatives that incorporate forest communities and other stakeholders, as critical partners in the development of solutions to social, economic, and environmental problems in the forest sector;
- Through lessons learned in this pandemic and from other sectors, there is the opportunity to leverage technology to facilitate the real-time capture of data on forests, forest monitoring and forest production activities and trade to improve decision making in the sector;
- Consideration should be given to compilation of data on the availability, use, production, marketing/trade and consumption of NTFPs, to promote their commercialisation;
- More robust mechanisms are needed to protect workers and women's rights given their vulnerability and their potential of being the most impacted by such crises; and
- National Forest Financing Strategies (NFFS) should be adopted and integrated as an integral part of the national COVID-19 recovery plans, and as part of appropriate national frameworks, including integrated national financing frameworks.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to COVID-19 Context

1.1.1. General Overview

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was first reported from Wuhan, China, on 31 December 2019 (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020)[1]. Africa confirmed its first COVID-19 case in Egypt on 14th February 2020. Since then, every country in Africa has been affected and more than 1 million cases reported. The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a global pandemic on 11th March 2020. This pandemic has constituted one of the most devastating global crises since World War II (WHO 2020).

As at 3rd December 2020, Africa had 2,196,257 reported cases, 52,490 deaths and 1,862,685 recoveries. Southern and Northern Africa had the highest reported cases with 894,700 and 753,900, respectively. These two sub-regions account for 75% of cases in Africa as at 3rd December 2020 (Africa CDC, 2020).

African governments have been quick to adopt public health measures in line with WHO and Africa (CDC) guidelines to curtail the spread of COVID-19. These measures such as restrictions on movements, lockdowns, social distancing, border closures, etc., have however had heavy social and economic consequences on the African continent. What started as an unprecedented health crisis is destabilising the entire global economy. As with other sectors, the crisis has impacted and continues to impact on the forest sector in many ways. These include the disruption to livelihoods, employment, global supply chains, reverse migration from urban to rural areas thereby resulting in the increasing dependence on forests as well as significantly increasing pressure on forest health and biodiversity. Furthermore, the economic crisis triggered by COVID-19 is likely to push 34.3 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020 (UNDESA, 2020). Extreme poverty rate in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to increase by 2 percentage points as a result of the pandemic (Montes *et al.* 2020).

Forests are acting as safety nets with more people among the rural poor turning to forest products for their subsistence needs during this crisis (Sacko, 2020). Forests provide economical and livelihood support for many people around the world, especially the rural poor, generating more than 86 million jobs. Forest sector provides job for not less than 54.2 million people in the world (ILO, 2020). About 31% of the world's population depends on wood-based energy for cooking, while up to 1 billion people feed on bush meat. There are more than 1.5 billion people, of which women, children and other vulnerable groups depend on forests for food, nutritional diversity and income (FAO, 2018). In Africa, over two-thirds of the population relies on forests for their livelihoods, while fuelwood accounts for about 90% of primary energy source for households (Ebrahim and Weng, 2016). Driven by the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is predicted to fall to -3.3% in 2020, pushing the region into its first recession in 25 years.

Forest and forest-based sectors however offer opportunities in mitigating impacts and can contribute to building back better post COVID-19 with sustainable and green solutions. Already since the start of the pandemic, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests members have leveraged digital technologies to facilitate discussions with the different stakeholders on addressing COVID-19's impact on forestry

[1] https://www.who.int/bangladesh/emergencies/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-update

sector and explored means to promote building back better through a series of policy briefs and virtual meetings with the different stakeholders in the forest sector.

At the fifteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF15) held virtually on 30 June 2020 the UNFF Secretariat (UNFFS) was requested, to compile an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic[2]. To achieve this goal, the UNFFS, in September commissioned a series of regional studies namely Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Western Europe. This report is one of the regional studies and covers Africa.

The studies sought to assess the impact and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable forest management (SFM), livelihoods of forest dependent people and indigenous community, women and youth, institutional capacity building, forest industries and trade and investment/finance; international and regional cooperation on forests and forest issues.

1.2. Objectives of this report

The main objective of this study is to provide an initial assessment of the impacts and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable forest management (SFM) and the forest sector in the Africa Region, drawing on existing published studies and reports, news items, policy briefs, supplemented by consultations with relevant stakeholders. This report therefore provides findings on the impact and implications of COVID-19 on the forest sector in Africa.

1.3. Structure of the report

The rest of this report is structured in 4 sections as follows:

- **Section 2** highlights the approach to collating data and information (the assessment framework).
- **Section 3** provides an overview of the forest sector in Africa, and the overall COVID-19 context in the region; This sets the context for drawing on the COVID-19 impacts, and implications identified in the Africa region.
- **Section 4** highlights the findings on the impact of COVID-19 and the implications on sustainable forest management and conservation activities, livelihoods of forest dependent people, indigenous people, women and youth, forest industries (labour markets, employment, domestic and international demand for forest products and services); investments and financing as well as forest certification.
- **Section 5** presents summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations for "building back better" and promoting a green growth pathway.

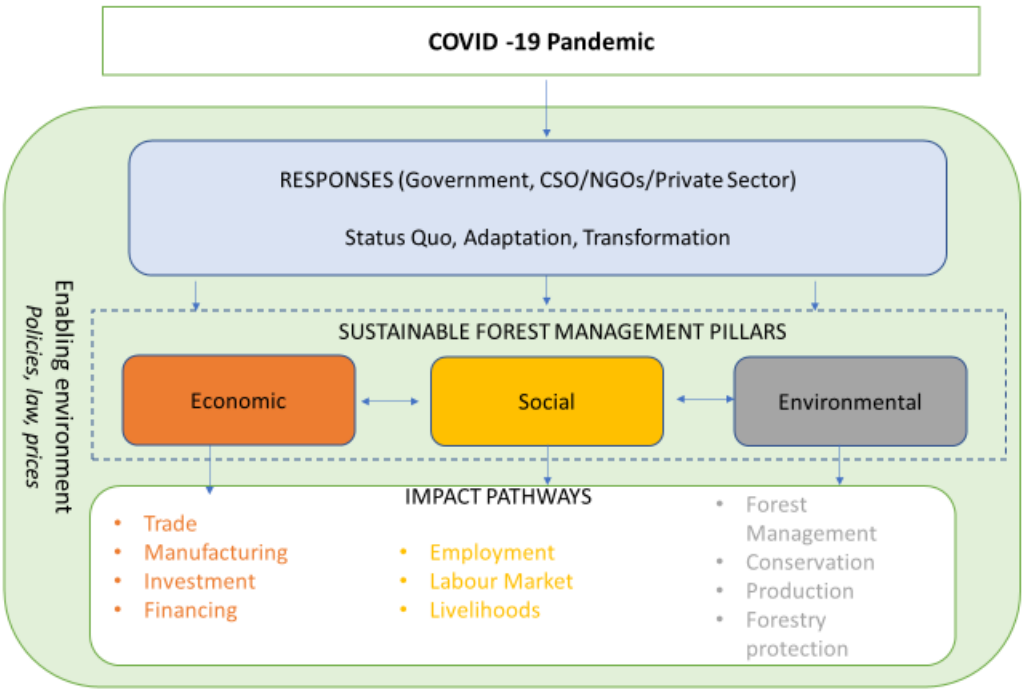
[2] In accordance with paragraph 14 of the UNFF15 resolution, the UNFF Secretariat is requested, in consultation with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and with input from members of the Forum, to compile an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on: i) sustainable forest management (SFM), ii) the forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, iii) forest financing and international cooperation, and to present this assessment to the Forum at its sixteenth session in April 2021.

2. Methodology

2.1. Assessment Framework

The review of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the forestry sector in Africa is framed around the 3 pillars of SFM, namely Economic, Social and Environmental as shown in Figure 1. The review explores the impact pathways and the extent to which support could be provided to minimise the impact but also the extent to which these pathways could be used to promote the recovery of the forestry sector in Africa beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: Assessment framework



2.2. Research Questions

The impact assessment questions are related to:

(i) What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable forest management (SFM) and the forest sector?

(ii) What have been the responses by the forestry sector specifically? How have general responses by governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector to the pandemic affected SFM and the forestry sector at large?

(iii) What are the mitigation measures necessary for the forest sector's recovery and how can these measures enhance the contribution of forests to inclusive sustainable development?

(iv) What are the emerging opportunities that COVID-19 has brought to the Forestry Sector?

Detailed questions and related sources of evidence are contained in Annex 1.

2.3. Data Collection Methods

A mixed-methods approach, involving a literature review based on desk review of existing published studies, reports, news items, webinar summaries/recordings and policy briefs, a structured online questionnaire, and key informant interviews was used.

In the **first phase** literature is reviewed of existing published studies, reports, news items, policy briefs and related webinar summaries.

The **second phase** involved an online survey of UNFF National Focal Points, Major Groups, CPF, private sector, academia and regional/sub-regional organizations.

In the **third phase** key informant interviews were carried out with in-depth telephone or Skype interviews with individuals and institutions identified through literature reviewed, discussions with the UNFF focal points and a snow balling effect in identifying persons involved in activities, projects and programmes of the UNFFS and other forestry related activities.

It is worth pointing out that prior to the UNFF15 resolution that requested the UNFFS to compile an initial assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on SFM there was an African Union initiated project **"Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the management of forests and trees in Africa"** in its inception phase, which was eventually launched in July 2020. The project objective is "To assess the impact of COVID-19 on SFM and improve the capacity of selected regional organizations and countries to design/update improved forest management programmes and action plans in support of socio-economic recovery and inclusive development." The African Union (AU) is collaborating with the UNFFS, African Forest Forum (AFF), FAO, CIFOR and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC-Africa region) in the implementation of the project. The project duration is July 2020 – December 2021 and is being implemented in two phases[3]

As the overall goals of the project and this assessment study complemented each other, therefore, in developing the Africa region report, the consultant coordinated with the project and drew heavily on the sub-regional reports and indepth national reports prepared under the UNFFS/AU project. This approach ensured that:

- Logistical and technological challenges could better be managed through the structures of the UNFFS/AU project
- Approach used provided the opportunity to gain access to key informants in forest-dependent communities drawing on the network of consultants working on the UNFFS/AU project
- The coordination with the UNFF/AU project provided indepth information and insights of COVID-19 impact in the region and is expected to further enrich work on the assessment of COVID-19 impact being undertaken through the UNFF15 resolution.

2.4. Limitations

Limitations that were identified are as follows:

- Poor/low survey response rates from the UNFF national focal points in Africa

[3] AU/UNFFS project: Phase 1(July 2020 – 31 December 2020) focus is on improving understanding of the impact of the pandemic on forests and forest dependent communities at national and regional level. Phase 2 (January – December 2021) focus is on strengthening the capacities of countries and sub-regional organizations to develop and implement strategies and measures to enhance the contribution of trees and forests to socio-economic recovery and inclusive development.

- Assessment of impacts and implications of COVID-19 on the forest sector was undertaken at a time when the impacts of the pandemic were still unfolding.
- There is a general acknowledgement in the region that there is a limited number of reliable academic and grey literature on impacts of COVID-19 on the forest sector in Africa.
- Generally poor response rates to the questionnaires that were sent out and invitations for key informant interviews.

  In Southern Africa (Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Republic of South Africa) some communities targeted for assessment do not have access to internet connectivity/ digital platforms and therefore impacting on the number of communities reached.

2.5. Mitigation measures:

The following were the main mitigation measure put in place to address the limitations:

- The use of key informant interviews and their perceptions on the impacts of COVID-19 was used to address the evolving nature of the pandemic. Also, the use of webinars in following up on evolving issues and impacts on the different stakeholders was helpful.
- Despite the lack of reliable academic literature on the subject matter coupled with the low response rates, the three methods used, namely the literature review, survey and key informant interviews in the sub regions allowed for triangulation of the data and there was therefore sufficient information in the areas of interest in the assessment for the Africa Region study.

3. Forest sector in Africa and COVID-19 context

3.1. Overview of forest sector in the Africa region

Africa is richly endowed with vast tropical forests, ranging from areas with the least forest cover in Northern Africa to the Congo Basin in Central Africa, which houses the world's second largest continuous block of tropical forest. Africa has 675 million hectares of forest and 350 million hectares of wooded land which together cover 35 per cent of its total land area (FAO, 2010). This includes tropical moist forests primarily in Central and West Africa, tropical dry forest, mostly in East and Southern Africa, including the miombo woodlands in Tanzania and Mozambique, and Mediterranean forests and woodland in North Africa

Table 2: Forest area by region

Region/subregion	Forest area (1 000 ha)			
	1990	2000	2010	2020
Eastern and Southern Africa	346 034	332 580	314 849	295 778
Northern Africa	39 926	38 104	36 833	35 151
Western and Central Africa	356 842	339 365	324 333	305 710
Total Africa	**742 801**	**710 049**	**676 015**	**636 639**
East Asia	209 906	229 071	252 390	271 403
South and Southeast Asia	326 511	308 077	305 461	296 047
Western and Central Asia	48 976	50 262	53 109	55 237
Total Asia	**585 393**	**587 410**	**610 960**	**622 687**
Europe excl. Russian Federation	185 369	193 000	198 847	202 150
Total Europe	**994 319**	**1 002 268**	**1 013 982**	**1 017 461**
Caribbean	5 961	6 808	7 497	7 889
Central America	28 002	25 819	23 706	22 404
North America	721 317	719 721	722 987	722 417
Total North and Central America	**755 279**	**752 349**	**754 190**	**752 710**
Total Oceania	**184 974**	**183 328**	**181 015**	**185 248**
Total South America	**973 666**	**922 645**	**870 154**	**844 186**
WORLD	**4 236 433**	**4 158 050**	**4 106 317**	**4 058 931**

Source: FAO, 2020

As shown in Table 3 Africa has the largest annual rate of net forest loss of 3.9 million ha in the period 2010–2020 (FAO,2020).

