



# REGIONAL STUDY ON YOUTH AND BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

Action research on  
youth inclusion in governance,  
policymaking and management of  
conservation programs in Africa

1<sup>st</sup> Edition, August 2024

By Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement (JVE)

With the support of the African Biodiversity Network (ABN)



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## PLEASE NOTE

This edition is mostly focused on youth in West Africa. The text will be updated on East, Southern and Central Africa in the second edition.



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# SUMMARY

## The Context

The recognition and appreciation of Africa's dynamic youth population is crucial. The role of youth in Africa's development agenda has gained momentum, as evidenced by the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) which recognises youth as key partners in fostering solidarity and cohesion. Additionally, the African Union Commission's 2004-2007 Strategic Plan prioritised youth development and empowerment. The African Youth Charter (AYC), adopted in 2006 in Banjul, The Gambia, emphasises the vital role of young men and women in Africa's development, providing a continental framework that addresses youth rights, duties, freedoms, and participation at all development levels.

Human activities are the primary causes of climate change, biodiversity loss, and natural resource degradation. Over time, populations have adopted new technologies and practices that have altered ecological and socio-political structures, often at the expense of traditional African knowledge systems that have maintained a harmonious interaction between humanity and nature for centuries. The transfer of traditional knowledge to younger generations is waning, evidenced by a loss of cultural and spiritual connections with nature, leading to rapid degradation of natural resources and social values.

## The Purpose of the Study

This study explores how young people are involved in conserving biocultural diversity and fostering intergenerational learning. Increasingly aware of the climate crisis, young people are spearheading sustainable solutions and urging leaders to act decisively to reduce emissions and enhance community resilience. However, these efforts often lack sufficient support from governments and stakeholders.





The study was initiated to address the imbalanced relationship between nature and people, aiming to reverse biodiversity loss and prevent future global pandemics. Its purpose is to analyse and understand the determinants of Africa's youth engagement in cultural biodiversity governance and achieving the SDGs.

## The Findings

Findings reveal that young people's knowledge and understanding of cultural biodiversity are limited. This issue, along with other factors like varied interests and weak ties to governance structures, contributes to their low engagement. While numerous programs and initiatives exist, they often fail to resonate or make a significant impact due to inadequate communication and strategies not tailored to young audiences. To achieve the 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature, outlined in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, it is imperative to challenge and change our notions about biodiversity and cultural diversity through educational campaigns and coordinated support efforts.





# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Agro Bio Culture
ABN	African Biodiversity Network
AFSA	Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa
AOC	Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre
AOF	Afrique Occidentale Francophone
APAC	Aire du Patrimoine Autochtone Communautaire (or Indigenous and Community Conserved Area" (ICCA) in English)
BCD	Bio-culturelle diversité
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
ECOWAS	The Economic Community of West African States
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
AMCEN	The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
COPAGEN	Coalition pour la Protection du Patrimoine Génétique Africain
GYBN	Global Youth Biodiversity Network
IPCC	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JVE	Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
OIF	Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
PEC	Programme Écologie et Conscience
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
PAC	Position Africaine Commune
SBC	Semaine de la Biodiversité Culturelle
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
AU	African Union
UEMOA	The West African Monetary and Economic Union
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

# THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

Biodiversity is essential for human well-being but faces severe threats from climate change and economic globalisation, which also erode both biological and cultural diversity. As we navigate the Anthropocene era, we see a significant reduction in biodiversity alongside profound impacts on cultural groups, including the loss of traditional languages and ways of living.

Sustainable development relies on robust collaboration between communities and stakeholders, leveraging traditional knowledge to maintain harmony between nature and humanity. Despite global targets to halt biodiversity loss, progress is lacking, and the decline in biodiversity correlates with losses in linguistic and cultural diversity. This trend is exacerbated by globalisation. Areas rich in biodiversity often also boast cultural diversity, showing the strong connection between indigenous communities and nature where traditional practices are preserved.

As climate change's impacts grow, especially in Africa, communities strain under the pressure on natural resources, with the young bearing the brunt of these changes. They face a future where both biodiversity and cultural diversity are increasingly threatened.

As part of the project "Conserving biocultural diversity by strengthening community and ecosystem resilience", implemented by the African Biodiversity Network (ABC) with the support of its partner, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), this study examines the extent to which today's young Africans are engaged in issues relating to biocultural diversity in Africa. It also analyses the role of different actors in transferring traditional/local knowledge to younger generations through their activities and platforms, while identifying innovative means of conservation and sustainable governance.

This study document focuses on information relating to the different regions of Africa. The information contained in this study is the result not only of documentary research but also of consultations with young people and resource persons in the various countries concerned.

## STUDY OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to map the existing regulatory framework (including institutional, legal, strategic) around biocultural diversity in Africa and to identify youth initiatives, networks and programs that are having a high impact in communities, contributing to the fight against the erosion of cultural biodiversity and demonstrating environmental leadership in promoting sustainable development.

The results of this study will be used to improve the involvement of young people and youth organisations in these areas, as well as their leadership role in environmental governance on the continent.

Specifically, the study:

- i. Maps all significant biocultural events at national, sub-regional and continental levels.
- ii. Maps, categorises, assesses and analyses the regulatory environment governing biocultural diversity and youth involvement in environmental governance in Africa.
- iii. Identifies and map existing youth initiatives, networks, and programs in the fields of biodiversity conservation, environmental leadership, natural resource management and sustainable agriculture, and highlight the added value of youth and cultural biodiversity spaces/platforms/schemes/programs.
- iv. Highlights young people's perceptions of cultural biodiversity.

- v. Analyses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to youth initiatives, to deduce regional priorities for inclusion in the development of a strategic roadmap to strengthen bio-cultural conservation initiatives based on best practices and mechanisms to contribute to the emergence of an African youth movement on cultural biodiversity.

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

Six major coherent clusters (regions) have been defined on the continent. These are:

**Table 1: Distribution of countries by sub-region and responsibility for the study**

	Region	Countries	Responsible
1	West Africa (Francophone)	Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Niger, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Mauritania	Benin
2	West Africa (Anglophone)	Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone	Gambia
3	North Africa	Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Sudan	Morocco
4	East Africa	Kenya, Ouganda, Tanzanie, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, South Sudan	Rwanda
5	South Africa	Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Angola, South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland	Zimbabwe
6	Central Africa	Cameroon, DR Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Central African Republic, Gabon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea	Cameroon

For each region, a JVE National Representation was selected to coordinate the implementation of the study. In each region or zone, the study methodology was broken down into 3 main phases:

### 3.1. Preparatory phase: Literature Review

The documents reviewed consisted of the collection and examining documents on climate, culture, biodiversity and youth to identify existing biocultural events in the blocks of countries studied, as well as the regulatory and legislative frameworks in these countries around the themes of the study.

### 3.2. Data collection phase

Data collection was aimed at identifying existing youth initiatives, networks, and programs in the fields of biodiversity conservation, environmental leadership, natural resource management as well as sustainable agriculture.

Data was also collected to assess young people's perception of biodiversity. Data and information were collected through online discussions, telephone calls and desk research. Regional discussions and data collection took place between February and April 2022.

Online phone zooms and meetings with different groups were also held with youth team leaders to explore the status of biocultural diversity in their regions, levels of engagement of youth and youth groups, and known platforms for promoting biocultural diversity.

West Africa was targeted for a survey on youth involvement and participation in cultural biodiversity-related actions among young people and youth structures. Forty-four people were surveyed.

### 3.3. Data processing and analysis phase

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data collected was carried out. Based on the results obtained, a SWOT analysis was carried out and made it possible to identify the priority areas of intervention on which to focus to ensure active involvement and participation of young people in the preservation of cultural biodiversity.





# PART ONE

## YOUTH AND BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY



# NOTIONS ON YOUTH DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION

## POPULATION

According to the United Nations definition, youth is the age group between 10 and 24 years old, adolescents being between 10 and 19 years old and young people between 15 and 24 years old. However, different countries use different age ranges to define each group at the national level (table 2). Furthermore, the African Youth Charter defines youth as between 15 and 35 years old.

**Table 2: Definitions of young people according to national policies**

Age range	West and Central African countries
12 - 35	Benin
15 -24	Togo
15 - 30	Gambia
15 -34	Liberia
15 - 35	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Niger
18 - 35	Nigeria, Senegal
Unknown or not specified	Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Mauritania, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mali, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea- Bissau
<b>15 - 35</b>	African Youth Charter
No policy on youth, not available or currently under development	São Tomé and Príncipe, Mali, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region of the South whose demographic growth is by far the fastest. Presently, it is about 2.7% per year compared to 1.8% in North Africa and the Middle East, and 1.3 % to 0.3% elsewhere (Table 3). The growing share of youth in the African population is a very concrete reality. Sixty percent (60%) of Africans are under 24 years old. By 2050, 35% of young people in the world will be African, whereas this proportion was only 15% in 2000. This specificity is essential for the future of this continent which is the youngest in the world.