Table 3: Rate of forest loss by region

Region/subregion	Forest area annual change					
	1990–2000		2000–2010		2010–2020	
	1 000 ha/yr	%	1 000 ha/yr	%	1 000 ha/yr	%
Eastern and Southern Africa	-1 345	-0.40	-1 773	-0.55	-1 907	-0.62
Northern Africa	-182	-0.47	-127	-0.34	-168	-0.47
Western and Central Africa	-1 748	-0.50	-1 503	-0.45	-1 862	-0.59
Total Africa	**-3 275**	**-0.45**	**-3 403**	**-0.49**	**-3 938**	**-0.60**
East Asia	1 917	0.88	2 332	0.97	1 901	0.73
South and Southeast Asia	-1 843	-0.58	-262	-0.09	-941	-0.31
Western and Central Asia	129	0.26	285	0.55	213	0.39
Total Asia	**202**	**0.03**	**2 355**	**0.39**	**1 173**	**0.19**
Europe excl. Russian Federation	763	0.40	585	0.30	330	0.16
Total Europe	**795**	**0.08**	**1 171**	**0.12**	**348**	**0.03**
Caribbean	85	1.34	69	0.97	39	0.51
Central America	-218	-0.81	-211	-0.85	-130	-0.56
North America	-160	-0.02	327	0.05	-57	-0.01
Total North and Central America	**-293**	**-0.04**	**184**	**0.02**	**-148**	**-0.02**
Total Oceania	**-165**	**-0.09**	**-231**	**-0.13**	**423**	**0.23**
Total South America	**-5 102**	**-0.54**	**-5 249**	**-0.58**	**-2 597**	**-0.30**
WORLD	**-7 838**	**-0.19**	**-5 173**	**-0.13**	**-4 739**	**-0.12**

Note: The rate of change (%) is calculated as the compound annual change rate.

Source: FAO, 2020

Trends in forest area (1990 – 2020) and net annual change in forest cover for the different regions in Africa as shown in Table 3 reflect a decline in the forest areas in the region between 1990 and 2020. However, trends in forest cover are usually over longer time frames and the full impact of COVID-19 on forest areas of Africa may take a longer period to be experienced.

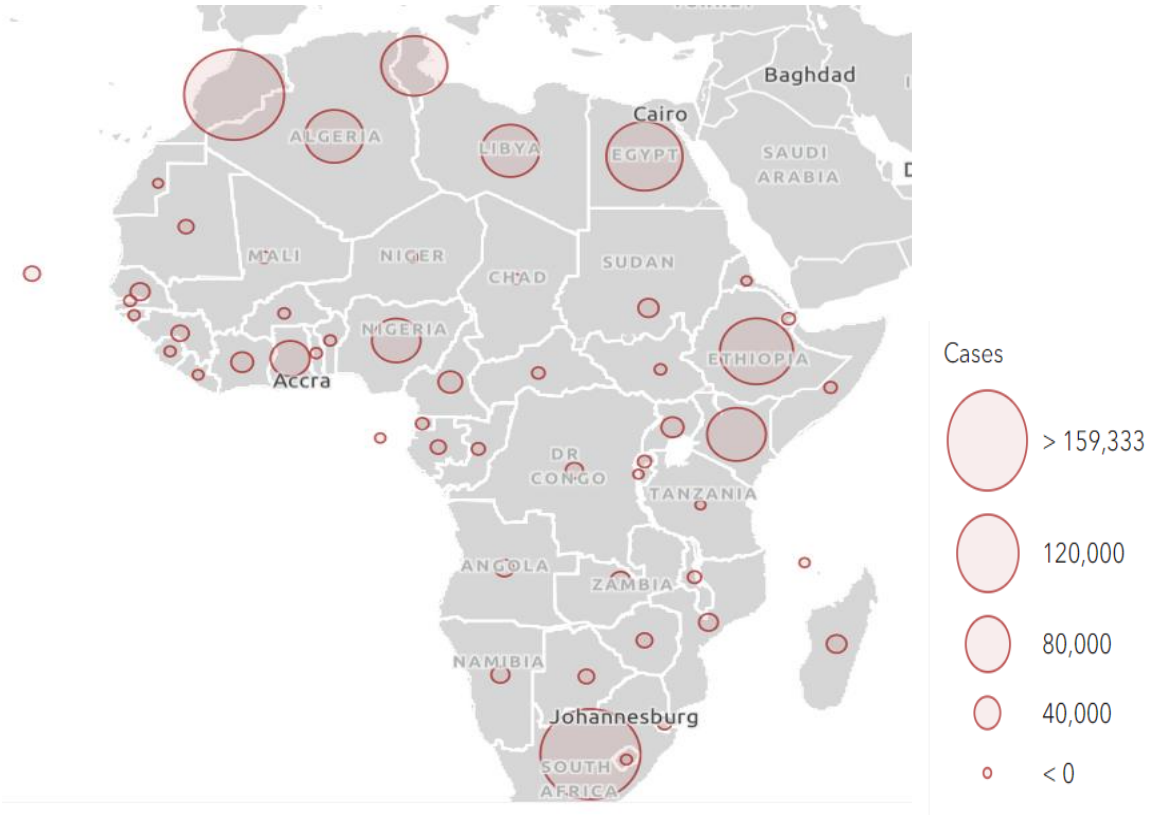
An estimated 65% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa is rural and depends directly or indirectly on forests and woodlands for food, fuelwood, building materials, medicines, oils, gums, resins and fodder. So, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the dependence could be higher and provide many challenges that could limit the capacity of forests to provide meaningful and sustainable ecosystem services that could contribute to socio-economic development of the continent.

3.2. COVID-19 Context

3.2.1. Trends and Status

The trend of COVID-19 infection, globally and in Africa, has been on the increase since the first reported incidence in December 2019. Regards the COVID-19 situation in Africa, as at 6th December 2020 the number of confirmed cases is 2,261,589, deaths 53,853 and recoveries 1,927,697. The situation in the countries of Africa is show in Figure 3

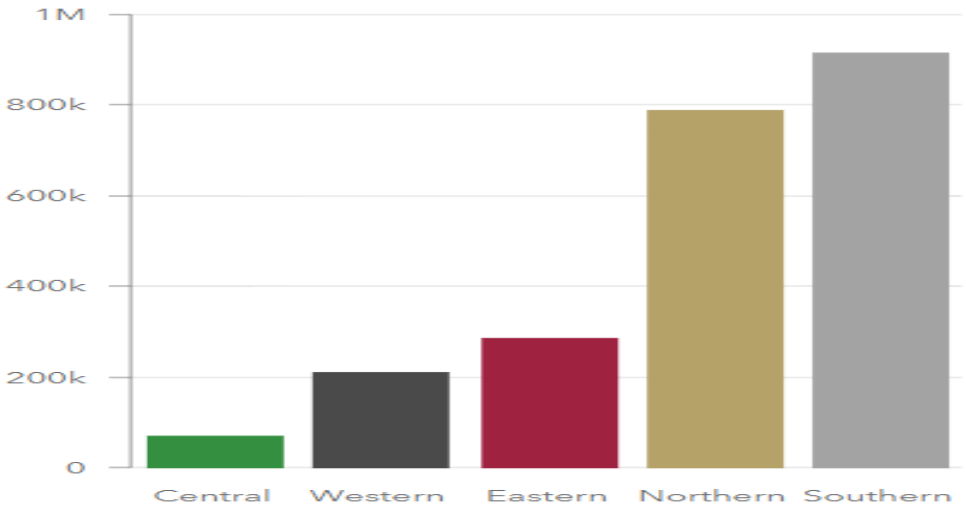
Figure 3: Map of Coronavirus cases in Africa



Source: Africa CDC, 2020

Southern Africa, North Africa, East Africa and West Africa appears to have the largest of COVID-19 cases. Central Africa and the Sahel region have the lowest confirmed cases in Africa. The distribution of cases by sub-region as at 6th December 2020 is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Distribution of COVID-19 cases by sub-region



Source: Africa CDC, 2020

Table 4 Top ten African countries with confirmed cases of COVID-19

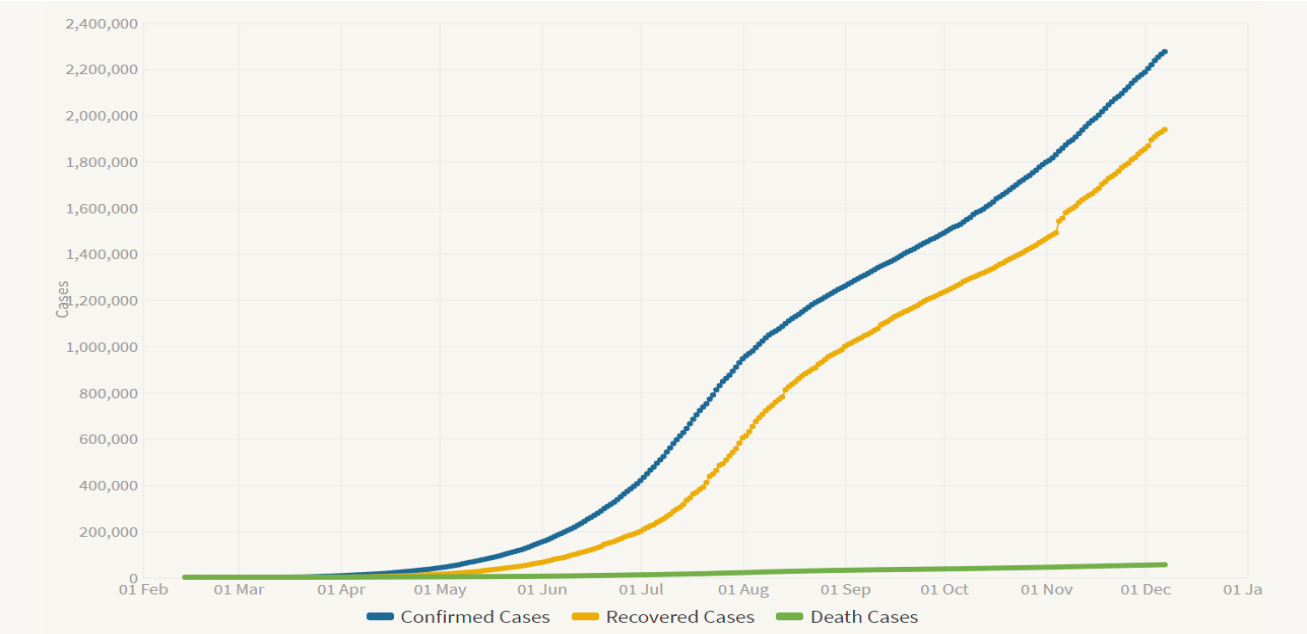
Country	Number of confirmed cases as at December 8 2020	Sub-region
South Africa	810,449	Southern Africa
Morocco	376,738	Northern Africa
Egypt	118,014	Northern Africa
Ethiopia	112,740	Eastern Africa
Tunisia	102,991	Northern Africa
Kenya	87,984	Eastern Africa
Algeria	87,502	Northern Africa
Libya	85,529	Northern Africa
Nigeria	68,937	West Africa
Ghana	52096	West Africa

Source: Africa CDC, 2020

Central Africa and the Sahel area appear to have very low confirmed cases. Southern Africa confirmed cases is mainly coming from one country- South Africa. South Africa has also reported a new variant of the virus and may require new measures that would come with more adverse impacts. South Africa however happens to be one of Africa's industrialised economies and its manufacturing and tourism sectors would most likely be impacted by COVID-19. The tourism sectors in Northern Africa countries such as Morocco and Egypt that have high confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be adversely affected. This impact on the forestry sector is discussed further in Section 4.1.2.

Trends in confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Africa is shown in Figure 5. Africa has seen a sharp rise in confirmed cases and recoveries since July of 2020. Unlike other regions the high recoveries from COVID-19 has contributed to Africa not experiencing pressure on their health systems as initially feared. Deaths from COVID-19 have also remained low over the period March to the present (6th December 2020).

Figure 5: Trends of COVID-19 confirmed cases, recoveries and deaths in Africa



Source: Kawamara, 2020

3.2.2. Measures and responses taken in Africa

Public sector response

In response to the pandemic, the different countries in Africa have taken various measures and responses ranging from lock down measures, reduced movement to mandatory 'stay-at-home' measures (Milken Institute, 2020), restrictions to access to markets, social distancing measures, restrictions on domestic/international travel, etc. Measures taken by several African governments are shown below and details of measures and responses by country and potential impact is contained in Annex 2.

- Border closures and suspension of domestic and international flights;
- Economic relief/stimulus measures for public and businesses (e.g. lowered interest rates, tax reductions, bail outs for companies/ institutions, cash disbursements, food distribution, free water and electricity for limited periods;
- Declaration of State of emergency in the country/Emergency/COVID-19 fund created;
- Lockdowns (partial lockdown/total lock down or lock down of high-risk areas/regions);
- Provision of protective personal equipment (PPE);
- Social distancing/mandatory mask wearing;
- Restrictions to market access;
- Health Screening/quarantining/ communication and awareness creation on COVID-19;
- Ban on group activities and social gatherings including schools;
- Job reductions.

Most of these actions were undertaken by governments or public sector institutions. Implementation of the measures has involved technical partnerships with governments, multilateral institutions, the private sector and civil society. UN Country Teams in the regions are working with donors to build partnerships with national and local governments, as well as communities and the private sector to ensure that the SDGs remain on track and remove challenges to development while addressing the COVID-19. The UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa has provided a guidance note for greener recovery through nature-based solutions. UNDP could provide assistance to new emerging focus areas in the full Green Stimulus Programme for Africa as a contribution towards Africa's recovery from the devastating COVID-19 pandemic (Chirwa, 2020)

Private sector responses

Private sector responses to COVID-19 pandemic on the African continent have involved a variety of responses by businesses and business associations. The private sector was very much involved in contributions for the supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and awareness creation activities in the countries in the sub-region. For instance, in Ghana (West Africa) the private sector recognised the challenge to government and stepped in to make contributions for the purchase of PPEs and also fund a 100-bed infectious diseases centre that was built using mainly Ghanaian experts within a period of 12 weeks (Adam, 2020). Individual trade associations and companies have continued to make donations of PPEs, sanitary materials and other items to local hospitals as contributions towards the handling of COVID-19 pandemic. Box 1 shows an example of the private sector in the forest industries' response to COVID-19.

Box 1: Private Sector response in Ghana

Private Sector response in Ghana – SAMARTEX Timber and Plywood Ltd.

"Additionally, in our response to the COVID-19 prevention protocols prescribed by the President, the company in collaboration with the opinion leaders undertook pragmatic measures to help protect the people in the communities. These measures included but not limited to the following:

1. Massive sensitization and education through community information centres, radio centres, banners and flyers.
2. Donation of veronica buckets, water stands, and sinks, soaps, nose masks and hand sanitizers to the various communities, fire service, health directorates, National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), security agencies, and media houses that cuts across three municipalities, namely, Amenfi West, Amenfi East and Aowin Suaman and
3. Mounting of barriers and provision of PPEs and temperature guns to do basic checks for both the indigenes and all persons entering or exiting the communities.

These unbudgeted costs have further worsened our cashflow challenges as a company considering the already existed problems being confronted with our company during this period".

Mr. Richard Nsenkyire (M.D SAMARTEX)

Source: Nsenkyire, 2020)

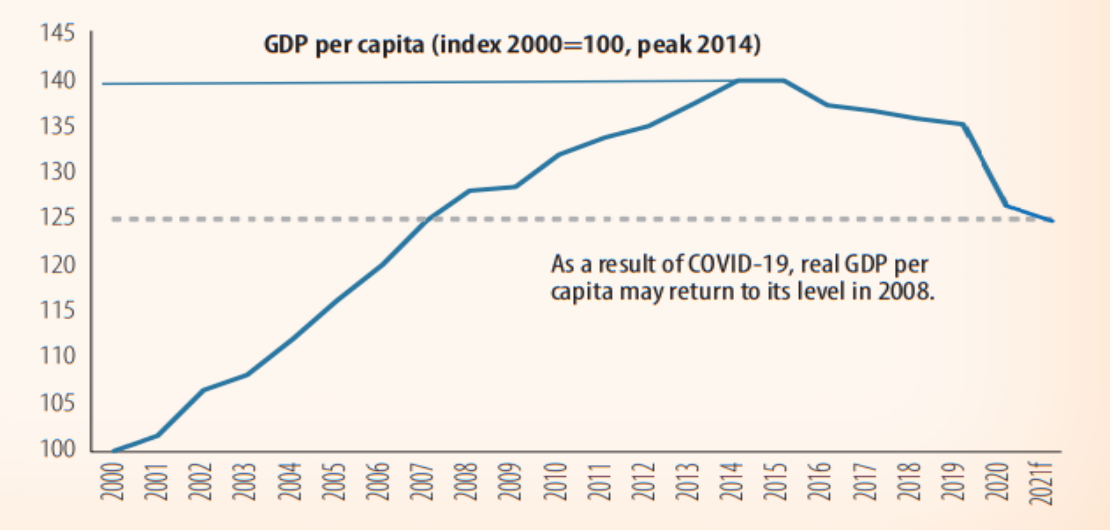
NGO/CSO Responses

Non-Governmental Organizations/Civil Society Organizations (NGOs/CSOs) in Africa have undergone adjustments and changes to their operations due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. For many these organizations funding decisions have had to be made, thereby impacting on some social intervention programmes that have either been cut back significantly or halted. These NGOs/CSOs have leveraged the use of ICT and social media tools to conduct meetings, trainings, and other institutional work. For example, in Ghana some stakeholders have also actively supported affected communities with food aid, PPEs and awareness creation on COVID-19 protocols targeted at containing the spread of the disease.

In Southern Africa, Angola has received funding for community projects, that will be implemented by the NGO - Associação de Conservação do Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Integrado Rural (ACADIR). The work will include extension of an existing conservation agriculture project, food-for-work schemes and other social relief initiatives. While in Botswana support has been received though BirdLife for community-based natural resource management solutions in Chobe area and Ngamiland. This support enables BirdLife to secure the salaries of over 400 personnel from Community Based Organisations, as well as developing alternative livelihood options for the targeted rural communities. Further support is being channelled through Kalahari Conservation Society to initiate cash-for-work programmes that will include infrastructure repairs, maintenance and development in Chobe National Park and Moremi Game Reserve.

The pandemic, as well as the responses to curb its spread on the African continent, have been responsible for the significant economic downturn. Due to COVID-19, the World Bank predicts a decline in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita to 2008 levels (Figure 5). At a May 2020, meeting the Heads of States for the East African sub region, members acknowledged the region's key economic sectors were experiencing a slowdown as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Heads of state noted that the highly impacted sectors were the agriculture, trade, manufacturing and industry, tourism, hospitality and entertainment. This is generally reflected in the other sub-regions of the continent.

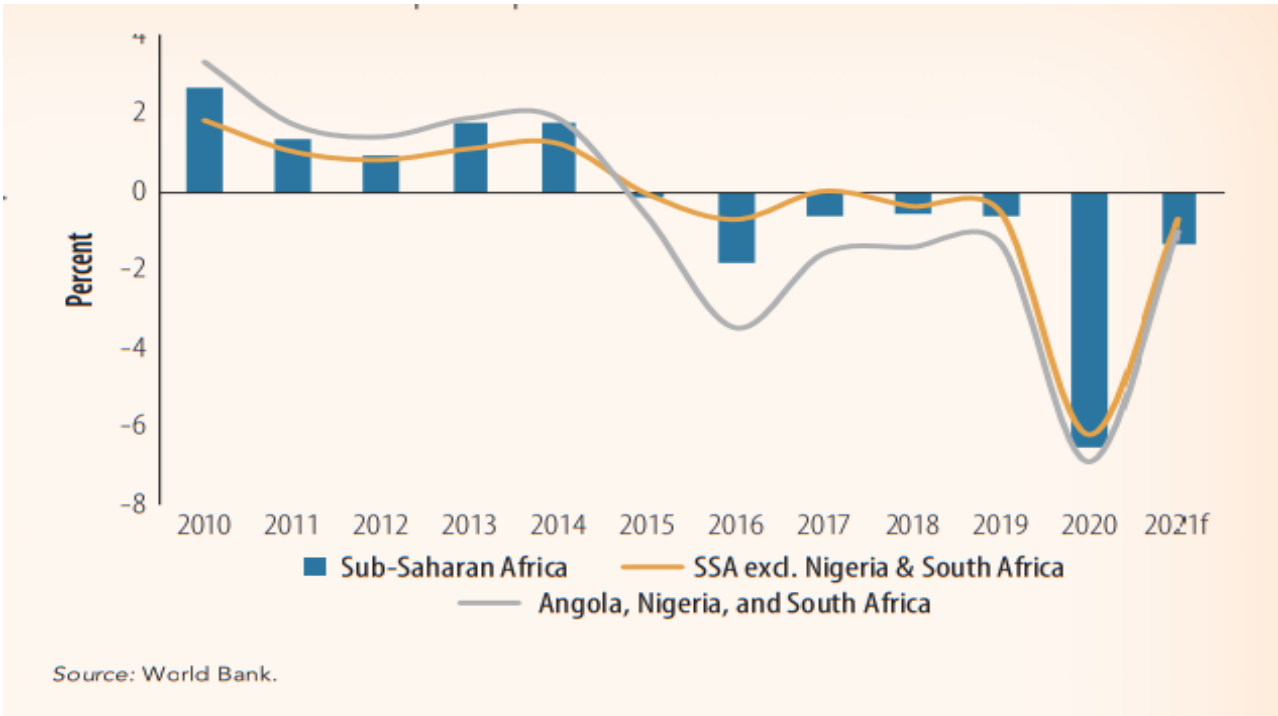
Figure 6: Real GDP per capita (2000-2021)



Source: World Bank, 2020

UNCTAD estimates that due to COVID-19 African economies could fall by about 1.4% in GDP, with smaller economies facing contraction of up to 7.8%. The contraction would mainly be due to export adjustments affecting primary commodity exporters, the losses in tax revenue which will reduce the capacity of governments to respond to the crisis. Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to witness a decrease in real GDP of more than 6% in 2020 (Figure 6).

Figure 7: Real GDP for sub-Saharan Africa



With the COVID-19 measures taken by governments, the Economic Commission of Africa predicts that vulnerable households in Africa are approximately 6% less likely to escape poverty, with a potential population of between 5 to 29 million expected to be pushed into extreme poverty (Milken Institute, 2020).

A survey by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on Key challenges faced by firms in Africa as a result of COVID-19 measures and responses are as shown in Table 5. Falling demand for services and products, lack of operational cash flow, reduction in meeting new customers and closing businesses were the four top challenges faced by companies in Africa.

Table 5: Key challenges faced by companies in Africa as due to COVID-19

Order	Challenges
1	Drop in demand for products/services
2	Lack of operational cash flow
3	Reduction of opportunities to meet new customers
4	Business is closed
5	Issues with changing business strategies and offering alternative products/services
6	Decline in workers' production/productivity from working at home
7	Many workers cannot return to work
8	Challenges in logistics and shipping of products
9	Difficulties in obtaining supplies of raw materials essential for production

Source: Economic Commission for Africa, 2020

However, from the sub-regional studies the following were the key challenges in the different sub-regions (Table 6).

Table 6: Key challenges faced by companies in Africa as due to COVID-19 (sub-regions)

Sub-region	Key challenges faced by forest sector companies
Central Africa	Job loses; business closures (25%)[4]; low market demand; reduction in cash flows
East Africa	Mobilising domestic resources; weak forest governance; weak institutional capacities; low funding to forestry; weak regulation
North Africa	Job loses; business closure; decline in worker productivity; lack of cashflow
Southern Africa	Decline in markets for forest products; working from home; low use of technology; lower cash inflows;
West Africa	Higher production cost; Job losses; lower cash inflows; limited stakeholder engagements; Shipping and logistics difficulties

Source: Economic Commission for Africa, 2020

[4] Business closures in Central Africa mainly firms with Chinese capital (Mobolo, 2020: COMIFAC Report)

4. Impacts of COVID-19 on the forest sector and sustainable forest management in Africa

The sustainable management of forests and trees outside forests is vital to the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It builds on the momentum provided by the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The African Union also recognizes forestry as a key development sector that can uplift the continent from poverty especially with regard to energy (charcoal, fuel wood, etc.), food, wood (timber, building poles, carvings etc.), and non-timber forest products (indigenous wild fruits, wild vegetables, herbal medicine). Environmental services of forests underpin ecosystem functions that support agriculture and the continent's tourism industry amongst others.

In the SADC region governments promoted the continued operation of most of the agricultural activities, provision of loan schemes to the farmers for investments and increasing production of agricultural products. Forestry sector was very much impacted by the lock down as a result of the restriction of movements and closure of borders and a ban on international trade. This had a direct negative impact on the trade of forest goods and services. Governments in the sub-regions diverted funding from other sectors including forestry to health sector aiming to fight the spread of the pandemic.

This section reports on the impacts of COVID-19 on sustainable forest management, conservation activities including production, afforestation, changes to forest use, forest certification, livelihood of forest dependent people and local communities, forest industries, institutional capacity, investment and financing and international/regional cooperation on forest related issues.

These elements are presented around the three pillars of SFM, namely environmental, economic and social aspects highlighting specific sub themes that have emerged from the study in the five sub-regions as well as areas stated in the terms of reference (ToR) (Annex 3).

4.1. Environmental Impacts

4.1.1. Impact on forest management, forest protection and afforestation

The pandemic posed and as at the time of preparing this report continued to pose a great risk to sustainable forest management related activities on the continent mainly due to the institution of movement restrictions and measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. There have been largely negative outcomes for sustainable forest management and forest protection efforts in Africa.

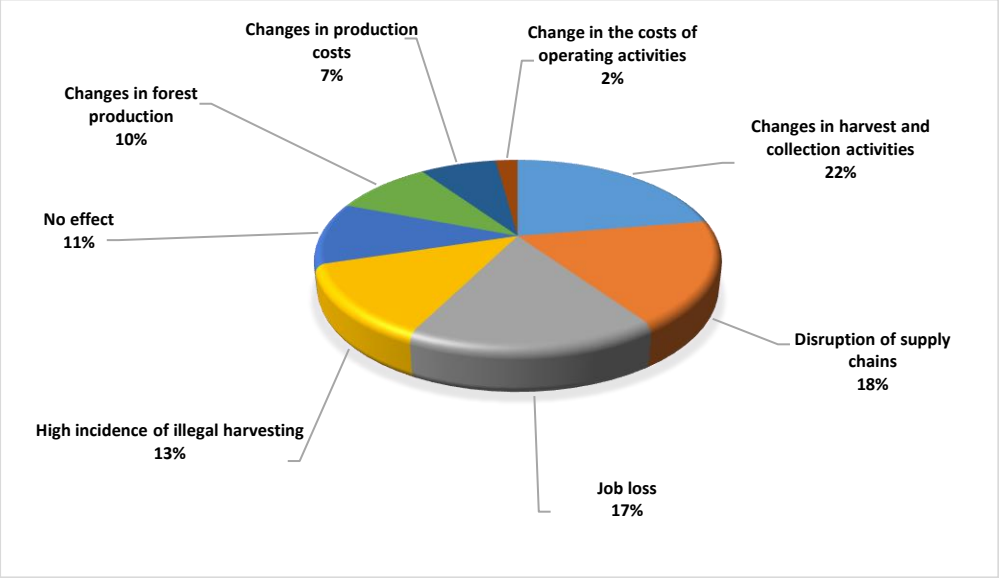
One of the main reasons behind this has been the imposition of social distancing rules across the continent. Similarly, funding challenges triggered by the pandemic have been a major contributory factor. The regional studies revealed significant reduction in the revenues collected by forest sector public agencies in both West and East Africa, as well as decrease in funding from development partners. In Ghana, the financing challenge for forest protection extends also to the reduction in private sector payments on social responsibility agreements that provided funds to the communities in forest areas.

Collectively, these funding challenges have hampered efforts to promote sustainable forest management on the continent. This has been evident in the weakening of the capacity of forest sector institutions to engage effectively in meeting tree planting targets and monitoring of forest resources to reduce ills such as deforestation and forest fires. According to the African Union (2020), the

pandemic is likely to lead to increased deforestation rates, as national forest institutions are likely to struggle in maintaining their staff due to a decline in funding for forest protection activities.

In North Africa based on stakeholder assessments the area of forest products exploitation/harvesting has been most affected (22% of responses), followed by disruptions in supply chains due to cancellations in sales auctions (18% of responses) and loss of jobs (17% of responses). Stakeholder assessment of the impacts of COVID 19 on the forest sector in Northern Africa sub-region is shown in Figure 8. Also, illegal harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) has been on the increase due to reduced monitoring by the public sector forest agencies.