**Table 3: Comparative demographic situation**

Region or Country	Population (millions)				Population Ratios 2020/2000	Natural Growth Rate (%)		
	1990	2000	2010	2020		1995 to 2000	2005 to 2010	2015 to 2020
West Africa (17 countries)	181	235	307	402	1.71	2.7	2.8	2.7
Central Africa (9 countries)	71	96	132	180	1.87	2.9	2.9	2.7
East Africa (20 countries)	197	257	339	445	1.73	2.8	2.9	2.7
Southern Africa (5 countries)	42	51	58	68	1.31	1.4	1.1	1.1
<b>Total (51 countries)</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>1094</b>	<b>1.71</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.7</b>

Burkina Faso	8.8	11.6	15.6	20.9	1.8	3.1	3.2	3.0
Ghana	14.8	19.3	24.8	31.0	1.6	2.6	2.4	2.2
Niger	8.0	11.4	16.4	24.1	2.1	3.6	3.8	3.8
Nigeria	95.2	122.3	158.5	206.1	1.7	2.5	2.7	2.5
Cameroon	11.8	15.5	20.3	26.5	1.7	2.6	2.7	2.6
DR Congo	34.6	47.1	64.6	89.6	1.9	2.9	3.3	3.2
Ethiopia	47.9	66.2	87.6	115.8	1.7	2.5	2.8	2.6
Kenya	23.7	31.3	42.0	53.8	1.7	2.5	2.7	2.5
Rwanda	7.3	8.4	10.5	13.0	1.6	2.9	2.5	2.4
Tanzania	23.1	33.5	44.3	59.7	1.8	2.8	2.7	2.5
Zimbabwe	10.4	11.9	12.7	14.9	1.3	1.7	1.8	1.7
South Africa	36.8	45.0	50.6	59.3	1.3	2.0	1.9	1.1

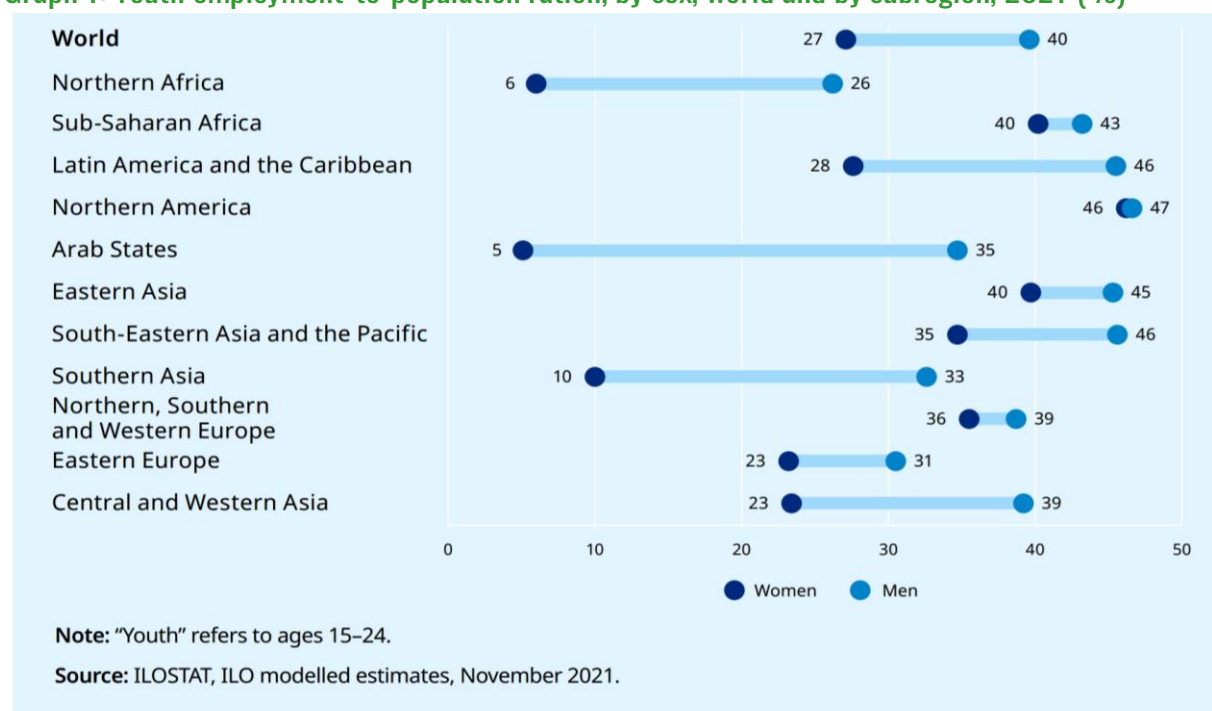
**Source: United Nations (2019). Data available at [www.unpopulation.org](http://www.unpopulation.org)**

The share of young people in the African population continues to increase. Indeed, West and Central Africa is one of the youngest regions in the world: it is estimated to have around 77 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24. The continent's share of the world's youth population is projected to rise from one-fifth of what it was in 2012, to one-third by 2050. Current trends suggest that much of this increase will take place in West, Central and East African countries. This high proportion of young people represents an opportunity to take full advantage of the demographic dividend, by focusing on appropriate investments that contribute to development and impact on the population.

## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

In general, the ratio of young people in employment to the size of the population in the different regions of the world is as follows:

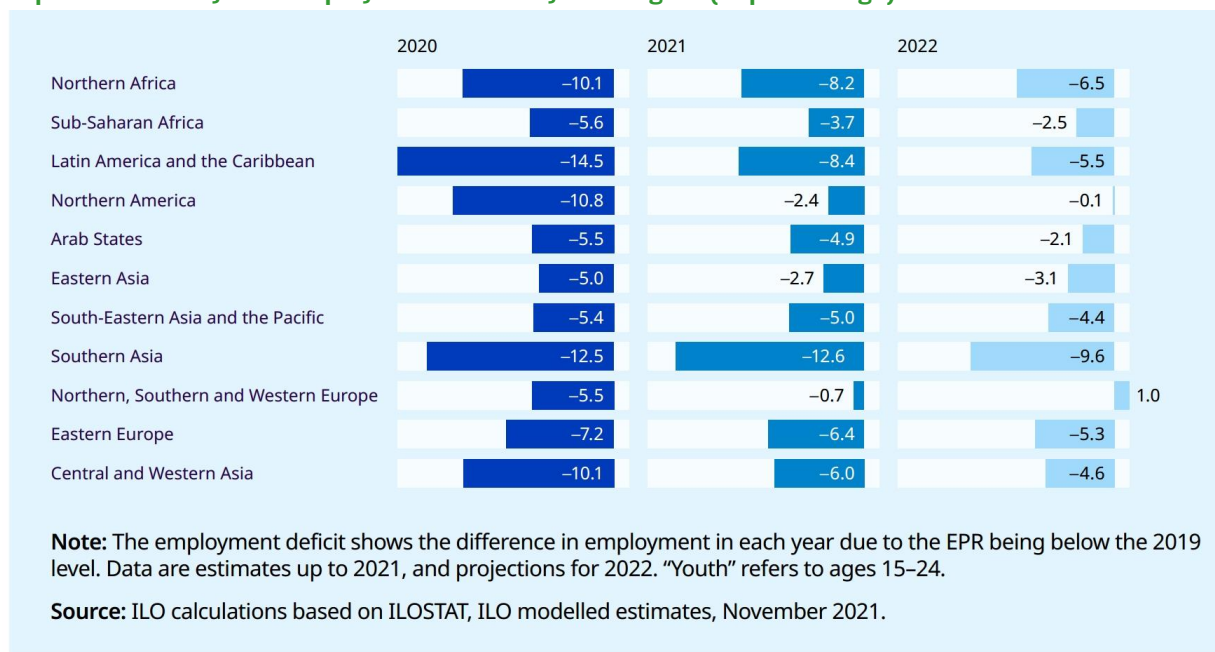
**Graph 1: Youth employment-to-population ration, by sex, world and by subregion, 2021 (%)**





This ratio remains relatively low for North Africa with a rate of 6% for women and 20% for men. At the level of sub-Saharan Africa, this ratio is around 40% and remains in more than acceptable proportions with regards to the trend observed in the different parts of the world. From 2019 to 2021, a trend towards a youth employment deficit is observed around the world due to Covid 19 and the current economic situation.

**Graph 2: Relative youth employment deficit by sub-region (in percentage)**



Today, the cohort of young Africans is faced with the mismatch between labour market needs and youth training as well as new challenges, such as protracted crises, migration, and global competition on the labour market.

There are several definitions of youth. Within the framework of this study, since it is implemented in Africa, we will make ours for the future the definition of the African Youth Charter. This defines a young person as anyone between the ages of 15 and 35.

## CONCEPTS ON BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY

### CULTURE

*"Culture, in its broadest sense, is considered as the set of distinctive traits, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective, which characterise a society or a social group. It encompasses, in addition to the arts and letters, ways of life, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs."*

Mexico Declaration on Cultural Policies. World Conference on Cultural Policies, 1982

Culture represents the identity of societies or social groups.

It is widely accepted that development can only be sustainable with a strong cultural component. Indeed, only a human-centred approach to development based on mutual respect and open dialogue between cultures can lead to lasting peace.



## CULTURAL DIVERSITY

*Cultural Diversity is the multiplicity of forms of expression of the cultures of groups and societies. These cultural expressions are transmitted within and between groups and societies, as well as from generation to generation. Cultural diversity manifests itself not only in the many forms through which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, enriched and transmitted, but also through various modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment, regardless of the technologies and means used.*

UNESCO, Convention on the Protection and Promotion  
of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2005.

The Convention on The Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions affirms in its preamble that cultural diversity constitutes a common heritage of humanity and that it should be celebrated and preserved for the benefit of all.

## BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity is the living fabric of our planet. This covers all natural environments and forms of life (plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, etc.) and their interactions. It comprises three interdependent levels:

- the diversity of living environments at all scales: from the oceans, meadows, forests... to the content of cells (think of the parasites that can live there) through the pond at the bottom of one's garden, or green spaces in the city;
- the diversity of species (including the human species) that live in these environments;
- the genetic diversity of individuals within each species: in other words, we are all different!

Source: [https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/biodiversite-presentation-et-informations-cles#scroll-nav\\_\\_4](https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/biodiversite-presentation-et-informations-cles#scroll-nav__4)

Today's biological diversity comes from the long and slow evolution of the living world on the planet, since the first known living organisms 3.5 billion years ago.

Biodiversity renders 4 four types of services to humans. These are:

- ➔ Supply services (food, fibers, combustible biomass, fresh water, etc.),
- ➔ Regulation services (air quality control, water regulation, erosion control, etc.),
- ➔ Cultural services (leisure and eco-tourism, ethical values) and
- ➔ Support services (nutrient cycle, primary production and water cycle) which are all
- ➔ Essential for Life.