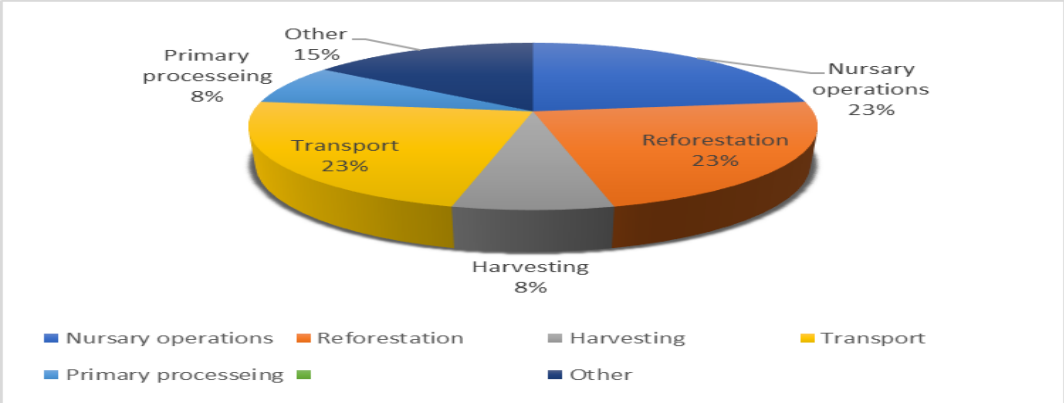
Figure 8: Stakeholder assessments on impacts of COVID-19



Source: Hammoudi, 2020

The East Africa study shows that stakeholders reported numerous instances of postponements or outright cancellations of many forest management activities that relate to reforestation, afforestation, and other silvicultural operations such as thinning and pruning in plantations due to restrictions. This trend is consistent with events in West Africa - for example, a survey of forest sector stakeholders in Ghana (Figure 9) highlighted nursery operations and reforestation as being significantly impacted by the measures taken by governments to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 9: Forest based activities most impacted by COVID-19(Ghana stakeholder survey)



Source: Adam, 2020

The sub-regional report for Southern Africa, highlights the impact of COVID-19 measures as the reduction in ground monitoring and control. Urban-to-rural migration trends in the region will directly contribute to increased illegal timber harvest, charcoal production, tenure conflicts, land grabbing and forest crime for immediate economic gains. In the SADC region, most (70-90%) of SFM activities such as silvicultural management, afforestation/reforestation, fire management, assisted and natural regeneration continued despite the restriction and measures introduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This could be attributed to the forestry sector being considered as an essential sector. The Southern Africa report also indicated that COVID-19 had a moderate to severe impact on forest fires.

Notably, public stakeholders in East Africa highlighted difficulties in sustaining surveillance activities conducted by forest staff and guards in the state managed reserves. For example, in Uganda, the National Forest Authority failed to reach its annual target of planting 40,000ha for its tree planting campaign for restoration of its forests. Only 10,000ha had been covered by the late planting season and therefore jeopardizing Uganda's long-term ambitious target of planting 9.6 million trees per year. Tanzania, which avoided instituting strict lockdown measures, reported its forest agency's planting target had fallen by 20%. The planting target for 2020 was 10,000ha.

Additionally, the Covid 19 pandemic had direct impacts in the Eastern Africa region with countries such as Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, experiencing an increasing level of illegal activities in several forest reserves. The activities were mainly illegal logging and removal of valuable timber tree species as a result of reduced monitoring activities. This may contribute to deforestation, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation in the short to medium term if no remedial actions are taken. Illegal logging adversely impacted on livelihoods due to loss of revenue to the Government, distorted markets and trade. Communities implementing community-based forest management in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania reported many incidences of illegal harvesting in the community reserves which will impact on their incomes and livelihoods.

Private sector stakeholders actively involved in forest protection have also not been immune to the challenges presented by the pandemic. Notable plantation companies such as Green Resources (GRL) in Uganda and Tanzania, Kilombero Valley Teak company (KVTC) and TanWat in Tanzania were not able to reach their planting targets as a result of lockdown due to pandemic.

4.1.2. Impact on Conservation activities

Though it is relatively early to assess the full scale of the pandemic's impact on conservation activities in Africa, there is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest a worrying trend. At the opposite end – lockdowns and lack of activities in forests have pushed the "pause" button on nature and it has rebounded – clean air/water, growing population of wildlife on land, etc. Similar to the challenges faced with forest protection, the pandemic has sparked a funding challenge for conservation efforts. Through a combination of budgetary cuts and re-allocation of funds to COVID-19 response measures instituted by public institutional donors and international philanthropic organizations and funding prioritization of healthcare by African governments, as well as financial challenges faced by corporate establishments, the availability of capital for conservation initiatives has significantly diminished in 2020.

Ecotourism is particularly important in Eastern and Southern Africa and has been grounded to a halt by the pandemic and the ensuing movement restriction measures. Hence, the number of tourists to forest-based ecotourism sites in Africa has plummeted. This has led to the loss of tourism revenue essential for funding conservation activities and associated expenses such as staff wages (Lindsey et al. 2020). The Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority projected a US$3.8 million (50%) shortfall in the second quarter of 2020 due to reduced tourism-related spending (Lindsey et al. 2020). Similarly, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), which generates 88% of its revenue from tourist

entrance fees, expected a shortfall of US$1.4 million for priority activities from July to December 2020 (Lindsey et al. 2020).

These financing challenges have been directly linked to the increasing incidence of poaching and the illegal trade in endangered animals in Africa. In North Africa, conservation authorities and stakeholders have expressed concerns about the increasing death toll and trafficking of endangered species in Morocco (Cherkaoui *et al.* 2020). In the Blue Cedar *Cedrus atlantica* forests of Middle Atlas, conservation stakeholders have reported facing a poaching crisis following a collapse in ecotourism during the pandemic lockdown (Cherkaoui *et al*. 2020).

Additionally, communities in Southern Africa that had hitherto primarily depended on forest-based tourism for jobs and their livelihoods have seen a sharp decline in their incomes (Box 2).

Box 2: Protecting livelihoods in Malawi amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

Like most of southern Africa, the economic devastation caused by the loss of jobs due to the closure of hospitality businesses since March 2020, has become a stark reality for Malawi, with more than 35 000 Malawians who have reportedly lost their jobs. The decline in visitor numbers to the parks is affecting revenue, which has a devastating impact on the survival of communities living around these areas, and on park operations. Approximately 11 percent of the communities surrounding the parks are migrant workers who are affected by the closing of certain facilities.

Additionally, a large percentage of the population relies on subsistence farming, fishing, and bee-keeping to make a living. With a drop in sales at markets, compounded by tourists not buying honey and other items at the Park gates, many families are losing critical income.

The German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), through KfW Development Bank has provided funding to the Government of Malawi. The employment programmes will mainly engage communities to build or rehabilitate assets that are vital for sustaining the livelihoods of the communities and support eco-tourism activities within the parks.

Photo 1: *Prescribed burning by community members in Nyika National Park (Source: Peace Parks Foundation)*

According to Dr Michael Biswick Usi, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Wildlife, Malawi

"The government has implemented various critical measures to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic, especially in response to the struggling tourism sector. We would like to thank the German government for their generous support that enables us to do even more – bringing relief to the local communities living around the protected areas of the Malawi-Zambia TFCA, who largely rely on these parks for their survival."

Source: Chirwa, 2020

In Botswana there are already emerging reports of increased poaching and illegal resource extraction linked to loss of rural livelihoods and reduced capacity to conduct patrols and fieldwork by enforcement staff. In East Africa, livelihood challenges have driven many to engage in detrimental activities such as poaching and charcoal production to improve their incomes – adversely impacting on wildlife conservation efforts. According to a report of the Global Geneva, there is evidence of an increase in poaching, as COVID-19 has negatively impacted revenue generation from wildlife tourism, as well as funding for anti-poaching efforts (Somerville, 2020).

These financial challenges have also disrupted public-private partnership on conservation. According to stakeholders in North Africa, the challenges by public, private and NGO actors have disrupted public-private partnership on conservation and has increased the vulnerability of communities that rely on income from conservation initiatives.

Furthermore, broader COVID-19 economic challenges faced by some economic actors have had dire impacts on conservation efforts in Africa. For example, there has been an increase in the encroachment of forest reserves by farmers. Côte d'Ivoire's national parks and forest reserves, housing the remnants of the country's original forest cover, are a notable example of this trend. With the pandemic leading to a fall in cocoa export prices and livelihood challenges for cocoa farmers; these farmers are showing increasing tendency to expand their activities/farms into the national parks and forest reserves (Awad and Konn 2020).

The pandemic, through restrictions on travel and gatherings, has also led to the cancellation and postponement of key conversation related conferences and fund-raising events relevant to the African forest sector (Lindsey et al. 2020). Notably, the first Africa Protected Areas Congress – a 2,000-delegate conference which aimed to position the continent's protected areas within the broader goals of sustainable development – had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 (IUCN, 2020).

The study, however, reveals a potential positive outcome of the pandemic's impact on conservation efforts in Africa – the increase in governmental appreciation of the contribution of biodiversity-based tourism. Once more as economic data on the impact of COVID-19 on ecotourism in Africa becomes available, governments across the continent will be equipped to better quantify the contribution of biodiversity-based tourism and facilitate the development of the technical insights needed to mitigate future disruptions to tourism through the diversification of the wildlife economy.

4.1.3. Increased risk of biodiversity loss

Consistent with the findings on forest protection and conservation activities in Africa, the threat of biodiversity loss across Africa's forest regions has largely increased since the onset of the pandemic. In West Africa, revenue generation challenges faced by the ecotourism industry because of COVID-19 has contributed to the exacerbation of the overexploitation of forest resources, especially through illegal activities including poaching. Driven either by third parties or staff of nature reserves with limited alternative sources of income, the increase in poaching activities has been witnessed in West Africa (Nyomi, 2020), as well as East Africa – the threat posed by the increase in consumption of bushmeat has been severe, with anecdotal evidence reported from Tsavo East National Park in Kenya (Lindsey et al. 2020). Similarly, this trend has been witnessed in some parts of North Africa. In Morocco, the COVID-19 outbreak has adversely impacted on efforts to protect endangered wildlife (Cherkaoui et al. 2020).

Since the introduction of containment measures in Morocco on 20 March 2020, several acts of poaching have been observed in different parts of the country, perpetrated by hunters taking advantage of the containment context (Gianaris, 2020). Likewise, many shepherds have been taking advantage of the country's lockdown to bring their cattle in the protected areas where vegetation cover is generally better (Cherkaoui et al. 2020) thereby placing the forest resources under pressure.

Nonetheless, on the positive side, in a few regions, due to the imposition of movement restrictions, the isolation of natural spaces has enabled the regeneration of fauna and flora in some parts of North Africa and has offered additional security to the movement of animals within their habitats (Gianaris, 2020). Similarly, lockdown transport restrictions may curb the illicit trade in wildlife and provide respite for PAs that suffer negative impacts of tourist congestion (Lindsey et al. 2020). Furthermore, with countries in Asia, such as China and Vietnam, taking greater steps to restrict the trade in threatened wildlife (Cherkaoui et al. 2020), this may lead to a significant decline in poaching activities

in Africa that tend to supply demand in Asia. Some African countries have also taken steps to protect wildlife due to COVID-19-inspired increase in the appreciation of the link between tropical wildlife and zoonotic diseases. One such country is Gabon – it has banned consumption of bats and pangolins following the COVID-19 crisis (Lindsey et al. 2020). It is important to note, however, that these positive environmental outcomes linked to COVID-19 are likely to be temporary and prone to reversal when travel restrictions ease and countries return to business as usual (Lindsey et al. 2020).

4.1.4. Illegal logging activities

Due to a number of factors, increasing incidences of illegal logging activities were identified in forest regions across Africa. Criminal syndicates, taking advantage of governmental prioritization of healthcare, have been increasing their activities in illegal logging in Africa which already costs the continent US$17 billion annually (African Union 2020). In Eastern, Western and Southern Africa, illegal activities have been reported to be happening in many of the forest reserves. For example, in Tanzania, illegal logging activities were noted to have increased by 20% from the usual reported number of incidents. Also, in Uganda and Kenya illegal logging of valuable timber tree species are reported to have been happening during the course of the pandemic. A survey of stakeholders in Central Africa showed that the pandemic had led to an increase in illegal logging activities in the Congo Basin (Mbzibain 2020).

The pandemic's worsening of the financial and staffing challenges faced by forest communities and forest sector agencies has weakened their ability to curb illegal logging activities, for example, through increased surveillance (Cherkaoui et al. 2020). In the Southern Africa study, among others, the reduction of staff was highlighted as a key factor in the increase of illegal logging.

According to the East Africa study, illicit activities have been detrimental to the livelihoods of communities implementing forest management initiatives, reduced government revenue, and distorted timber market and trade dynamics.

In Senegal, a survey of Forest Service officials by the national consultant revealed concerns over effective controls and minimization of illegal activities. Similarly, the reduction in operating budgets for national park managers may force many to adapt to the new approach to monitoring protected areas that could compromise their operational effectiveness.

Additionally, in Southern Africa, difficulties in securing legitimate logging licenses due to the impact of lockdown restrictions on government operations have forced some to engage in illegal logging. These activities are noted to have also heightened tensions between local communities and forest managers in some East African countries. The pandemic has also been responsible for the postponement of planned regional policy dialogues focusing largely on addressing the illegal harvesting and trade in Rosewood(*Dalbergia spp*) (African Union, 2020).

It must be noted, however, that in some instances, the movement restrictions set off by the pandemic has proven to apply a temporary downward pressure on international demand for illegally logged timber. Notably, media reports from Sierra Leone indicate that due to the COVID-19 pandemic the rate of illegal logging in the Outamba Kilimi National Park had fallen to zero due to the drop in international demand for Rosewood (*Dalbergia spp*) logs (African Union, 2020). This situation in Sierra Leone and perhaps in other countries in the region provide a temporal reprieve and opportunities for governments to undertake measures to prevent the return of illegal logging at the end of the COVID-19 crisis.

4.1.5. Forest Certification

Forest certification is an important market-based incentive to improve forest management. The restrictions and measures taken by countries to contain COVID-19 pandemic have impacted on the Forest Certification related activities. Despite the adverse impact, the certification standards remain the same. However, the certification bodies have reacted with some level of flexibility and are for instance undertaking remote conduct of the audits on online to reflect the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic. These changes have included options for postponing surveillance audits for a period not exceeding six (6) months.

As a result of COVID-19, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) extended the transition period for three revised international standards - Chain of Custody (ST 2002), PEFC Trademarks (ST 2001) and Certification Body Requirements – Chain of Custody (ST 2003) standards – by six months (Papnews 2020). According to PEFC, these extensions give "certified entities and certification and accreditation bodies an additional six months to align their procedures with the requirements in the 2020 versions of these three vital standards". Additionally, PEFC has also made allowances for remote audits, and where this is not sufficient, the extension of time periods, for certification bodies and certified companies affected by COVID-19 (PEFC, 2020). Also, due to the slow down or cessation of business operations, some companies requested for waivers or delayed audits and/or remit payments until business operations were back to normal. The costs for audits have been significantly reduced because of the pandemic and the absence of travel and physical visits to sites.

Similarly, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) forest management certification requirements were revised to allow for online and telephone verification of records from certified companies (Kojwang, Nov 2020, Skype communication). FSC also accommodated remote chain of custody (COC) audits based on information provided by companies and suspended field assessments. FSC has also adapted its training activities in the light of the challenges of COVID-19 by going online. The interviewee highlighted the leadership role that FSC certified companies in Gabon took regards health and safety requirements in educating and sharing their experiences on health and safety from their work on forest certification.

4.2. Economic Impacts

Although many African countries had been in economic distress prior to the COVID-19, the pandemic has resulted in Africa experiencing its first continent-wide recession in 25 years (World Bank, 2020). This distress is more severe for Southern Africa countries (notably Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe) partly due to unsustainable debt burdens (Vines, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has however, propelled African debt repayment and forgiveness to the top of the international agenda once again.

The smaller economies in the region could face contraction of up to 7.8%. The contraction is mainly a result of export adjustments affecting primary commodity exporters, and the attendant losses to tax revenue which reduce the capacity of government to extend public services necessary to respond to the crisis.

A number of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Africa are reported to be operating at about 43 per cent, while the Large Size Enterprises (LSEs) operate at a slightly higher capacity. The subsectors most affected are manufacturing, health, entertainment, utilities and transport and trade. report to be operating at the lowest possible capacities. The key challenges reported by African businesses are low demand in the market, lack of operational cash flow, reduction of opportunities to meet new customers and closure of businesses (ECA, 2020).

4.2.1. Impact of COVID-19 on production and international trade in wood products from Africa

At the recent virtual meeting of the 56th Session of the International Tropical Timber Council, the Secretariat in its report of the ITTO's Biennial Review and Assessment of the World Timber Situation indicated that COVID-19 pandemic has had a drastic impact on tropical timber trade when compared with 2019. Exports of Logs were down by 28%, sawnwood down by 16% and tropical plywood down by 8% according to preliminary findings of a report presented by the ITTO Secretariat on the fifth and final day of the 56th Session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC).

The measures and responses to COVID-19 pandemic have impacted on the timber trade and industry. A recent study by FAO (2020) notes that COVID-19 has impacted on timber exporting as follows:

- a decline in exports of round timber resulting in stockpile of export products being built up and losses as due to perishable nature of some species of timber such as Ceiba *(Ceiba pentandra*) and Obeche /Wawa (*Triplochiton Scleroxylon*)
- limited demand in Africa's traditional markets of Europe and USA.
- Low demand for timber in the emerging markets and in particular, China.

These have therefore resulted in a decrease in export earnings for African countries involved in the production and exports of timber.

For instance, In Kenya (East Africa), before the COVID-19 pandemic over 1,000 small, medium and large saw millers operated in the country with assets worth more than KES 500 billion shillings (USD 5 billion). This was an increase in investment trends for nearly thirty years prior to the pandemic. These have however been heavily impacted due to the travel restrictions since a significant volume of the raw materials i.e. logs were not collected and the stockpile of saw logs could not be processed. This has resulted in many sawmills operating below full capacities while others have been compelled to shut down. Malawi, in Southern Africa, exports forestry products to international markets and countries in the sub-region. Closure of borders led to reduced production and trade. Central Africa also reports of reduced exports, cancellations/postponements in contracts and lower production volumes. For instance, Cameroon reports a 5% drop in export volumes for the first half of the year. Congo experienced a significant decrease in demand in the external market and in particular sales to China. The situation is no different in West Africa. Generally, prices of forest products have been negatively affected by COVID-19 in both the domestic and international markets.

The rapid socio-economic assessment conducted by UNDP in Tanzania, found that the Tanzania Forest Service recorded a decline between 10 and 20 containers per month caused by a decline in export demand for timber and logs in some ports like Tanga (UNDP, 2020). The timber trade had been affected with the closure of boarders and lockdowns. The closure further impacted on employment within forest industries, forest plantations, government forest administration and the private sector.

There are growing fears that post COVID-19 African timber exporting countries may seek to make up for the losses by promoting a strong export driven program thereby overlooking requirements for sustainable forest management.

4.2.2. Domestic industrial and manufacturing activities

The travel restrictions and lockdown measures introduced by governments also affected the imports of spares, imported raw material such as agro-chemicals and treatment chemicals and equipment. Business dependent on import of raw material were heavily affected. Paper and packaging industry that depend on forest raw material was found to flourish during the COVID-19 peak across the globe. This is also true in the EAC sub-region, where the import of paper and packaging material were

constrained by travel restrictions, hence prompting accelerated domestic production. The demand for packaging material produced from wood pulp and other material has been high in the region due to previous efforts to ban the use of plastic bags, in Kenya, South Sudan, Rwanda and Tanzania (DW,2020). Domestic manufacturing activities were also impacted by supply chain disruptions in particular for imported raw materials. Much of these items did not arrive on time due to delayed or cancelled contracts on imports, making domestic industrial and manufacturing activities low.

In the SADC region, the most affected sectors were the SMSEs, informal sector and to a lesser extent the formal sector. However, in South Africa the commercial industry does not appear to have been impacted as much as other sectors and this could be attributed to the government including the forest sector in the essential category group.

4.2.3. Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)

The prevalence and use of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) are common in many African countries. They are used as food and medicines as well as source of income to many local communities. For instance, local knowledge of medicinal plants in the treatment of many diseases and ailments still exist and play an important role in primary health care services in the remote rural areas. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2020) report estimated 75% of approved antimicrobial drugs are derived from natural or naturally derived compounds.

Although it has been rarely quantified, the use of NTFPs before and during COVID-19 pandemic times has been reported widely. These, for example, were believed to drive away flu-related ailments and improve body immunities. Furthermore, NTFPs continued to be valued as safety nets for food security. In Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, for example, an increased interest in NTFPs was captured in interviews with diverse stakeholders, mostly local community representatives. Trees and shrubs with medicinal values were thrust into the limelight by social media reports of an increased demand for natural tonics and the extracts for different medicinal use.

A key challenge to the growth and importance of the contribution of NTFP to economies in the region is the lack of data/information despite the market demand and increasing use of NTFPs. The COVID-19 pandemic has therefore brought to the fore the need to develop the methodology and document the contribution of NTFPs to livelihoods and economy. Furthermore, the use of NTFPs in treatment of diseases most often is not scientifically established. This provides the opportunity for future research for evidence on the effectiveness of NTFPs that are used for the treatment of diseases. Impact of COVID-19 on NTFPs has been its use in treatment of different types of illness and although there is no scientific basis for use, uptake has nevertheless been on the increase.

4.2.4. Labour market and employment

The economic disruptions due to COVID-19 have had a major effect on work globally by causing a decline in employment (ILO, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on labour and employment in the forestry sector in Africa varied between countries. Most forestry related activities are labour intensive and cannot be undertaken remotely like other sectors. Hence the movement restrictions/lock downs directed by governments resulted in high job losses and closures in the sector. For instance, in Rwanda 38% of all workers in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors were moderately at risk of losing their jobs.

Persons employed in the informal sector were most at risk of losing their jobs (ILO, 2020). When this happens, this category of workers might engage in forest-based activities such as charcoal production and harvesting of NTFPs for medicinal, dietary, and nutritional needs. This has the effect of increasing forest degradation and creating conditions for social conflicts with indigenous communities.

In Ghana, many firms in the agriculture sector were grappling with a decrease in the number of available workers, largely due to movement restrictions, as well as border closures (Primo *et al.*, 2020).

Guinea-Bissau's cashew nut sector has seen a reduction in the number of workers due to movement restrictions, particularly border closures that have affected essential seasonal workers (FAO, 2020).

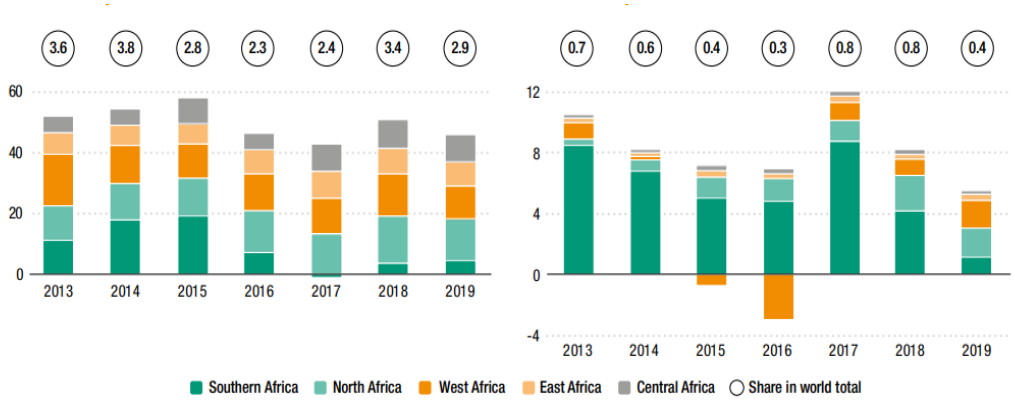
In West Africa's forest sector, the COVID-19 pandemic was expected to lead to a reduction in the salary of workers, layoffs in both wood and non-wood industries, and a loss of sources of income (Tientcheu, 2020).

4.2.5. Investment and financing

Many countries seized the opportunity within the crisis to move faster on toward necessary reforms and investments that will be crucial for long-term development. The World Bank (2020) estimated that growth in private investment would fall severely, from 8 percent in 2019 to 4 percent in 2020, due to the surge in global uncertainty, reduced capital inflows to the region and increased investor risk aversion across all sectors of the economy. Generally, all countries in the region reported a significant reduction in public and private financing in the forest sector.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic adversely impacted on foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to Africa and the rest of the world. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2020) predicted that FDI flows to Africa will contract by 25% - 40% in 2020. Trends in FDI inflow and outflows for Africa by sub-regions is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 10: FDI inflows and outflows (Billions of dollars and percentages)



Source: UNCTAD, 2020

In East Africa, the UNCTAD was pessimistic that reduced availability of public and private investment due to the economic crisis might reduce efforts to transform production systems and put at risk ambitious public and private sector commitments to fight climate change. This was observed in almost all member states of the sub region when the pandemic hit the region. Public finances were relocated to health sectors with much focus and prioritization on essential requirements such as medications, personal protective equipment (PPE), soaps, hand sanitizer and essential drugs.

In Tanzania, for example, investments in sawmills were estimated to drop by 20% when compared to the same period in April - May 2019. In July 2020, for example, the Rwandan investment growth went down by 4 percent when compared to the same period in 2019. In Ghana in West Africa, planned investments into timber processing was suspended as a result of the COVID-19 (Adams, 2020).

COVID-19 did not seem to have altered the trend of low prioritisation of public sector investment into the forest sector. According to a member of the African Forest Forum that was interviewed, governments in Africa were relatively inactive on investments in forest management, with their focus limited to policy formulation and forest law enforcement.

4.2.6. Impact of COVID-19 on migrant remittance flows

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis it has brought will see the level of remittances that migrant workers send home decline by 14 percent by 2021 when compared to the pre COVID-19 levels in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). The factors driving this change are the weak economies in the host countries as result of pandemic, low employment levels, weak oil prices and depreciation of the currencies of remittance-source countries against the US dollar.

Remittances to Sub-Saharan Africa are projected to decline by around 9 percent in 2020 to US$44 billion (World Bank, 2020). All major remittance-receiving countries in the region would subsequently experience a decline in remittances. Kenya was the exception in 2020 and remittance flows remained positive, but it projected to see a decline in 2021. The longer COVID-19 pandemic impacts on both destination and origin countries in the region, migrant remittances are expected to fall further and this could possibly result in an increase in food insecurity and poverty in the region. This could have the effect of pressure on the use of forest resources to supplement incomes due to shortfalls in receipts.

4.3. Social Impacts

4.3.1. Impacts on livelihoods of forest-dependent people

In Africa, millions of people depend on forests for food, medicine, and jobs (African Union, 2020). There was strong evidence to suggest that the pandemic disrupted the forest and tree-based livelihood options for forest dependent people in Africa. Firstly, the imposition of movement restrictions, social distancing measures, and broader lockdown measures forced many forest-based businesses to cease or limit operations, placing the livelihoods of informal sector workers at risk (African Union 2020). In some parts of the continent, livestock markets have also closed (Lindsey et al. 2020). According to Brainforest, a local NGO in Gabon, forest sector workers also grappled with increased cost of transportation (Mbolo, 2020). These outcomes have contributed to significant loss of jobs and incomes, as businesses had to lay-off staff to minimize costs. With the lack of prioritization of forest-based industries by many African governments (African Union 2020), there is a likelihood that welfare of workers in this sector may be neglected. This could cause many to engage in illicit activities to survive such as illegal charcoal production (African Union 2020).

As highlighted in the North Africa report, this was particularly painful for informal sector workers within the forest sector. Notably, in both West Africa and North Africa, due to the COVID-19 induced supply chain hurdles, many stakeholders, such as farmers, struggled to access markets for their goods. In Ghana and The Gambia, some farmers also struggled to find buyers for their produce (IFAD, 2020). This problem was further compounded by difficulties in hiring farm labourers who are unable to access their farms due to the increased transportation costs (Primo *et al,* 2020).

In Senegal (West Africa), the closure of weekly rural markets (louma[5]) and the restrictions on travel had a negative impact on the marketing of forest products, in particular non-wood forest products. The national study for Senegal reported that closure of the louma was the main cause of non-collection of perishables NTFPs resulting in loss of sizeable amount of income to for rural households.