Source: The services provided by biodiversity - The SD notebooks - complete tool  
(cahiersdeveloppement-durable.be)

## BIODIVERSITY, CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

There is a close link between biodiversity and cultural diversity. The **UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity**, adopted on November 2, 2001, declares, under **Article 1 – Cultural diversity: the common heritage of humanity**: " As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature."

Some authors do not hesitate to link biodiversity and cultural diversity. This is what Arne Naess argues when he asserts that cultural forms in their diversity "can be considered as part of the

richness and diversity of life forms on earth<sup>1</sup>.” Considered as one of the modalities of biodiversity, cultural diversity must benefit from the same respect and local cultures “must be preserved, in the same way as endangered species”<sup>2</sup>

**Biocultural diversity** is defined as the co-evolution and permanent adaptation of biological diversity and cultural diversity. This co-evolution has generated local ecological knowledge and practices that are transmitted from generation to generation and allow societies around the world to manage their resources in a sustainable way while preserving their cultural identity and social structures.

This definition only reinforces the intertwined nature of cultural diversity and biodiversity. Biodiversity is essential to the cultural integrity of people. Biocultural diversity has enabled societies to manage their resources sustainably while preserving their cultural identity and social structures. Human behavior towards their environment and towards others is deeply linked to their cultures.



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<sup>1</sup> Arne Naess, “The Encouraging Richness and Diversity of Ultimate Premises in Environmental Philosophy”, *The Trumpeter*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1992, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Geneviève Michon, “Social sciences and biodiversity: new issues for a new context”, p. 424.



## PART TWO

# BIOCULTURAL EVENTS AND SETTING REGULATORY



# BIO-CULTURAL EVENTS

Bio-cultural events are generally identity celebrations, organised to celebrate key moments in the history of communities. Their purpose is often to enable people to remember their shared history and to promote cohesion and solidarity between members of the same community.

The following tables present some festivals recorded in Africa in general.

## ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL PROMOTION – INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED BY INSTITUTIONS

**Table 4: Examples of Artistic and Cultural Festivals in Africa**

Events	Type of Event
<b>Artistic and Cultural Nights of Cotonou (ACNC) - Benin</b>	An initiative of the Government of President Patrice TALON and which aims to promote the creations of the most inspired talented artists, and above all to reveal those who until now have remained unknown to the general public.
<b>Abéné Festival, Senegal</b>	Every winter since 1994, the village of Abéné, in Casamance, holds the week-long Abéné Festival, a program of music, dance, song and theater in African colours. People come from all over the country, but also from Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Guinea Bissau and even from Europe or America to meet African culture and ethnic groups through the arts. During the day there are programs for the children and meetings about issues such as deforestation and environmental threats.
<b>"Fête de la Musique," World Music Day - Ivory Coast</b>	"Fête de la Musique," also known as World Music Day. This festival, of French origin, is celebrated worldwide and features various musical performances in public spaces, aiming to promote music in all its forms making it accessible to a broader audience.
<b>7th edition of the Ogobagna cultural festival Mali</b>	"The place of women in our traditional societies"! This was the theme of the 7th edition of the Dogon Cultural Festival, "Ogobagna" (from January 24 to 30, 2022). On the bill, as in previous editions, conference-debates, an exhibition fair, a traditional wrestling tournament, a giant concert with the stars of Malian music.
<b>Storytelling Nights Festival in the village in Sissamba (Lâ-Toden) Burkina Faso</b>	With a series of shows and performances by musicians, dancers, jugglers and other storytellers, this festival is an invitation to share and discover life in the village.
<b>Carnival Kaleta and agouda arts festival in Ouidah - Benin</b>	Kaleta dances - the Kaletas, "masked people" in Portuguese, having settled on the Beninese coast - with masks and costumes on a background of traditional music. A free festival for all.
<b>Ségou'Art, festival on Niger in Ségou Mali</b>	The city of Ségou, northeast of Bamako, hosts the largest contemporary art fair in Mali. This festival of traditional music and dance celebrates the rebirth of Ségou, a land of history and culture. This event aims to promote the work of young artists from the continent to collectors, gallery owners, art critics and the general public. The Ségou festival includes concerts and master classes, theatrical performances, exhibitions of art and crafts on the Bogolan, stories of tales and legends, music and dances, puppet shows, an artistic fair, a discussion forum, workshops.
<b>Celebration of KWANZAA Bénin</b>	Organised by CEVASTE in the classified forest of Pahou; Kwanzaa was created in 1966 by African-American activist Maulana Karenga. Its original purpose was to promote and reaffirm the ties between Black Americans and Africa, to stand out from the celebrations of Christmas brought by white Europeans.
<b>Popo Carnival in Bonoua Côte d'Ivoire</b>	This carnival is a real institution in the region. It celebrates the traditions, habits and customs of the region. It was established as a time of leisure for local peoples and populations. It is a variant of the yam festival. It includes an election for the most handsome man and the most beautiful woman, a commercial week and, of course, a great parade of floats and masked men.



<b>Nomadic Festival Mauritanie</b>	The result of a collaboration between Canada and Mauritania, each year this festival celebrates nomadic culture on both sides of the Atlantic. Artists from all over the world come together in Nordic lands or on the borders of Western Sahara to honor the arts, traditions and sense of sharing of nomadism. Dances, songs, gastronomy and literature are on the program of this event open to all. In the desert, Mauritanian and Canadian musicians mingle their sounds to the delight of the public.
<b>Saint-Louis Jazz in Saint-Louis Senegal</b>	Saint-Louis organises the largest international jazz festival on the African continent every year. This so-called festival has welcomed major international stars since its creation in 1994. Apart from concerts and the craft fair on Place Faidherbe, many street and neighborhood events enliven the island.
<b>Djenné canoe race Mali</b>	Usually held on September 22, Mali's Independence Day. Another takes place in mid- October, from Thursday to Saturday, during the tabay-hoo ("hare beat") festival. Originally, this hunt was intended to ward off evil spirits and kill harmful animals.
<b>General meeting of Wodaabé Fulani herders in Tagoudoum Niger</b>	The Wodaabé, itinerant herders of zebus belonging to the Fulani family, meet at the end of September to feed a reflection on livestock farming and nomadism on a daily basis, and on the interactions between this activity and tourism. It is a "kind of social, economic and cultural forum".
<b>Marian pilgrimage to Popenguine Senegal</b>	On Whit Monday, a Christian pilgrimage takes place throughout the day. Thousands of Catholics from West Africa Walk from Dakar to Popenguine, a small seaside village known for its Black Madonna (blessed by the Pope).
<b>West Africa Food Festival</b>	The 14th edition of the Food Festival is held in Brussels and Wallonia, before touring West Africa (DRC, Senegal, Burkina Faso, CAR).
<b>FESTISOL BENIN Benin</b>	organized by Festival des Solidarités Benin Debate meeting other theater projection conference solidarity environment other interculturality food/agriculture, adults, students young people



## EVENTS PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

**Table 5: Events aimed at protecting the environment and biodiversity**

Events	Type of Event
<b>Independence Day and Tree Festival Niger</b>	The particularity of Independence Day in Niger is that in addition to celebrating the country's autonomy from France, acquired on August 3, 1960, this day is also that of the Arbor Day. To sustainably preserve its ecosystem, Niger has launched a land restoration program. Nigeriens are invited to plant a tree each that day to fight against the desertification of the country.
<b>National Tree Day Togo and Benin</b>	This day, established on June 1, 1977, sees the Togolese plant trees to symbolise reforestation, the fight for the protection of the environment and sustainable development. This day dedicated to the protection of trees and the environment is also placed under the sign of the fight against coastal erosion.
<b>International Day for Biological Diversity</b>	The International Day for Biological Diversity is celebrated each year on May 22, the date of the adoption of the text of the Convention on biodiversity.
<b>Earth Hour World</b>	Initiated in 2007, the Earth Hour is a call to the initiative of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF, World Fund for Nature) for planetary mobilisation by plunging the earth into darkness for 1 hour, 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. to participate symbolically in the fight for the defense of the environment and against global warming.
<b>International Mother Earth Day</b>	It was first celebrated on April 22, 1970, in the United States, often considered the birth of the environmental movement. Over the years, it has become the largest participatory environmental movement on the planet.
<b>World Africa Day</b>	Across the continent, Africa Day commemorates the creation in 1963, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which was succeeded by the African Union (AU) in 2002. Many activities and ceremonies are organised across the continent. Africa Day aims to "bring African people together, strengthen their faith in integration and popularise the ideal of union on the continent".