In Southern Africa, many are dependent on forests and forest related activities. For instance, in Zambia it is estimated that 90 percent of households in urban centres use charcoal as a source of energy and the rural communities mostly depend on forests for their livelihoods (Chirwa, 2020). In Malawi, 94% of household energy requirements is sourced from the forests. However, the COVID-19 measures introduced made access to forest resources limited and a number of forest-based companies reduced their workforce or shut down thereby impacting on jobs and incomes. The outcomes of a focus group discussion reported in the sub-regional report for Southern Africa, based on the perceptions of twenty communities in Southern Malawi were as follows:

- Forest resource use at the community level is not restricted and continued normally. However, the sale of firewood, charcoal and other NTFPs were affected by the restrictions
- Forest based informal enterprises such as sale of firewood, charcoal and other NTFPS are the most affected due to government restrictions and measures to curtail COVID-19 pandemic.
- In the absence of the provision of extension services and visits by extension officers, management and monitoring of the forest resources were affected as a result of the restrictions.
- Women were anxious to engage in local forest products collection for fear of contracting the COVID-19

The pandemic response measures heightened food security concerns for forest-dependent people. For example, some farmers faced difficulties in accessing their farmlands at critical periods of the growing season, thereby threatening food security (UNHCR, 2020). Likewise, the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET,2020) cited disruptions to cereal production in South Sudan as contributing to a projected cereal deficit of 482,000 metric tonnes (FAO, 2020). These challenges were also exacerbated by the imposition of border closures and movement restrictions, thereby interrupting food imports.

The livelihoods of nomadic pastoralists, particularly in the West African Sahel region, were impacted by the imposition of border closures and restrictions on transboundary movements (FAO, 2020). According to the OECD, COVID-19 is expected to worsen ongoing food and nutrition crises in the Sahel – over 50 million people in the sub-region are potentially susceptible due to the combined effects of the food supply chain impacts of COVID-19 and ongoing conflicts in the Sahel (OECD, 2020).

[5] *Louma markets serve as the main locations for selling agricultural and forestry products where wholesale traders source their supplies for the urban markets. These louma markets serve as a marketing center where towns in the neighborhood bring their products for sale. Each of the towns have a day of the week that holds a louma and such a day is known to all. Hence sellers can move around each day of the week and increase their incomes. It therefore occupies a strategic place in the functioning of the rural economy improving the livelihoods of the communities.*

4.3.2. Indigenous peoples and local communities

Forest-based indigenous peoples and local communities in Africa are particularly vulnerable to the socio-economic and health impacts of COVID-19. Evidence from the Congo Basin suggests that governments responses to the social needs focused primarily on urban areas, neglecting rural communities (Mbolo 2020). In East Africa, many members of indigenous communities actively engage in the informal sector - Batwa in Uganda and the Maasai in Kenya engage in handicrafts, tourism, livestock rearing and other seasonal work. Hence, the pandemic restrictions dealt a serious economic blow to these communities. Also, due to the disruptions to forest industries and the associated livelihood challenges, many members of indigenous communities retreated deeper into forests for food, fuel, and shelter, as well as to protect themselves from the risk of COVID-19 infection. This could further worsen the risk of overexploitation of forest resources. Such an outcome would further increase the vulnerability of indigenous groups such as the Batwa of Uganda.

A similar situation was witnessed in West Africa. Indigenous communities in forest regions, having built their livelihoods around the exploitation of forest products for consumption by customers in urban areas, were disturbed by COVID-19. Also, the high cost of transportation because of the COVID-19 pandemic hampered access to markets.

Nonetheless, the zoonotic origins of COVID-19, coupled with its socio-economic challenges has highlighted the importance of developing initiatives that incorporate forest communities as critical partners in the development of solutions to social, economic, and environmental problems in forest regions (Tientcheu, 2020).

4.3.3. Smallholder forest owners and workers

Small forest owners are mostly engaged in managing small areas of forests management units and usually are about 20 – 200 ha. They also include formalized tree growers' associations or unions. With the increased risk of food insecurity and decline in incomes, there is a potential for many smallholder forest owners and workers to increase their reliance on forests and forest products for subsistence which could lead to overharvesting of natural resources (African Union 2020).

In West Africa, many smallholder farmers in forest regions have had to grapple with a worsening financial situation. Some smallholder unions have also struggled to obtain financial support from the government in their jurisdiction to mitigate the challenges brought on by COVID-19, as is the case in Ghana (ITC, 2020). According to the Ghana Federation of Forest and Farm Producers (GhaFFaP), since the onset of the pandemic, there has been an upsurge in poverty as many farmers have struggled to cope with the government's restrictions on mobility and commerce, and producers have resorted to selling their small assets and illegally cutting trees to support their livelihoods (Devyatkin, 2020).

Smallholder forest owners and workers in East Africa faced an equally daunting situation. The tree growers' association in Tanzania noted sharp declines in demand from local sawmills and export markets for saw logs. This led to a collapse of prices, threatening the financial viability of many stakeholders. Additionally, due to the lockdown in the subregion, many smallholder forest owners were unable to catch up with planting season requirements, thereby missing important planting targets. Hence, Tanzania saw a 5% reduction of investment in timber and pole trees planting (*Pinues sp*., *Eucalyptus* sp., and *Cupressus*), according to tree growers' association. Also, many members switched to fruit trees growing especially avocado (*Persea americana*) as an alternative fast-growing tree with early returns. Likewise, some smallholder forest owners have complained about an increase in poaching and unauthorized harvesting of fodder on their properties, as was the case in Kenya.

4.3.4. Gender and youth

The UN Policy Brief (2020), on the Impact of the COVID-19 on women warns of different impacts on economic and productive lives of women and men. This is attributed to the fact that across the globe, women earn less, save less, hold less secure jobs and are more likely to be employed in the informal sector. UN brief, highlights that as women take on greater care demands at home, their jobs will also be disproportionately affected by cuts and lay-offs. Such impacts risk rolling back the already fragile gains made in female labour force participation. In the forest sector, women occupy both full and part time employment albeit poorly paid and occupy low profiles in the value chains. Access and use of forest products and availability of economic opportunities for women are constrained by socio-cultural, religious, technical, policy and institutional barriers (FAO 2013).

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated socio-economic issues in Africa, women bearing the largest burden of caring for their families (OCHA, 2020). As a prominent avenue for financial empowerment, the informal sector in Africa is dominated by women – the forest sector is no exception. In the forest sector women occupy both full and part time employment albeit poorly paid and occupy low profiles in the value chains. Access and use of forest products and availability of economic opportunities for women are constrained by socio-cultural, religious, technical, policy and institutional barriers (FAO 2013). Nonetheless, the pandemic poses significant threats to the livelihoods of women in the continent.

Notably, due to the slowdown in economic activities in urban areas as a response to the virus, there is an expectation of an influx of workers, especially men, from urban areas to rural areas, leading to an increase in competition over forest-derived resources, such as charcoal. This has the effect of weakening the financial security of rural women already engaged in the forest sector. Reports from Cameroon indicate that the economic security of rural women has been made precarious due to the influx of workers from urban areas (Mbolo, 2020). Also, in East Africa, it has been witnessed that in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, women have remained marginalized as more men have gone into the forest sector due to loss of livelihoods in other ventures that prompted shifting focus towards forest products as a safety net.

Women, who tend to be overrepresented in the lower economic tiers of the forestry sector, have had to grapple with business challenges. For example, restrictions on international travels and shipment of goods have caused a decline in export of gum arabica from Tanzania. This has had negative consequences to the entire value chain of gum arabica, thereby depriving women, who occupy the lower level of the gum arabica value chain, a meaningful livelihood.

There is anecdotal evidence from countries in West Africa that suggests that women engaged in the agribusiness sector are prone to experiencing a decline in their incomes due to the negative impact COVID-19 has had on commerce. Due to these financial challenges, some African governments have introduced initiatives to counter the negative economic impact of COVID-19 on women in the agribusiness sector - the Senegalese government, for example, has enacted measures to source from women rice producers within its jurisdiction (Viña, Singh and Elwell, 2020). Additionally, due to the dominant role women play in the informal agribusiness sector, they are also particularly at risk to exposure to COVID-19 infection (Ibezim-Ohaeri and Okon, 2020).

The pandemic has also worsened the threat of physical and psychological abuse against women. For example, in Kenya, it is reported that the loss of jobs has caused strains in family relations as women bear the economic brunt and having to feed larger families unaided by men. This has led to mounting psychological stress, as well as increased cases of domestic violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also negatively impacted the prospects for the youth of Africa. Ghana's timber sector offers a textbook case. The slowdown in Ghana's timber sector has also affected job opportunities for the youth residing in forest regions (Adams, 2020). Additionally, a Ghanaian private sector stakeholder surveyed for the study highlighted that the youth were one of the more affected groups in the forest sector due to the loss of their jobs.

4.3.5. Impact on Institutional capacity at the regional level

Ministries of health and other public agencies, working together with the African CDC and WHO, provided awareness and guidelines on COVID-19, that were operationalized at work to minimize the infections. The forest sector agencies and departments implemented these measures accordingly and therefore adapted well to the crisis. Intensification of use of PPE in forest operations had positive compliance to the health measures as well as code of forestry in some countries.

Growing interest by forest research institutions and agencies is remarkable in the East Africa sub region. Forestry research institutions like in Kenya and Tanzania have taken measures to research on indigenous species that are believed to have medicinal values that could in future, lead to pharmaceutical contributions to fight against COVID-19 (Malugu 2020).

In a recent study by the Association Technique Internationale des Bois Tropicaux (ATIBT) in the COMIFAC area, staffing levels in the forestry sector were reported to have been reduced by 70% and this had an adverse effect on the smooth running of logging, processing and timber trade activities particularly with reduced trade with China (Mbolo, 2020).

From the North Africa study, the analysis of responses shows mixed assessments on the capacity of the forest sector institutions to manage, adapt or overcome the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Hammoudi, 2020). Slightly more than half of respondents to a survey (57%) perceive the existing institutions do not have the capacity to manage during this pandemic due to the lack of human resources in terms of staffing and training. The respondents also argue that neither the forestry administrations or the firms are equipped to ensure the observance of the required protocols such as social distancing and the use of PPEs. However, the respondents were quick to add that there is the opportunity to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) enhance their performance and strengthen coordination with partners (Hammoudi, 2020).

In Senegal (West Africa) the introduction of the restrictions and measures resulted in the suspension of patrols by rangers as a result of reduced staffing levels. Loss of revenue to state agencies responsible for patrols have impacted on their capacities to undertake field work and enforcement.

The pandemic has also weakened the budgetary capacity of the forest institutions in Southern Africa and similar situations are found in the other sub-regions. Several state agencies are dependent on the state for resources and in these difficult times when the priority is with addressing the pandemic, forest institutions will not have the governance capacity to manage and adapt since they are very much dependent of state allocations.

In the absence of resources for the public sector institutions they can piggy bag on some NGOs. For instance, the regreening Africa project being managed by World Vision in West Africa were able to work with forest officers to gain access to actors in the field through the provision of transport and PPEs for protection against COVID-19. The COVID19 crisis is therefore affecting the ability of forest sector institutions to mobilize and involve stakeholders in resource management. Lifting such a constraint is not within the reach of the forest institutions alone (Dieng, 2020).

4.3.6. International and regional cooperation on forests and forestry issues

The CPF members are collaborating with several international organizations such as WB, AfDB, WHO, UNDP, IMF etc. and regional partners (AU, COMIFAC, EAC, ECOWAS, SADC and MENA) to respond to the impact of COVID-19 in the forest sector in Africa. A lead organization in this process is the UN Food and Agriculture Organization which initiated a series of discussions through webinars in creating a platform to reflect on the impacts of COVID-19 on the forest sector and the approach to "building back better".

FAO has called for USD 1.3 billion in initial investments to provide a coordinated global response to ensure nutritious food for all both during and after the pandemic. The WB is providing up to $50 billion for African countries to address the impacts from COVID-19. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, the World Bank has made nearly $12 billion available across Africa to help countries respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

There have also been studies through the FAO-EU FLEGT programme to undertake two regional studies that examine the impact of COVID-19 on forest communities. These studies were undertaken by two partners - RECOFTC for Asia and CIDT for Africa. Initial results and preliminary findings were presented at a webinar event of the Forest Technical Network in Africa (FTN -Africa) on 28th October 2020. Furthermore, the FAO, AU Commission, UNFF, AFF with the support of other partners organized a webinar on the impact of COVID-19 on the forestry sector.

The African Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 outbreak, identified among others the need to collaborate across all member states of the African Union to ensure high-level political commitment and leadership across all sectors involved in COVID-19 response, particularly Peace and Security, Trade and Industry, Economic Affairs, and Rural Economy and Agriculture. High-level political commitment is critical for cross boarder collaboration and coordination in addressing impacts on the forest sector.

There is evidence therefore of collaboration between international, regional and sub-regional organizations, in addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the forest sector and willingness of these agencies in post pandemic to invest more on deforestation free pathways and green economy. The recent joint statement by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF, 2020) , urges the global community cannot allow this pandemic to reverse hard-won progress in protecting forests, reducing and reversing forest loss and degradation and boosting the sustainable production and trade of agricultural and forest products. This reflects the spirit and willingness to collectively respond to the impact of COVID-19 and to "build back better" by international, regional sub-regional organizations, the private sector, CSO and governments.

5. Key Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Key Findings

The summary of key findings from the study are as follows:

5.1.1. Status of forest management and conservation activities, production, forest protection, afforestation etc.

- Movement restrictions and measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 have had negative outcomes for sustainable forest management and forest protection efforts in Africa. Both the public sector agencies and the private sector were unable to undertake forest protection and monitoring activities.
- Funding challenges triggered by the pandemic have been a major contributory factor for the negative outcome on SFM. The sub-regional studies revealed significant reduction in revenues collected by forest sector public agencies in both West and East Africa, as well as decrease in funding from development partners. This hampered their ability to carry out planned activities such as meeting silvicultural operations, tree planting targets, and others such as thinning and pruning in plantations.
- National forest institutions are likely to struggle maintaining their staff due to a decline in funding for forest protection activities and could result in job losses.
- Illegal harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) has been on the increase due to reduced monitoring by the public sector forest agencies and may impact on the future management of the forests sustainably
- Ecotourism, especially in Eastern and Southern Africa has grounded to a halt by the pandemic with the ensuing movement restriction measures. Hence, the number of tourists to forest-based ecotourism sites in Africa has plummeted. For instance, the visitor numbers fell by 60-79% in Senegal's Bandia Wildlife reserve. This has led to the loss of tourism revenue essential for funding conservation activities and associated expenses such as staff wages.
- Afforestation and planting activities across the continent have been negatively impacted. For example, the Tanzania forest agency recounts a 20% reduction in its planting target for 2020. Likewise, in Uganda, the National Forest Authority (NFA) failed to reach its annual target of planting 40,000 ha for its tree planting campaign for restoration.

5.1.2. Livelihoods of forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, smallholder forest owners, workers, women and youth.

- The national study for Senegal reports that field investigations indicate the closure of the louma (market) was the main cause of non-collection of perishables NTFPs resulting in loss of sizeable amount of income to for rural households
- Communities dependent on forest-based tourism for jobs and livelihoods experienced decline in their incomes and risk their engagement in illegal activities such as poaching and illegal timber production to enhance their incomes.
- The vulnerability had pushed many indigenous communities to retreating deeper into forests for food, fuel, and shelter, and to protect themselves from the risk of COVID-19 infection. This risks over exploitation of forest resources, particularly for NTFPs.
- Increase in sexual and gender-based violence in the communities due to the fact that perpetrators feel frustrated as a result of the restrictions and use this as a way to overcome their anger.

- The livelihood of women in forest areas have directly impacted due to the influx of workers from urban areas in such of economic opportunities.
- Women sell food and clothing to workers around the factories. The lock down and social distancing measures resulted in a loss of income due to reduced numbers in the factories.
- Impact on youth was mainly in area of job losses due to the COVID-19 measures.

5.1.3. Forest industries labour market and employment, as well as the domestic and international demands for forest products and services

- Several Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Africa are reported to be operating at about 43 per cent of their installed capacities. Large Size Enterprises (LSEs) operate at a slightly higher capacity. The subsectors most affected are manufacturing, health, entertainment, utilities, transport and trade.
- Supply chains adversely affected impacting on exports of timber and imports of spares and machinery due to COVID-19 measures/restrictions.
- Restrictions on travel and transportation at regional and international routes, as well as border closures, directly impacted cross border trade and international commerce for forest sector businesses, resulting in decline in the export and import of forest products.
- Manufacturing Industries have experienced increase in cost of production due to provision of i) PPEs, hand washing equipment, cost of machinery & equipment maintenance, ii) Higher cost of raw material for processing, iii) under- utilization of plant capacity, iv) un-utilized human resource, extra health costs
- Except for South Africa and Gabon, the forest sector is not considered an essential sector and hence the forest industry in several African countries did not benefit from government stimulus packages or other measures meant to stimulate the economy.
- Boarder closures have impacted on the movement of seasonal workers; What may appear to be an urban to rural migration could possibly be attributed to seasonal workers rather than COVID-19.

5.1.4. Investment and financing (public and private including foreign direct investment)

- The COVID-19 pandemic has propelled African debt repayment and forgiveness to the top of the international agenda once again.

- Governments and development partners have been forced to reallocate funds from the forest sector to healthcare due to the urgent need to curb the spread of the pandemic. Hence, forest institutions will continue to suffer from the reduction of in-flows of funds, hampering their activities to enhance sustainable forest management.

5.1.5. International and regional cooperation on forests and forestry issues

- Some international meetings in the early part of 2020 had to be suspended or rescheduled.
- Holding of virtual meetings has enabled international and regional cooperation on forests and forestry issues to continue to good effect. Despite this arrangement it has not been effective in hosting large numbers and having the effect of lobbying or meetings in corridors that enriched deliberations at such meetings.

5.2. Conclusions

Though the extent of the pandemic's impacts on Africa's forestry sector is yet to be in full view, this report has provided relevant insights that require critical attention by forest sector stakeholders. There is evidence that the broad economic impacts of COVID-19, driven largely by movement restrictions, has had, and could potentially continue to have, a direct impact on forest sector businesses. This has worrying implications for employment, supply chains and international trade, and the investment flows into the sector. Furthermore, due to some inherent weaknesses within forestry governance in Africa, the pandemic has contributed to an increase in the incidence of illicit activities, such as illegal logging and poaching. Such a challenge – partly caused by the inability to raise sufficient funds to cover forest management and monitoring– has also been a hindrance to efforts to promote SFM, especially through afforestation, silviculture operations, and conservation initiatives. Additionally, the social implications of COVID-19 on the forest sector stakeholders have also been of great concern. Across Africa, the livelihoods of indigenous communities, women and the youth have been made particularly precarious due to the combination of both a lack of market for forest goods and services and the increase in competition for forest resources due to the urban-to-rural migration trend that has been set off by the pandemic.

Although the pandemic has negatively impacted Africa's forest sector in diverse ways, it has also provided the opportunity to highlight the key role forests can play in a post COVID recovery by investing in the sustainable management of forests and its potential for green growth and development in the sub-region. Well managed forests/plantations can create jobs, address the issues related to the informal sector and serve as safety nets in times of crisis.

5.3. Recommendations

Key recommendation made for consideration are as follows:

1. The forest sector is critically important in "building back better", building resilience to any disaster and responding to COVID-19 in both the short and long terms. It offers a good number of job opportunities particularly with commercial forest plantations or reforestation. Through the plantations development or reforestation/afforestation programmes there are opportunities for engaging contract/seasonal workers. Furthermore, it can bring flexibility to families in improving their household incomes.

2. As a long-term strategy, policy makers should partner with the private sector to promote sustainable investment by mainstreaming sustainable forest management into national and international investment policies.

3. There are opportunities for forests to contribute to sustainable pathways through job creation, improvement in livelihood, prevention of future pandemics (particularly those related to zoonotic diseases), and contributions towards economic growth. This requires the collaboration of governments, private sector, major group/CSOs and international development partners as equal partners engaging in consultations and adopting common approaches.

4. The zoonotic origins of COVID-19, coupled with its socio-economic challenges has highlighted the importance of developing initiatives that incorporate forest communities and other stakeholders as critical partners in the development of solutions to social, economic, and environmental problems in the forest sector. There is the need to promote further research to gain a better understanding of the linkage of forests to zoonotic diseases and the wider impacts of forests.

5. A challenge to decision making in the forest sector has been the lack of real-time data on forests and forest production activities and trade for decision making. Through lessons learned in this pandemic and from other sectors there is the opportunity to leverage technology to facilitate the real-time capture of data on forests, forest monitoring and forest production activities and trade to improve decision making in the sector. Perhaps the FLEGT VPA process provides an entry point for developing systems that can provide real time data forests, forest production, utilization and trade.

6. There is the potential for commercialisation of NTFPs. Consideration should be given to compilation of data on its availability, use, production, marketing/trade and consumption and their contribution to national economies.

7. A lesson learned from the pandemic is the need for more robust mechanisms to protect workers and women's rights given their vulnerability and their potential of being the most impacted by such crises.

8. To harness finance from all sources, National Forest Financing Strategies (NFFS) should be adopted and integrated as an integral part of the national COVID-19 recovery plans, and as part of appropriate national frameworks, including integrated national financing frameworks. Such NFFS will help governments to identify gaps, opportunities and challenges at the sector level and align the sectoral actions with higher national development goals.

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Annex 1: Detailed Assessment questions

Component of assessment framework	Detailed Assessment Questions	Source of Evidence

Sector Context	• What is the profile of the forestry sector in the country / sub region/region?
	  ○ Forest area (net loss or gain of forest area since 2010). Include areas under Plantations
	  ○ Production and exports
	  ▪ Trends in production and exports of timber and timber products for the country/sub region/region
	  ○ Contribution of forestry sector to the economy
	  ○ Legal framework and governance
	  ○ Forest based livelihoods/ employment
		• Literature review (Forest Sector Development Plans, Forest Resources Assessment ITTO/UNECE/FAO data bases
		• Governments (Ministries Departments, Agencies (MDA) responsible for forests and Environment
		• NGOs/CSOs

COVID 19 context	• What is the situation of COVID 19 in the country/sub region/region? • What are the impacts and implications of restrictions on movement for the forest sector and management? • What has been the impact of COVID- 19 in the country / region (for example changes in prices of commodities, labour, supply chains, fiscal deficits etc.)	• Country COVID 19 Situation reports, Government COVID19 strategy documents, Country subsector analysis, etc.) • UNFF focal points, • MDAs responsible for Forests, Environment, Revenue Authorities and Trade

	• Which other sectors linked to the forestry sector has been impacted by COVID 19 (e.g. transport, energy including fuel wood & charcoal production, Agriculture etc.)	• Private sector (FFPO, Forest Products Associations, etc.); include a proportion from the informal sector
Government response/ recovery measures	• What has been the government, private sector and NGO response to the pandemic? To what extent has the forestry sector been engaged in discussions on COVID 19 response? • How have these responses affected the forestry sector? Has the sector responded specifically? (For example, studies commissioned to understand impacts, use of coordination mechanisms to work with development partners? Stimulus packages by government, drafting of new government regulations/Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), etc.?) • Have the forest related trade associations approached government for support in response to the COVID 19 impact? • Are there specific national and relevant international rules related to COVID-19 that have to be applied by the forest sector? • What has been/ the medium to long term strategies adopted/ proposed by government to recover from the impact of COVID 19? • Do forest-based sectors and institutions have the governance capabilities to manage, adapt or recover from the COVID19 crisis? • How has COVID 19 affected progress on the Global Forest goals and agreements?	• UNFF Focal points, • MDAs in Forestry and Environment Ministries • UNFF Major Groups representatives • Private sector/ Timber trade association • Forest and Farm Producer Organizations (FFPO) • CPF members • Development partners/agencies

	• How has COVID 19 affected monitoring and enforcements, including certification, security of tenure, policy and legal framework on environmental issues at national and sub regional levels?	

Impact pathways	**Economic impacts**
	• What are the main impacts of COVID-19 on forest-based sectors, such as forestry and logging, wood manufacturing and processing, and wood pulp and paper?
	  ○ How has COVID19 affected the production /manufacturing of forest products in the country/sub region/region? (e.g. changes in volume, type of products, cost of production, labour force, revenue flows, etc.)
	  ○ Are there differential impacts for different types of producers (i.e. large scale, SMSEs, formal vs informal sectors of the industry)?
	  ○ What has been the response to changes in production and manufacturing brought about by COVID19?
	  ○ What has been the impact on supply chains?
	• What is the trend in the forest products trade in your country, sub regions or region?
	  ○ How has COVID affected or likely to affect the trade of forest products for both the domestic and export
		• UNFF Focal points,
		• MDAs in Forestry, Trade and Environment Ministries
		• UNFF Major Groups representatives
		• Private sector/ Timber trade associations
		• Forest and Farm Producer Organizations (FFPO)
		• CPF members/International Organizations

	markets? How has it impacted on the imports of forest products? ○ Has there been suspensions/cancellations /delays in contracts? ○ What are the immediate and long-term economic consequences of the COVID19 pandemic for forest enterprises and forest owners? ○ What are the current forest industry market conditions/ changes and the resulting impact on forest owners, forest products manufacturers, and logging contractors? • How has the level of investment and financing in the forestry sector by government or private stakeholders changed as a result of COVID 19? • What role would you like to see the UNFFS and other CPF members, intergovernmental organisations/development partners (i.e. World Bank, AfDB, EU, etc.) play with respect to response measures to mitigate the economic impact of COVID 19 on the forest sector?	
	Social impacts • How has forest based livelihood activities been affected? • Are some groups more affected? (e.g. women, youth, indigenous and forest communities, SMSE, etc.)? • What coping strategies have been adopted? • How has COVID 19 impacted on working conditions of workers in the forestry sector in your country/sub region?	• UNFF Focal points and Major Groups • SMSEs • Producer Organizations/Federations • Wildlife management authorities, • Government officials, civil society, local and indigenous communities and forest and timber trade associations, private sector,

	• What has been the role of different stakeholders (government, producer organization, CPF, etc) in mitigating social impacts? • How are forest goods and services (bushmeat, food resources, Fuelwood, etc.) used as a result of COVID 19? Is there evidence of a forest safety net? • What has been the impact on the use/access to forest goods and services (bushmeat, NTFP, etc.)? • What has been the effect on forest/nature-based tourism? • What role can traditional based knowledge on forests play in its contribution to the recovery of the forest sector and to the sustainable development goals? • Has the cultural and spiritual value of forests been recognised or affected during this COVID 19 pandemic? • Taking into account the current context and lessons learned from other pandemics, how should the needs and livelihoods of forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities be accounted for in future forest management designs, practices, and rules?	academia and research practitioners, and development partners • CPF members
	Environmental impacts • Has there been changes in patterns of deforestation or loss of biodiversity as a result of COVID 19? • How has the pandemic affected land use, conservation and deforestation in the country, sub-region and region?	• Government officials (UNFF Focal points), • CPF members • NGOs in the Forest Sector, • Local community

	• Has COVID 19 affected conservation and protection activities? Has COVID 19 impacted on the level of illegal activities including wildlife poaching in forest management units? • How has COVID 19 affected national policies or strategies on environmental protection? For example, are there changes in funding for national programmes? Are there changes in enforcement patterns? • How does the COVID-19 pandemic offer opportunities for sustainable forest management and green recovery? • How are the socio-economic consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic reflected in ecosystem services provided by forests? • Are observed COVID-19 restrictions/protocols associated with reduced forest management? • How is COVID-19 affecting forest management and efforts to conserve or protect forest biodiversity? • Is certified or legal timber production and trade still important in this COVID-19 crisis? • What are the possible short-term and long-term environmental effects of COVID-19? Is there any emerging evidence from the field?	• Indigenous groups • Private sector, • Academia and research practitioners, • development partners • Certification bodies

Annex 2: Table of COVID-19 Measures and responses in Africa

Country	Measures and responses	Impact of COVID-19	Policy change/new policies that are likely to impact the forest sector
Angola	• Quarantine measures • Restrictions on domestic and international movement • Social distancing measures (including economic activities) • Economic stimulus measures • Health system measures	• Increase in the risk of biodiversity loss • Loss of tourism revenue • Increased incidence of illegal logging and poaching activities	• Restrictions on domestic and international travel, as well as border closure • Cessation of economic activities