## TRADITIONAL FESTIVITIES

**Table 6: List of traditional festivals in West Africa**

Events	Type of Event
<b>Odon-Tsu, yam festival in Atakpamé Togo</b>	This harvest festival gives rise to traditional ceremonies in honor of Mother Earth. You can attend many mask and fire dances in traditional costumes, linked to Voodoo culture, including the war dance performed by women on Fridays, following preparation in the bush the previous night, but also the Tchébé dance on stilts that are around 3 to 4 meters. At the stadium, we attend demonstrations of traditional dances as well as the prayer of the spiritual leader, and we can taste the yam. "Odon" means "party" and "Tsu" is the genius of the earth, the force acting on the shoot cereals, especially yam tubers. The last Saturday in July. When: July (every year)
<b>Kilikpo, harvest festival in Tchamba Togo</b>	It is on the occasion of the festival of abundant harvests that the new yam is consumed. Offerings are made to the gods, protective spirits and spirits. This month is therefore considered a month of abundance and sanctification. The harvest festival is celebrated in Tchamba on the first Saturday of August.
<b>Guetna or date festival in Adrar Mauritania</b>	Every summer, in July-August, sedentary people and nomads meet in the oases of the Adrar desert to pick dates. The collection of dates is called the guetna. This summer meeting, a popular event, comes from a long nomadic tradition, and the festivities are numerous. The families who have immigrated to the city then meet to celebrate. Dwellings in cities and camps are abandoned and families meet in the many huts scattered in the palm groves. It is during this period that weddings and concerts of griots are also organised. The guetna lasts until the rainy season, which begins with the month of September.
<b>Dzawuwu-za, Kloto Ewe harvest festival in Kpalimé Togo</b>	This custom refers to ancestral beliefs in the region of Kpalimé and Mount Kloto. According to tradition, dishes made from the first fruits of corn, cassava and yam are cooked for the gods and the spirits of the dead. The Ewe people organise this event

	in religious colours in honor of several gods, and in particular the goddess Apetofia, divinity among others of the forests, plains and mountains of Agou.
<b>Bean festival (Ayiza)</b> <b>Togo</b>	This festival is celebrated in Tsévié, 35 km north of Lomé, in memory of the Ewe Fulani in exodus (exodus from Notsé). As they migrated south, they would have founded Tsévié in 1720 by sowing beans there. The sowers then refused to leave, wanting to wait for the harvest. The name Tsévié comes from tsé (to produce) and vié (a little).
<b>Togbui-Agni, harvest festival of the Adja-tado people of Moyen-Mono in Tado</b> <b>Togo - Bénin</b>	The Adja-Tado of Moyen Mono, a community mainly located southeast of Notsé, in the Moyen Mono prefecture, organises its traditional festival. On this occasion, the "King of the Earth" is out solemnly in Tado. The sick are exorcised during ritual ceremonies during which they also thank the spirits of the ancestors and the nourishing earth for the abundance of the harvests.
<b>Harvest or fonio festival (Ovazou) in Akposso and Akebou country</b> <b>Togo</b>	The inhabitants thank the gods for having allowed an abundant harvest, and for having protected the community. The word "ovazu" comes from the akposso words "ova" ("fonio", a cereal) and "zu" ("party"). On the program: tam-tam, ancestor worship and new fonio consumption ceremonies. Fonio probably played a major role in the fight against the enemies of the Akposso people. This festival is generally celebrated on the 2nd Saturday of December, every other year in Amlamé, the other in Badou.
<b>Yam Festival</b>  <b>Benin</b>	The Yam Festival in Benin, known locally as the "Fête de l'Igname," is an important cultural and agricultural celebration that marks the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the yam harvest, typically held in August or September. This festival is deeply rooted in the traditions of the various ethnic groups in Benin, especially among the Yoruba, Fon, and Bariba people. It symbolises gratitude to the earth and the ancestors for a bountiful harvest and involves various rituals, including the offering of yams to deities and ancestors. The festivities are characterised by colourful ceremonies, traditional music and dance, and communal feasting on yam dishes. The festival is also a time for family reunions and community gatherings, fostering a sense of unity and cultural pride among the participants.
<b>Abissa festival in Grand-Bassam</b>  <b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>	This traditional cultural celebration and celebration is orchestrated by the N'Zima community to symbolise the concepts of democracy and social justice. The N'Zima, originally from Ghana, meet around their chief and to the sound of tom-toms to take stock of the past year, and possibly denounce either the injustices committed, or to publicly confess them within the framework of a request for forgiveness from his own and for repentance. The Abissa Festival is celebrated between late October and early November.
<b>Traditional Gamou from Kahone (Kaolack)</b>  <b>Sénégal</b>	The tradition of this event dates to the 16th century; it was held under the reign of the King of Saloum. Every year on the 1st weekend of May (Thursday to Saturday), you can attend ritual dances with masks. These divination sessions predict the course of the wintering (the rainy season) and augur a fruitful agricultural season.
<b>Bianou in Agadez</b>  <b>Niger</b>	This Muslim New Year celebration has been celebrated in Agadez since the Middle Ages but has since spread towards Arlit. It is a tradition for the Agadéziens to claim of Tuareg identity and also a moment of parades and meetings. For a few days, the city lives to the rhythm of tom-toms, drums and dances, and young Tuaregs come to court the women, because it is also customary for it to be the feast of seduction.
<b>Tamkharit (Achoura)</b>  <b>Senegal</b>	This holiday corresponds to the 10th day of the Muslim year. It is a day of prayers, fasting and feasting to encourage sharing and solidarity, two key principles of Senegalese life. According to custom, the Senegalese eat their fill on this occasion to symbolise their hope of having enough to eat through the year. It is on the occasion of Tadjaboou, a carnival during which little boys dress up as girls and vice versa.
<b>Mbossé festival in Kaolack</b>  <b>Sénégal</b>	Mbossé is the totem of the city of Kaolack. This festival is a procession where divinatory sessions take place. Symbolically the city is placed under the protection of the totem, through sacrifices. The Mbossé festival takes place in August or September, depending on the lunar calendar



<b>Salt cure in In gall</b>  <b>Niger</b>	One of the most important events in the Nigerien cultural calendar. Every year in mid-September, at the end of the rainy season, Tuaregs and Peuls come together at In gall, 160 km from Agadez, after the summer transhumance towards the salty pastures of the north. This great festival of breeders is a privileged moment for these nomads.
<b>Guéréwol, festival of the Peuls Bororos in the Sahel region</b>  <b>Niger</b>	The Guérowol is a festival that takes place during the cure salée, in mid-September, at the end of the rainy season. More than a party, it's a competition between the men of the Fulani community. From morning to night, they dance and wear their finery and make-up in front of the elders and the women of the tribe, who will elect the best dancer. The winner will choose his future wife from among the women who elected him.
<b>Exit from the Kankourang</b>  <b>Senegal</b>	This event celebrating male circumcision is organised every year, from the beginning of August to the end of September in all the Mandinka villages, but especially in the city of Mbour. The Kankourang is the guarantor of order and justice as well as the exorcist of evil spirits. As such, he ensures transmission and teaching of a complex collection of know-how and practices underpinning Manding cultural identity. A ritual that has spread to other communities and groups of the area, it is the occasion for young circumcised boys to learn the rules of behaviour for the ordering their community, the secrets of plants and their medicinal values, and hunting techniques.
<b>Humabel, feast of the king of Oussouye</b> <b>Senegal</b>	During the winter, this traditional festival is organised in honor of the King of Oussouye, in Casamance. They organise prayers, dances and wrestling sessions for boys and girls.



## HISTORICAL FESTIVITIES

**Table 7: Non-exhaustive list of historical festivals in Africa**

Events	Type of event
<b>The GAANI Festival Benin</b>	Secular festival of the Baatonus peoples of northern Benin
<b>Magal de Grand-Bassam Côte d'Ivoire</b>	A great pilgrimage dedicated to the commemoration of the passage of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké in Grand-Bassam, founder of Mouridism, in 1885, while he was on his way to Gabon to go into exile. On the program: major conference, then Magal ceremony at the Espace Jeunesse. It is the biggest celebration of the Senegalese diaspora in Africa.
<b>Epe-Ekpe, Togo</b>	The historical festival of the Guins, one of the most important in all of West Africa, marks the new year for this people who arrived from Ghana in the 17th century after the exodus from Notsé, and whose capital is Aného. Epe-Ekpe is the occasion for taking the sacred stone (Kpessosso), the core around which all events revolve. Epé-Ekpé is a mode of affirmation of the collective identity of these people, based on cosmological principles, on the symbolism of masculine and feminine. Solidarity is at the heart of Ekpé's teaching.
<b>Ewe Historical Festival (Agbogbo-Za) Togo</b>	On the occasion of the biggest traditional festival of the Ewe people, the inhabitants remember the tribulations suffered by the ancestors of the Ewe, from the great exodus from Notsé in the 17th century. The festival takes on a religious dimension: the first anticipated harvests are offered, and the blessing of the gods and spirits is implored. The first ritual ceremonies begin on the first Thursday of September in Notsé, and the climax of the celebrations takes place in the same town the following Saturday.

As we can see, in the different countries of the studied area, we find a diversity of bio- cultural events. These events of different nature participate in the artistic and cultural promotion, the protection of the environment and biodiversity and then contribute to the improvement of cultural biodiversity. Many of these events are governed in the various countries by fairly clear legislative and regulatory frameworks. The following chapter presents the main ones.

## REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND TEXTS

The study has looked into the legal arsenal of the countries covered here, to see what regulatory texts have been adopted to prevent or mitigate the erosion of cultural and biodiversity in these different countries.

These texts must make it possible to eradicate or limit the actions of:

- The destruction and fragmentation of natural environments are linked, in particular, to urbanisation and the development of transport infrastructures;
- Overexploitation of wild species: overfishing, deforestation, poaching;
- Water, soil, and air pollution;
- The introduction of invasive alien species;
- Climate change can be added to the other causes and aggravate them;
- The recognition and protection of indigenous cultures and knowledge.

The following table presents a summary of the extent of adoption of regulations on bio-cultural diversity-related the various countries in the study area.

**Table 8: Situation of countries in the regions of Africa with regard to the adoption of texts on bio-cultural diversity**

Region	Countries	Cultural biodiversity taken into account in the fundamental law	Has the country ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity?	Has the country ratified the convention on cultural diversity?	Does the country have any laws against the destruction and fragmentation of natural environments?	Does the country have any laws against the over-exploitation of wild species?	Does the country have any legislation to combat water, soil and air pollution?	Has the country adopted legislation against the introduction of invasive alien species?	Has the country adopted legislation on climate change?
Western Africa	Senegal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
(Francophone)	Mali	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Cote d'Ivoire	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Burkina Faso	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Togo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Benin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Niger	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Guinea-Conakry	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Liberia		X						X
	Mauritania	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Western Africa	Nigeria		X	X					X
(Anglophone)	Ghana	X	X	X					X



	The Gambia		X	X	X	X	X		X
	Sierra Leone		X						X
Northern Africa	Morocco	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Tunisia	X	X	X					X
	Algeria	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Egypt	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
	Libya		X						X
	Sudan		X	X					X
Eastern Africa	Kenya		X	X					X
	Uganda		X	X					X
	Tanzania		X	X					X
	Rwanda		X	X					X
	Ethiopia		X	X					X
	Burundi		X	X					X
	Djibouti		X	X					X
	Eritrea		X						X
Southern Africa	South Sudan		X	X					X
	Zimbabwe		X	X					X
	Mozambique		X	X					X
	Lesotho		X	X					X
	Malawi		X	X					X
	Namibia		X	X					X
	Angola		X	X					X

	South Africa	X	X	X					X
	Botswana	X	X	X					X
	Swaziland	X	X	X					X
Central Africa	Cameroon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	DR Congo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Congo-Brazzaville	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Central African Republic	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Gabon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Chad	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Equatorial Guinea	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Total	24	45	41	20	20	20	18	45
45 Countries	% of countries adopting regulatory texts	53	100	91	44	44	44	40	100

Analysis of this table shows that 100% of countries have texts relating to climate change and have ratified the Convention on Biodiversity.