Côte d'Ivoire	• Quarantine measures, • Restrictions on domestic and international movement • Social distancing measures (including economic activities), • Economic stimulus measures • Health system measures	• Worsening deforestation • Decline in income due to the drop in demand, working hours (curfew) and difficult access to raw materials due to the isolation of Greater Abidjan and the ban on travel between regions. • Fall in cocoa price	• Restrictions on domestic and international travel, as well as border closure • The authorities adopted a package of economic measures that includes the creation of 3 support funds for large companies, SMEs, and the informal sector.
Ghana	• Quarantine measures • Restrictions on domestic and international movement • Social distancing measures (including economic activities) • Economic stimulus measures	• Reduced cocoa exports and sales, and cocoa price decline • Disruptions to food supply chain • Increase in transportation costs • Reduced the frequency of farm visits by extension officers • Fall in production and export revenue in the timber sector	• Partial lockdown • Restrictions on domestic and international travel, as well as border closure • COVID-19 National Trust Fund to support vulnerable populations through contributions and donations from the public • The government launched the GHS 1 billion Coronavirus Alleviation Programme Business Support Scheme

	• Health system measures	• Some nature parks losing revenue • Farmers in Accra have reported an increase in demand for organic produce, and through online or telephone ordering and payments via app, the demand for organic food in these regions is being satisfied • Fall in the price of cashew leading to a fall in revenue for cashew producers	
Kenya	• Quarantine measures • Restrictions on domestic and international movement • Social distancing measures (including economic activities) • Economic stimulus measures • Health system measures	• Increase in the risk of biodiversity loss • Loss of tourism revenue • Increased incidence of illegal logging and poaching activities • Negative economic impact on sawmills • Increased interest in NTFPs • Livelihood challenges for indigenous communities such as the Maasai	• Restrictions on public transportation • Restrictions on domestic and international travel • An 8-Point Economic Stimulus Programme, amounting to a total of Ksh 53.7 Billion which will also focus on SMEs • Appropriation of an additional KES 10 Billion to the elderly, orphans and other vulnerable members of our society through cash-transfers by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, to cushion them from the adverse economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic • A reduction of the resident corporate income tax from 30 % to 25 % and the reduction of the turnover tax rate from the current 3% to 1% for all Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

Morocco	• Quarantine measures • Restrictions on domestic and international movement • Social distancing measures (including economic activities) • Economic stimulus measures • Health system measures	• Loss of tourism revenue • Increase in risk of illegal activities in forest reserves and biodiversity degradation	• Restrictions on domestic and international travel, as well as border closure • Restrictions on economic activities • The government is providing between $80 and $120 per month to families of informal workers in need • 11,5 billion dirhams have been mobilized to support households and firms, and provide relief to both formal employees and people working in the informal sector

Nigeria	• Quarantine measures, • Restrictions on domestic and international movement, • Social distancing measures (including economic activities) • Economic stimulus measures, • Health system measures	• Nigerian SMEs in nutritious foods production and processing experiencing supply chain bottlenecks • Agricultural sector expected to experience slow growth	• Lockdown measures in some states • Restriction on international travel • Restriction on inter-state passenger and goods transport • Shut down of markets, businesses, banks, and manufacturing industries • Stimulus package to support businesses hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic.
Rwanda	• Quarantine measures, • Restrictions on domestic and international movement, • Social distancing measures (including economic activities) • Economic stimulus measures,	• Loss of tourism revenue • Increase in risk of illegal activities in forest reserves and biodiversity degradation	• Partial lockdown restrictions • Restriction of international travel

	• Health system measures		
Senegal	• Restrictions on domestic and international movement, • Social distancing, • Economic stimulus measures, • Health screening, • Quarantining, • Mandatory mask wearing	• Interruption of agribusiness field work and prevention of small farmers and businesses in accessing markets their produce • Cessation of tourist activities, and the closure of touristic site	• Lockdown restrictions • Restriction on international and inter-regional travel • Closure of markets • Limitations on public transportation • Setting up of an emergency fund to support vulnerable households and firms • Introduction of some general tax relief • Economic and Social Resilience Programme: cash injection programme, and finance utility payments for poorer households, provide targeted support to hard-hit sectors such as tourism, transport, and agriculture • Reimbursement of VAT credits to provide companies with liquidity • Deferral of the payment of taxes and duties for some SMEs as well as companies operating in the hardest hit sectors (e.g. tourism)

			• Emergency mobilisation for the marketing of horticultural production that could not be sold due to the crisis and the purchase of rice harvesting equipment
South Africa	• Quarantine measures, • Restrictions on domestic and international movement, • Social distancing measures (including economic activities), • Economic stimulus measures, • Health system measures	• Loss of tourism revenue • Increase in risk of illegal activities in forest reserves and biodiversity degradation • Loss of jobs	• Lockdown measures • Restriction on international travel • Restriction on inter-state passenger and goods transport • Social distancing measures for businesses • A four-month holiday for skills development levy contributions (1 per cent of total salaries) to assist all businesses with cash flow • Over R100 million in the form of loans, grants and debt restructuring to SMEs • R200m available to assist SMEs in the tourism and hospitality sector
Tanzania	• Restrictions on domestic and international movement, • Social distancing, • Economic stimulus measures	• Cessation of tourist activities, and the closure of touristic site • Increase in risk of illegal activities in forest reserves and biodiversity degradation	• Lockdown restrictions • Restriction on international and inter-regional travel

	• Quarantining		
Tunisia	• Quarantine measures, • Restrictions on domestic and international movement, • Social distancing measures (including economic activities), • Economic stimulus measures, • Health system measures	• Closure of nature reserves • Increase in risk of illegal activities in forest reserves and biodiversity degradation • Loss of tourism revenue	• Lockdown measures • Ministry of Industry and SMEs announces that companies can submit a request to obtain special authorisation to continue operations under a limited format (15% maximum of employees) to perform or produce only essential services and goods for the economy • A series of economic and fiscal measures amounting to an estimated TND 2,500 million • The government announces an envelope of TND 150 million for social assistance and an additional social aid of TND 100 million to the most vulnerable people • Creation of a support fund for SMEs of TND 300 million

Uganda	• Quarantine measures, • Restrictions on domestic and international movement, • Social distancing measures (including economic activities), • Economic stimulus measures, • Health system measures	• Challenges reaching annual tree planting target • Loss of tourism revenue • Increase in risk of illegal activities in forest reserves and biodiversity degradation •	• The government has allocated USh300bn to enhance the provision of agricultural inputs and up-scaling agriculture extension services to boost production of key agricultural commodities • International travel restrictions • Limitation on public transport • The government has allocated USh94bn to microfinance institutions to improve access to finance for MSMEs

Annex 3: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for Consultancy

UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS SECRETARIAT, DESA

Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa

I. BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an enormous disruption to human lives, livelihoods and economic systems worldwide. It is the worst global crisis humanity has faced since the second world war. The pandemic has precipitated massive short-term economic contraction, shuttered countless businesses whether big or small, thrown tens of millions out of work, disrupted global supply chains, severely strained fiscal capacity and safety nets, and eroded global solidarity and multilateralism at a time when they are needed the most. The worst impacts of the pandemic have affected some of the most vulnerable segments of society. There have already been reports of indigenous communities in Asia and Latin America, who are turning to forests for food, medicines, fuel and shelter, and to isolate themselves from the risk of COVID-19 infection.

One-in-five people depend on forest products for food, income and nutritional diversity and generates more than $88 billion in income, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2020). Forty per cent of the extreme poor in rural areas live in forests and savannah areas.

As countries prioritize short and medium-term economic recovery, we could see reduced investment in sustainable forest management (SFM) and a rise in illegal logging. Given the focus on strengthening food security and food production – reduced wood demand, coupled with greater agricultural subsidies could raise the risk of deforestation from agricultural expansion into forests. Forests are also at risk from illegal or unsustainable logging, unmanaged fires, pollution, disease, fragmentation and the impact of climate change, all of which threaten the health of forests and their ability to function as productive and resilient ecosystems.

According to some recent studies (UNEP 2016 and 2020), 60 per cent of all infectious diseases in humans and 75 per cent of all emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic and tend to emerge when land, especially forests, is cleared for human activity, such as agriculture and human settlement. As forests are cleared, natural habitats and traditional buffer zones separating humans from animals or from the pathogens that they harbour, are reduced or lost increasing the chances of contact between animals and humans. In some countries and regions, the situation is confounded by consumption and improper handling of bushmeat especially during trade. Another recent study suggests that deforestation could lead to a rise in the occurrence of diseases like COVID-19. The study's findings suggest that when forests are cleared, the chances for transmission of zoonotic, or animal-to-human diseases, increase.

In Africa, the pandemic poses a great risk to sustainable development including diverting attention from, and derailing, sustainable forest management initiatives on the continent. The African Union Commission has since produced a preliminary forestry brief highlighting the relationship between the pandemic and the forestry sector including decline in trade in forest products and reliance on forests by people that have lost incomes and employment.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance and role of forests, trees agroforestry, in supporting sustainable development, the resilience of ecosystems and social systems to shocks. Forests provide multiple benefits to humankind and contribute significantly to poverty eradication. For millions of people living in poverty, forests and trees provide food, fuel for cooking and heating, water, medicine, shelter and clothing and function as safety nets in crises. Forests prevent land degradation and desertification and reduce the risk of floods, landslides, avalanches, droughts, dust storms, sandstorms and other natural disasters. They are home to an estimated 80 per cent of all terrestrial species. They sustain essential watersheds, contribute substantially to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to conservation of biodiversity.

When sustainably managed, forests can contribute significantly to not only to recovery from the effects of the pandemic but to supporting long term sustainable development through provision of forest goods and services from resilient and renewable ecosystems. Thus, the sustainable management of forests and trees outside forests is vital to the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The framework for action already exists, through the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 (UNSPF) which serves as a framework for forest-related work at all levels. It builds on the momentum provided by the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

To have a broad overview of the impacts of the global pandemic of COVID-19 on forests and forest-dependent people, and to assess the potential of forests to diminish the adverse impacts of COVID-19, Members of the Forum adopted the omnibus resolution during the fifteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF15) on 30 June 2020. In accordance with paragraph 14 of the UNFF15 resolution, the UNFF Secretariat is requested, in consultation with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and with input from members of the Forum, to compile an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on: i) sustainable forest management (SFM), ii) the forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, iii) forest financing and international cooperation, and to present this assessment to the Forum at its sixteenth session in April 2021.

In this regard, the UNFF Secretariat seeks to engage a highly qualified international consultant for the Africa region to conduct a regional assessment of the impact and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the forestry sector and potential responses and measures for recovery and sustainable development with special focus on sustainable forest management, forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, forest financing and international cooperation. The consultant will conduct the assessment in ECOWAS sub-region

and receive and integrate inputs from the other four sub-regions of Africa into one (Africa) regional report.

II. WORK ASSIGNMENTS

The specific responsibilities/tasks are:

1. Conduct an assessment of the impact and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable forest management (SFM) and the forest sector, drawing on existing published studies and reports, news items, policy briefs, supplemented by consultations with relevant stakeholders. The study should cover *inter alia*, impact and implications on:
    a) status of forest management and conservation activities, production, forest protection, afforestation etc.
    b) Livelihoods of forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, smallholder forest owners, workers, women and youth.
    c) Forest sector, including institutional capacity at the regional, sub-regional, national and subnational levels
    d) Forest industries labour market and employment, as well as the domestic and international demands for forest products and services,
    e) Trade, industrial and manufacturing activities,
    f) Investment and financing (public and private including foreign direct investment),
    g) Certification and traceability
    h) International and regional cooperation on forests and forestry issues
2. Working together with UNFF National Focal points, conduct stakeholder consultations to ensure their inputs are incorporated into the findings of the assessment, with particular focus on engagement of government officials, civil society, local community and forest associations, private sector, academia and research practitioners, development partners, intergovernmental and other regional organisations and relevant international organisations including members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) operational in the region.
3. Identify emerging opportunities (if any) that COVID-19 has brought to the fore and potential responses and measures for the forest sector's recovery and enhanced contribution of forests to inclusive sustainable development.
4. Prepare a methodology and template to be used across the sub-regions to guide sub-regional and national consultants and ensure easy integration of the findings into an Africa region study
5. Present the draft sub-regional report for ECOWAS to sub-regional experts and stakeholders at a sub-regional workshop to be held virtually and produce a workshop report
6. Participate in the Africa regional workshop (to be held virtually) and present the sub-regional study findings
7. Produce a regional report for Africa collating the findings from all the sub-regions and incorporating comments and inputs from the regional workshop not exceeding 50 pages excluding annexes. The final report should clearly describe the impacts and implications including risks, threats and challenges on the forest sector and sustainable

forest management, and the identification of, and consensus on, potential measures for addressing the impacts of the pandemic and for accelerating socio-economic recovery as well as inclusive sustainable development.

8. Present the findings of the Africa region study at the global expert meeting on impact of COVID-19 on SFM to be held in December 2020.

III. CONTRACT DURATION

The contract will be for 45 working days within the period 20 September to 31 December 2020.

IV. DUTY STATION AND LOCATION OF ASSIGNMENT

The consultant will work off-site

V. EXPECTED OUTPUT AND DELIVERY DATES

The consultant will produce the following outputs and work along the following deadlines:

- The first draft of the analytical study on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on SFM, the forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities forest financing and international cooperation in the ECOWAS subregion by 30 October 2020.
- A final analytical study (ECOWAS subregion) and regional workshop report by 30 November 2020
- A final analytical study that incorporates findings from the Africa regional by 31 December 2020.

All written outputs will be delivered electronically, via email to UNFFS through Njeri Kariuki at kariuki@un.org

VI. TRAVEL

The consultant is required to travel to attend the regional and global expert meetings on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SFM in December 2020 and present the findings of the analytical study, if conditions permit. Travel cost will be obligated separately.

VII. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The consultant's performance will be based upon the following indicators:

- Technically sound guidance of discussions
- Timeliness of written output submissions
- Quality and readability of reports
- Receptiveness/responsiveness to inputs from the regional workshop, UNFF and the expert group meeting and feed-back from UNFFS staff members

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS

The consultant shall have the following competencies and qualifications:

- Advanced university degree or higher (Master's degree or equivalent) in forestry, environment or related area. A first-level university degree in combination with fifteen additional years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.
- At least 15 years of experience in areas directly related to sustainable forest management and international cooperation, with broad knowledge of the interrelated nature of natural resource management and the cross-sectoral and inter-institutional nature of forests;
- Experience in governments, intergovernmental negotiations which create policies and laws and oversee enforcement of more than two areas of economic, social and environmental matters related to forests and trees;
- Excellent policy, analytical, technical, interpersonal and drafting skills, including experience in facilitating expert meetings and discussions;
- No conflicts of interest;
- Oral and written fluency in English;
- Participation in UNFF activities is an advantage; and
- Willingness to work collaboratively on a team.