91% have ratified the convention on cultural diversity. We note, however, that despite these widespread ratifications, only 53% have taken cultural biodiversity into account in their fundamental law.

44% of the countries in the study area have adopted texts against the destruction and fragmentation of natural environments. Only 44% have regulations on the overexploitation of wild species as well as on the pollution of water, soil and air. Finally, only 40% of these countries have regulations on the introduction of invasive alien species.

These results show that more than half of the countries do not have sufficiently comprehensive regulations to prevent the erosion of diversity, whether cultural or biological. Consequently, the preservation of cultural biodiversity in these countries is still precarious and it is necessary to work on it in order to strengthen it.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PRACTICES IN WEST AFRICA

Effective environmental protection requires policies that extend beyond national boundaries. The European Union serves as a significant example in this regard, acting as a model for the creation and effective implementation of environmental laws through binding directives that directly apply to member states. In contrast, African economic integration organisations show a notable lack of comprehensive environmental policies. The environmental policy documents that do exist within these organisations often contain general or vague language and lack binding authority. Unlike the EU, which has developed a robust body of community law, equivalent enforceable measures are largely absent in African community areas.





Differences among African organisations are evident, with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) showing relatively more initiative in environmental governance than the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). ECOWAS has established an Environment Directorate and adopted regulations on pesticides, seeds, and food safety since 2008. However, these efforts are still in their infancy, and there is no cohesive body of community environmental law across most African organisations. This lack of a unified legal framework is partly mitigated by multiple regional organisations that manage shared natural resources, such as the Senegal River Development Organisation (OMVS) and the Niger Basin Authority (NBA). Despite this, these organisations' effectiveness is hindered by a lack of coordination, preventing them from pooling resources or achieving common goals.

Mali offers a revealing case study. The country has a comprehensive array of national, regional, and international environmental laws, reflecting a strong governmental commitment to prioritising environmental issues. However, these laws often remain theoretical, with low practical effectiveness due to weak implementation mechanisms. Recent legal reforms in Mali aim to adapt to the socio-political context, promoting citizen involvement in managing and conserving natural resources, including through local and national councils for hunting and fishing. Yet, a paradox emerges: despite a wealth of environmental regulations, enforcement is weak, hampered by organisational inefficiencies, limited resources, and the compartmentalisation of laws across different sectors.

This situation in Mali is mirrored across much of the region. Environmental laws, while relevant, do not automatically produce the desired effects; their effectiveness depends on the resources and commitment of public authorities to enforce them. In Mali and other countries, environmental protection rules suffer from inadequate oversight by responsible agencies, which often fail to fully exercise their legal powers. Mechanisms for implementing environmental laws typically fall into two categories: non-jurisdictional, involving administrative procedures to prevent or penalise environmental damage, and jurisdictional, involving legal proceedings. However, in practice, both mechanisms are often underutilised, reducing their effectiveness in safeguarding the environment.

## CONSTRAINTS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAW IN WEST AFRICA

Shortcomings in the application of environmental law in French-speaking West Africa can be summarised as follows:

### CITIZENS' IGNORANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND ITS LACK OF LEGITIMACY

While citizens understand the importance of the environment and natural resources, they often do not see the value of environmental law itself. These laws, created by public authorities without real citizen participation, are viewed as foreign or imposed by developed countries and financial aid policies. Consequently, people are less likely to follow laws they do not know about or consider legitimate. This issue is exacerbated by increasing ecological disregard among the population.

## POVERTY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Poverty is a significant factor in non-compliance with environmental laws. For many, the environment is the main source of food and resources. Poor communities, needing to meet their basic needs, often overexploit natural resources, ignoring legal restrictions. In Mali and Benin, for example, poor households rely on firewood, harming vegetation. Similarly, extensive agriculture and livestock rearing can damage the environment. Poverty also leads to the use of cheaper, outdated technologies that pollute more, such as old vehicles and motorbikes.

## INADEQUATE AND COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION REGULATIONS

Legal standards are easier to enforce when they align with the social and cultural context. In Mali, many environmental laws are poorly adapted to the local context, leading to low adherence among citizens. While public authorities bear some responsibility for this, citizens also often show little respect for environmental regulations.

## INADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

Despite efforts to raise awareness, environmental laws are still not widely understood. The public's lack of familiarity with these laws is evident in the few complaints filed about environmental offences. The laws, often presented in French and in a legal style, are not accessible to the largely illiterate population and are rarely translated into local languages, making them even harder to understand. Furthermore, the judiciary lacks adequate training in environmental law, which has only recently been introduced into university curricula.

In conclusion, environmental law is crucial for ensuring healthy living conditions and supporting other fundamental rights like health, development, and life itself. It is concerning that these laws remain ineffective in regions such as French-speaking West Africa due to limited financial and human resources. Given the current global financial climate, it may be time for Africa to take the initiative in creating policies to generate the resources necessary for better enforcement of environmental law.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH INVOLVEMENT AND SPACES FOR ACTION

Access to information is the first pillar of environmental democracy, as effective public participation in decision-making, especially by young people, relies on comprehensive information. Clear environmental information is essential for meaningful youth participation in environmental protection. While some African countries recognise the right to information in their laws, this right often lacks necessary guarantees. The 2010 African regional conference on access to information revealed that less than 7.5% of African countries have laws on this right, lagging behind the global average due to a culture of secrecy, low public awareness, and institutional barriers.

Despite the 1992 Rio Declaration and the African Charter mandating access to information, many African states have yet to ensure this right effectively. Article 9 of the African Charter guarantees the right to information, including environmental data. However, practical challenges remain, such as setting deadlines for responding to information requests and providing support to the public, especially given the socio-economic context of African states. Environmental information must be made available promptly using various means, including new technologies.

Access to information must be complemented by the right to participate in environmental decision-making, the second pillar of environmental democracy. Public participation allows citizens to engage in the preparation of public projects and decisions that affect the environment, providing transparency and enabling public scrutiny. Although public participation procedures exist, they are often inadequate for effective environmental protection. Despite international commitments, public participation in African countries often appears incomplete, with citizens largely excluded from policy-making processes.

Administrative practices often place the public in a subordinate role, with decisions imposed unilaterally without genuine public involvement. This exclusion fosters a disconnect between public authorities and civil society, leading to indifference toward environmental law. Effective public participation requires new procedures that are transparent, inclusive, and iterative, ensuring public input is considered early in decision-making processes.

There are opportunities for greater youth involvement in environmental governance, but these must be created by management bodies. Young people often initiate actions independently to assert their presence in local environmental governance. Youth organisations in West Africa also target young people to preserve and promote bio-cultural diversity, providing platforms for them to express their commitment to their cultures and nature.





## PART THREE

# EXISTING INITIATIVES, NETWORKS AND YOUTH PROGRAMS



# REGIONAL PRESENCE OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

## PROGRAMS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Many youth organisations are involved in programs and initiatives to promote bio-cultural diversity. For many years, these programs, and initiatives, aimed primarily at young people, have placed cultural biodiversity at the heart of contemporary concerns, with particular emphasis on the importance of preserving our endogenous resources and wealth.

In the French-speaking West African sub-region, this is particularly true of the following initiatives:

- ➔ Youth for Biodiversity program of the NGO Eco Bénin
- ➔ Programme Ecologie et Conscience (PEC) from the NGO JVE
- ➔ GRABE BENIN and Nature Tropicale's Graine Future program
- ➔ Agro Bio Culture Festival (ABC) in Togo
- ➔ Program of the Fédération Connaître et Protéger la Nature (FCPN) - Etc.

Here is an outline of two initiatives implemented by civil society organisations.

## FOCUS ON YOUTH FOR BIODIVERSITY'S ECO-VOLUNTEERING PROGRAM

To place African youth at the forefront of biodiversity conservation efforts, the NGO Benin Ecotourism Concern (Eco-Benin) launched the Youth for Biodiversity (Y4B) eco-volunteering program from May to September 2020. This initiative, part of the "Engaging Youth in Biodiversity Conservation through Environmental Volunteering" project, was funded by the German-African Youth Initiative Innovation Fund (FI-AGYI). The project supports targets 7 and 3 of Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 13, and aligns with aspiration 6, particularly objective 18 (engaged and empowered youth) of the African Union's Agenda 2063. The primary goal was to enhance the participation of young Africans in sustainable biodiversity management.

The Y4B program involved 557 young people from Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea-Conakry. Of these participants, 46% were young women and 8% were individuals with disabilities. The program was organised into three phases:

- **Organisation of an international online training seminar:** in the form of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), it enabled participants to gain a better understanding of the importance of biodiversity, the Convention on Biological Diversity and its implementation mechanisms, and strategies for involving young people.
- **Participant coaching:** coaching sessions organised via online conference platforms were offered to participants to guide them in creating local youth activist groups, identifying, planning and implementing sustainable community actions for biodiversity conservation.
- **Sharing experiences:** at the end of their first community actions, participants produced experience sheets which were posted online.

Through this program, the young participants carried out several actions:

- **Awareness-raising** targeting various stakeholders such as children, farmers, fishermen and young people on themes such as bee protection, conservation of endangered species, organic farming, integrated soil fertility management, reducing the use of chemical pesticides and plastic.
- **Reforestation of riverbanks** using endangered native plants in protected areas.
- **Promotion of ecotourism** as an incentive to conserve biodiversity.

The Youth for Biodiversity program was also an opportunity for young people to collaborate with government authorities and civil society organisations in charge of biodiversity preservation. These players have come to appreciate the importance of involving young people in biodiversity conservation programs.

In order to reach more young people, the program will be repeated every year. New areas of capacity-building for young people, such as marine education, are also being developed.

## FOCUS ON THE AGRO BIO CULTURE FESTIVAL INITIATED BY JVE

The Festival Agro Bio Culture (ABC), formerly known as Semaine de Biodiversité Culturelle (SBC), organised each year by the NGO Jeunes volontaires pour l'environnement (JVE) in Togo, is an illustration of young people's participation in the protection and conservation of biodiversity. Although it is not an initiative of a multilateral, continental, sub-regional or national body, this festival succeeds in impacting over a hundred young people each year through the ingenuity of its program.

Organised by JVE in the prefecture of Kpélé, in the Plateau region of Togo, this annual initiative brings together young Africans from all regions (West Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, South Africa and North Africa) around the issues of cultural diversity conservation and agroecology.

Between caravans, stays at farmers' homes, hikes, discovery of the Assimé classified forest, training courses, culinary and tasting competitions, seed fairs, the University of Assimé (an opportunity for knowledge and capacity building), the ABC Festival offers an unprecedented framework for dialogue, reflection, learning, sharing, discovery and co-construction around the values of conserving biological diversity and bio-culturality. Every year, this experience produces young people who are increasingly seasoned, strengthened and ready to take up the challenge of conserving cultural biodiversity.

This program, supported in particular by JVE Togo's partners ABN, AFSA, NNV, WWF and the Togolese government, has proved its worth and remains a best practice that must be replicated in other French-speaking West African countries, all of which are rich in endogenous values and natural resources.





# PLATFORMS AND NETWORKS

...active in bio-cultural conservation and their strategies (or lack thereof) for involving young people

There are several platforms and networks active at regional level in biocultural conservation or related sectors, which are striving to improve young people's involvement in this area. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

**Table 9 : Platforms and networks involved in biocultural conservation**

Platforms	Missions
<b>Biodiversity</b>	
<b>African Biodiversity Network (ABN)</b>	The African Biodiversity Network (ABN) is an African network of individuals and organisations seeking African solutions to the ecological and socio-economic challenges facing the continent. ABN works on four (4) themes: community seeds and knowledge, community ecological governance, youth, culture and biodiversity, advocacy and communication practice and development and networking.
<b>Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN)</b>	The Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) is an international network of youth organisations and individuals from around the world whose common goal is to prevent the loss of biodiversity. Its mission is to build a global coalition of individuals and youth organisations to halt the loss of biodiversity through mobilising and empowering young people whilst raising global awareness on the importance of biodiversity.
<b>Consortium APAC/ICCA</b>	It is an international association officially established in Switzerland in 2010 as an International Association. Its mission is to promote the appropriate recognition and support of territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and communities (APAC - territoires de vie) at local, national and international levels. The consortium's strategic orientations are to support local, national and transnational action; influence policies, rights and discourse at global level; and build communication bridges.
<b>Nature protection and Climate change</b>	
<b>The JVE network in Africa</b>	JVE (Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement) is an NGO created in 2001. It has 25 offices in Africa. Its mission is to develop the leadership and eco-citizenship of young people, with a view to their involvement in promoting sustainable community development <a href="https://jve-international.net/">https://jve-international.net/</a>
<b>IUCN country networks</b>	IUCN is a unique membership union of governmental and civil society organisations. Drawing on the experience, resources and reach of over 1,400 member organisations, and the contributions of more than 15,000 experts, IUCN is the world authority on the status of the natural world and the actions needed to safeguard it. IUCN's objectives are to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature, and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. IUCN provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge, tools and projects that enable societies, economies and nature to thrive together.
<b>Coalition for the Protection of African Genetic Heritage</b>	COPAGEN is a social and citizen movement created in 2004, which has established itself in nine (9) West African countries, through national coalitions. It works to safeguard Africa's genetic heritage and the sustainable use of its biological resources. COPAGEN dreams of an Africa where genetic resources are managed sustainably. <a href="http://copagen.org/">http://copagen.org/</a>
<b>West African Learning Platform on Climate Change</b>	It is a platform for sharing experiences between countries developing and implementing national climate change learning strategies, and for promoting climate change learning. This platform is part of the implementation of the Climate Empowerment Action (CEA) and the Doha Work Programme. Since 2019, UN CC:Learn's West African Climate Change Learning Platform has been supporting current and future professionals in 13 Sahelian countries to be better prepared to tackle the climate crisis. <a href="https://www.unccllearn.org/fr/projets-nationaux/centre-ouest-africain/">https://www.unccllearn.org/fr/projets-nationaux/centre-ouest-africain/</a>

<b>Food sovereignty</b>	
<b>Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)</b>	<p>AFSA is a broad alliance of different civil society actors who are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. These include African farmers' organisations, African NGO networks, specialised African NGOs, consumer movements in Africa, international organisations that support AFSA's position, and individuals. Its members represent small-scale farmers, herders, hunters/gatherers and indigenous peoples. It is a network of networks which currently has 30 active members.</p> <p>AFSA's main objective is to influence policy and promote African solutions for food sovereignty. AFSA serves as a continental platform for the consolidation of food sovereignty issues, and brings together a single, stronger voice on the issues and tables clear, achievable solutions. <a href="https://afsafrica.org/">https://afsafrica.org/</a></p>
<b>Rights</b>	
<b>Rights and Resources Initiative</b>	<p>Founded in 2005, RRI is a global coalition of over 150 organisations dedicated to promoting the forest and resource rights of indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, local communities and the women who belong to them. RRI operates in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Coalition's themes for action are land data monitoring, gender parity, rights, climate and conservation, private sector engagement, rights and livelihoods <a href="https://rightsandresources.org/">https://rightsandresources.org/</a></p>
<b>WILDAF/FEDDAF (Woman Right and Development in Africa)</b>	<p>WILDAF is a pan-African non-governmental network of women's rights and individuals. It is dedicated to promoting and strengthening strategies that link law to development in order to increase women's participation and influence at all levels for the emergence of a culture of exercising and respecting women's rights in Africa. WILDAF-AO operates in 11 West African countries. Its objectives include promoting women's rights in all spheres (civic, social, political and economic), offering effective ways of using the law as a tool for development at local, national and regional levels, and establishing and maintaining a regional rapid response system to respond promptly to serious violations of women's rights. <a href="https://wildaf-ao.org/">https://wildaf-ao.org/</a></p>
<b>Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)</b>	<p>Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), founded in 2000, is a grantmaking and advocacy organisation focused on equality, justice, democratic governance, human rights and the promotion of knowledge. It is part of the global network of Open Society Foundations in 37 countries around the world. OSIWA's areas of focus are equality and anti-discrimination, justice reform and the rule of law, democratic practice; economic governance and advancement. <a href="https://www.osiwa.org/">https://www.osiwa.org/</a></p>
<b>Land</b>	
<b>International Land Coalition</b>	<p>Our collective aim as a network is to achieve land governance for and with people at country level, addressing the needs and protecting the rights of those who live on and from the land. It is present in Africa through ILC Afrique, a regional platform of the International Land Coalition (ILC). The common goal of ILC's more than 250 members is to achieve participatory and people-centered land governance at national level that meets the needs and protects the rights of women, men and communities who live off the land. The ILC Africa regional platform has 76 members in 26 sub-Saharan African countries. <a href="https://africa.landcoalition.org/fr/about-ilc-africa/">https://africa.landcoalition.org/fr/about-ilc-africa/</a></p>
<b>African Women's Network for Community Forest Management</b>	<p>REFACOF was founded in 2009 by 45 women from various countries in West Africa (Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Senegal) and Central Africa (Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, CAR, DRC) to play a more active role in the land and forestry reform processes underway on a continental and international scale, REFACOF's mission is to promote women's rights in Africa and influence policies and practices to achieve gender equity in land and forest tenure. Its actions are carried out along 4 strategic axes: institutional strengthening, promoting equitable tenure reforms, influencing sub-regional, regional and national land and forest tenure agendas and initiatives, and exchanging experiences. <a href="https://refacof.net/">https://refacof.net/</a></p>

The common denominator in the strategy of most of these networks and platforms remains the creation of national or geographical platforms to make the process of communication and experience sharing more effective. This strategy aims to involve more and more young people and youth organisations in bio-cultural conservation issues. In addition, these networks and platforms offer excellent opportunities for building the knowledge and skills of young people to enhance their

involvement in these processes. Networking through these different platforms is a good way of enhancing the visibility of actions to conserve bio-cultural diversity.

However, these opportunities remain unknown to the real targets: young people. There is an urgent need for a regional directory of genuinely active platforms and networks, and for this information to be disseminated as widely as possible in the countries concerned, with a view to involving more young people and youth organisations.

## FRAMEWORKS & PLATFORMS FOR DIALOGUE, DECISION-MAKING & GOVERNANCE

There are a number of frameworks and platforms for dialogue, decision-making and governance around bio-cultural diversity, the most important of which are as follows:

### THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

The COP15 on biological diversity represented a unique opportunity to halt the crucial loss of biodiversity. It adopted 23 targets, known as the Kunming Global Biodiversity Framework.

This global framework, adopted in December 2022, represents a crucial opportunity to reverse environmental destruction and the catastrophic loss of biodiversity. Its main commitment is to preserve 30% of land and sea by 2030. Another agreed "30×30" target is to restore 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030.

For the countries of the South, another crucial 30×30 objective has been set: to mobilise annual funding of US\$30 billion from so-called "developed" countries to "developing" countries by 2030. This is part of a global objective of US\$200 billion in annual financing from all sources.



Another financial target is to reduce subsidies for environmentally damaging activities by at least 500 billion US dollars a year by 2030.

The agreement also commits to a gender-sensitive approach and recognises the equal rights of women and girls to access land and natural resources. In addition, the agreement recognises the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly regarding their traditional territories.

## THE AFRICAN YOUTH FORUM FOR BIODIVERSITY

43 young people involved in 32 African organisations and institutions and from 19 countries on the continent, took part in the first African Youth Forum for Biodiversity, to exchange views on the draft global biodiversity framework for the post-2020 period, from February 5 to 7, 2020 in the Vème Biosphere Reserve, Tshipise, South Africa. This framework for dialogue was set up thanks to the Post2020 Biodiversity Framework project supported by the European Union, UNESCO, the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, the South African Youth Biodiversity Network and the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve for organising and hosting the Forum.

The forum provided a framework for analysis, reflection and dialogue, recognising that:

- African countries face specific environmental challenges.
- Young people are the future, and their voices and opinions will provide the solutions needed for the sustainability of our future together
- More than half of humanity lives in cities, and this proportion is expected to reach 60% by 2030, and 67% by 2050
- Africa's population is young, and that there is a large youth movement that needs to be recognised, involved, and whose proposals for solutions are needed
- 2020-2021 was a crucial moment in the history of humanity, and that the collective actions we take now will be decisive for the quality of our future lives
- Protecting biodiversity requires awareness-raising actions and raising the level of ambition and mobilisation; and urgent measures must be undertaken to preserve the wealth of biodiversity in Africa by considering the African Common Position (ACP) for the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's (AU) 2063 Agenda.

The participants at the African Youth Forum for Biodiversity, committed to:

- Lead transformative change in all sectors;
- Raise awareness by all available means of the importance of biodiversity and the risks associated with inaction;
- Intensify advocacy and activism efforts in favor of a new pact for Humankind and Nature;
- Continue to raise our voices and highlight the need for urgent action;
- Promote innovative technologies and sustainable livelihoods, through advocacy mechanisms and channels specific to young populations;
- Raise their ambitions and act urgently to address threats to biodiversity, and to conserve and restore the natural environment on which we depend;
- Establish dialogue and collaborate with other representative groups, to include young people's concerns in the agenda for discussion.

The African Youth Forum for Biodiversity has provided a valuable platform to discuss and contribute to the global biodiversity framework post-2020. It has allowed participants to evaluate both the immediate and long-term consequences of human activities on biodiversity and to take steps to



minimise these negative impacts. Emphasising the shared responsibility of all generations, the forum calls for full participation from children and youth, ensuring they have access to environmental information and opportunities for capacity building.

A critical issue identified is the lack of empirical data on biodiversity in many African countries, highlighting the need to promote scientific research and long-term monitoring. To strengthen youth involvement, the forum stresses the importance of operationalising Article 19 of the African Youth Charter, aligning with Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063, and leveraging youth mobilisation. Financial support, both internal and external, is essential for youth empowerment and the implementation of the post-2020 biodiversity framework.

The forum also addresses the root causes of biodiversity loss, such as pollution and invasive species, advocating for actions to reduce these threats and promote a biodiversity economy. Effective monitoring of the Global Biodiversity Framework through innovative technologies is crucial for reporting and exchanging information among stakeholders. Additionally, the use of biotechnology and other technological advances is recommended to conserve biodiversity.

To promote sustainable development, the forum suggests establishing compliance mechanisms and resources to enhance biodiversity-friendly technologies and governance. It also calls for integrating biodiversity considerations into all development sectors and employing multi-level governance structures. Specific attention is given to pollution impacts on water bodies and aquatic life.

The UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme is seen as an opportunity to enhance conservation measures, support sustainability education, and contribute to healthy and equitable societies. The forum recognises the importance of youth involvement in biodiversity negotiations, suggesting the launch of a Young Negotiators Program at the Convention on Biological Diversity to build the skills of young negotiators.

Acknowledging the links between biodiversity, nutrition, agriculture, and peace, the forum emphasises the protection of the African food system in alignment with the African Union's "Silence the Guns by 2050" initiative. It supports entrepreneurial initiatives of young people in biodiversity conservation. It calls for mechanisms that ensure gender equality and address gender issues. The forum also highlights the need for a collective continental strategy and the sharing of best practices among African countries.

## REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK FOR AFRICA

This consultation was organised by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Union Development Agency/New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), with the support of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The SABI Strategy Group also provided financial support, enabling the participation of two civil society organisations.

The consultation was undertaken under the guidance of the co-chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the supervision of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties. Ninety-one people took part, including representatives of the Parties, other governments, indigenous peoples and local communities in the region, as well as relevant organisations, including United Nations programs and organisations, other multilateral environmental agreements, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, women's and youth groups, the scientific community and academia.

## Lessons learned

1. The main lessons to be learned from this framework for dialogue and governance of biological diversity are set out below:
2. Participants identified opportunities and challenges in the region that could impact the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and Vision 2050, "living in harmony with nature." They noted the framework development offers a chance to learn from past mistakes, promote best practices, and align the Aichi Biodiversity Targets with the Sustainable Development Goals and other global or regional initiatives, including the AU's Agenda 2063.
3. African countries, despite their diversity, share a rich biodiversity and traditional knowledge. If managed sustainably, these resources could foster innovation, support sustainable development, and mitigate climate change through nature-based solutions. Africa's network of protected areas and biodiversity programs employ various strategies, including coastal zone management, marine spatial planning, and land-use planning.
4. Existing national and regional frameworks provide significant opportunities to advance the post-2020 biodiversity framework. All regional Parties have National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), alongside other policies and frameworks like the NEPAD Environmental Action Plan and the African Strategy to Combat Illegal Wildlife Trade.
5. National focal points, biodiversity committees, and sub-regional coordination frameworks, such as regional economic communities, offer institutional support for the post-2020 framework's implementation.
6. Participants noted opportunities in integrating biodiversity into national budgets, natural capital accounts, businesses, and academic curricula in some countries.
7. Additional opportunities include existing financing mechanisms like the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund, and the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN), which have enhanced understanding of biodiversity funding.

## CONSULTATION WITH ACTORS INVOLVED IN BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY INITIATIVES.

A regional consultation was launched with resource persons and organisations active in cultural biodiversity issues, with a view to identifying them, listing their fields of action and the actions they have implemented in the field.

**Table 10: Organisations consulted and fields of intervention**

Organisations	Fields of intervention and themes
<b>African Movement for Environmental Rights in the Eastern Region (MADEE)</b>	Human rights, environmental rights, land tenure, environmental education
<b>Friends of Francophone Africa - Benin (AMAF-BENIN)</b>	Conservation of natural resources (biodiversity, forests, water, etc.), sustainable agriculture, promotion of women's social and economic rights
<b>Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour le Bien-être au Bénin (GRABE-BENIN)</b>	Ecological governance of communities, environmental education through nature and culture clubs, agroecology
<b>CRICE for Life</b>	Environmental education and training of Eco-Pairs, Dialogue with communities, Cultural back-to-roots activities, Promotion of Earth Jurisprudence, Decolonisation of history and Cultural Entrepreneurship, Promotion of seed revival, Promotion of action for Regenerative Agriculture, Protection Promotion-saving of biosphere reserves.
<b>Young Volunteers for the Environment JVE-MALI</b>	1. Energy-climate-development; 2. Sustainable management of natural resources; 3. Eco-citizen commitment; 4. Disaster risk management
<b>Young Volunteers for the Environment - Niger</b>	Environmental protection and adaptation to climate change. We work to safeguard biodiversity through communications on endangered species and the preservation of sacred forests and their adaptation to global warming. Environmental leadership among young people is also one of our priorities. Environmental protection - Cultural Biodiversity - Research Action - Environmental Education
<b>Nature Plurielle NGO</b>	Sustainable management of the environment and biodiversity
<b>Nature Tropicale</b>	Environmental education
<b>ONG JEVEV (Jeunesse et Emplois Verts pour une Économie Verte) - Youth and Green Jobs for a Green Economy)</b>	Protection of flora and fauna - sustainable management of aquatic plants - Youth and Volunteering - Environmental education in schools / extracurricular - IWRM - Eco-citizenship - Ecotourism - Gender and climate

Various programs and initiatives have been carried out by these organisations and resource persons in their countries, including:

- Ethnic musical activities on environmental preservation
- Conferences on the cultural perception of biodiversity
- Conferences on the cultural dimension of peace

- International Youth Cooperation for Sustainable Development;
  - Strengthening Solidarity between France and Benin through the Francophonie and access to knowledge for all
  - Graine future since 2006. This involves intergenerational dialogues on biodiversity through a five-day retreat.
  - In 2017, Akpamè (Benin), Soirée de Contes à Akpamè et de Danses traditionnelles, Young people from Akpamè and Elders from Hounkonnou communities
  - In 2018, Adjarra (Benin), Protection of Cultural Diversity and University Studies - Awareness-raising - Training in cultural volunteering towards a commitment by youth to the promote of our values and the setting up of a committee - In 2019, Zounguè (Benin), Eco-Peers of the Vision Nature Program for Youth and Children (VINAJEN) - Intergenerational Dialogue - Education in culture, the sacred and the environment - Promotion of Jardin vie
  - Ecological outing to Fort de Condou in the Lo boucle du Baoulé biosphere reserve, in partnership with the Direction National Des Eaux Et Forêts and local universities.
  - Cultural Biodiversity Week 2012 in Tillabéri;
  - Digital youth engagement campaign on the restoration of degraded lands in 2021.
  - Climate and Ecology Ambassadors (ACE) to teach students the importance of biodiversity and environmental leadership
- in schools: Since 2020 in the Communes of Ifangni and Avrankou.
  - EntomodiverCity: since 2019 to discover endogenous knowledge of honey extraction and entomofauna protection in the Plateau department.
  - Environmental education through local knowledge;
  - Promotion of aromatic and medicinal plants by rural women
  - AGPEC (Africa Green Economy Promotion Center) is a framework for promoting green initiatives and technology transfer between youth CSOs working on mitigation - adaptation - biodiversity issues.
  - Since 2015 in the Ouémé Valley in Benin: promotion of green initiatives by young people, promotion of young green entrepreneurs specialised in mitigation - adaptation - biodiversity and other areas to achieve the SDGs)
  - Frameworks officially registered as a social enterprise to enable young innovators to seek funding and also outlets or sell their innovations.
  - Community dialogues on participatory governance of biodiversity and sacred forests - Objective: Promote local management and governance of natural resources and biodiversity - Period: February 2018 to December 2019 - Location: Allada, Adjarra and Aguégues in Benin organised by AMAF-BENIN ONG



## KNOWLEDGE OF EXISTING PLATFORMS AND FORUMS FOR ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNANCE

Consultation with resource persons and leaders of youth organisations active in the field of biodiversity conservation in the countries covered by the study reveals a low level of representativeness in governance platforms and spaces at national or regional level. Most of the analyses lead to the following observations:

- Weak application or implementation of frameworks
- Lack of resources to run platforms and forums
- Indigenous communities are not aware of government decisions, even though some are good ones.
- Weak involvement of indigenous peoples' organisations
- Initiatives to preserve our endogenous knowledge and protect our cultural biodiversity are to be encouraged. However, there is a lack of open collaboration with civil society players and indigenous peoples on the governance and valorisation of this knowledge of cultural biodiversity.
- Efforts are being made, but more remains to be done. In particular, the rights of indigenous peoples are not considered in several strategies in several countries.
- Lack of support for Aire du Patrimoine Autochtone Communautaire (APAC) or Indigenous and Community Conserved Area" (ICCA) in English
- Frameworks are created but often have a short life, as they are subsequently suffocated by the leadership war between them / or by the lack of funding sources.
- An effective, active commitment to governance will necessarily require a common and shared strategy.

## GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Among the gaps and challenges identified by the organisations and resource people consulted on the difficulties of programs and initiatives to involve young people in the conservation of bio-cultural diversity, we were able to highlight the following:

- Insufficient structuring and networking of organisations
- Insufficient knowledge of the legal and institutional framework
- Insufficient financial support for initiatives/programs
- Lack of financial and other resources for initiating organisations
- Weak organisation and capacity
- The decolonisation of history, the decolonisation of screens, the decolonisation of the books read by our young people, the decolonisation of their reading
- What about literacy in local languages? Promoting mother tongues,
- The promotion of cultural activities in schools,
- Promoting the regeneration of the basket of life in communities
- Lack of support
- Lack of training or knowledge about the role and benefits of biodiversity
- The loss of certain endogenous values and the lack of funding are today major difficulties for young people in reconnecting with bio-cultural diversity.
- Young people's willingness to participate/ loss of cultural values
- Lack of frameworks for training and exchange of experience
- Leadership wars

## ADDED VALUE OF THESE INITIATIVES FOR BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY

As can be seen, initiatives to inform young people about biodiversity protection, to promote environmental protection actions and to encourage young people to participate in environmental governance are legion in many countries.

These initiatives have undoubtedly helped to raise awareness among countries, populations and young people of the need to preserve biodiversity and participate in biocultural governance.

Unfortunately, for the moment, this awareness has not yet been sufficiently translated into concrete action in the field. As proof, the degradation of cultural biodiversity continues in African countries, and in view of the gaps and challenges identified, it is necessary to review the strategies to be implemented to reverse the current trend of degradation of cultural biodiversity.







## PART FOUR

# CULTURAL BIODIVERSITY AS SEEN BY YOUNG PEOPLE





This section is devoted to the study of young people's perception of cultural biodiversity. To this end, nearly 200 individuals were formally and informally consulted on biodiversity-related topics.

This survey was limited to West Africa due to resource constraints. Although it did not cover the other African regions, we can safely consider that its results represent the regional perspective of young people about cultural biodiversity.

## PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Over 70% of respondents were between 15 and 35 years of age, while less than 30% were over 35. No respondents under the age of 15 shared their opinion on the issue during the consultation.

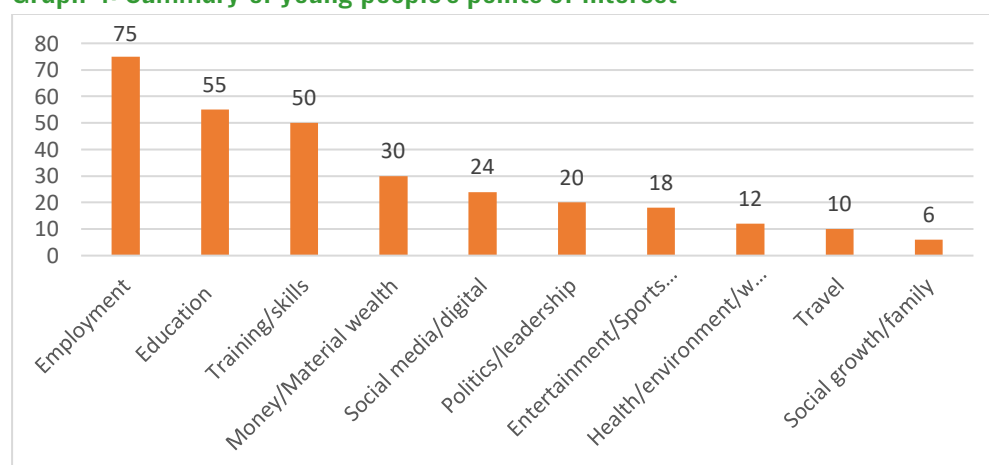
40% of respondents were from the West African region, compared with 24% from Central Africa, 20% from East Africa, 13% from South Africa and only 3% from the North African region.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S INTERESTS

Ten areas of interest were identified by young people as being the most important. Economic issues were and remain the main preoccupation of young people in Africa. Priorities vary slightly from place to place. Although unemployment is the most important issue overall, it is not the most important in all the countries surveyed. For some, it's education, and for others, the economic situation and access to resources.

75% of respondents agree that employment and finding a stable source of income for young people is a real problem and a major challenge in Africa. Unfortunately, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest unemployment rate in the world. With Africa's growing workforce, the environment is ripe for new ideas, technology and growth. However, according to the World Bank, 70% of the African workforce faces obstacles such as low levels of education, limited access to resources, cultural barriers and underdeveloped infrastructure, not to mention unforeseen events such as the avian flu pandemic COVID-19.

**Graph 4: Summary of young people's points of interest**



Priority has also been given to education and training to develop the skills needed for entrepreneurship and improve employability. Promoting literacy is an integral part of the UN's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

It was noted that 90% of respondents of both sexes frequently used the internet to access news and information at least a few times a week. 24% of respondents consider the use of social media and digital resources a priority in terms of accessing opportunities, forming opinions and following trends.

65% of men surveyed are more interested in politics and leadership than their female counterparts. On the contrary, 75% of women surveyed prioritise social growth and the family over their male counterparts.

Issues of climate change and gender equality were mentioned a few times but were overtaken by the other issues already mentioned in the priority scale. It's easy to see why issues relating to environmental governance, biodiversity and bio-cultural diversity are not yet high on the agenda of young people in Africa. This can be explained by the many factors mentioned above, and above all by the ultimate preoccupation with employment. However, there are grounds for hope in some of the points of interest raised by the young people who took part in the consultation.

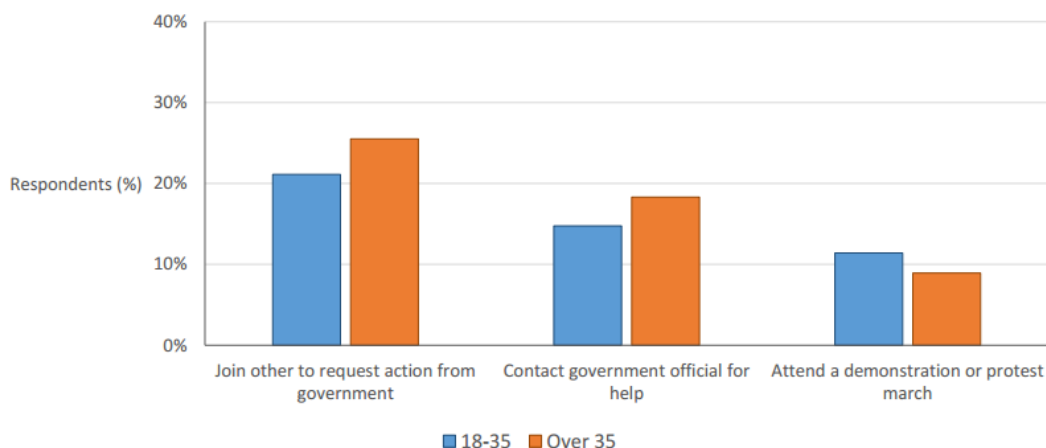
## INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

In Africa, leadership and decision-making traditionally fall to the elderly, especially in a society that is still very patriarchal.

A European Union study revealed that young Africans trust political institutions less and participate less in formal political processes than older citizens and are more concerned about corruption. Low levels of political participation among young Africans mean that "African governments and development partners have considerable work to do to achieve the goal of increased civic and political participation among young people, especially young women, as stated in a policy paper (Lekalake and Gyimah-Boadi 2016)". Recognition of the important role young people can play in development affairs has grown, with the UN citing young people as "agents of change" for the Sustainable Development Goals, with "the potential to most effectively transform the world into a better place for all" (United Nations 2018).

The Joint Research Center (JRC) technical report examined data from the 34-country Afrobarometer public opinion survey, which tested several pathways in which youth participation in decision-making was likely, including (a) joining others to collectively demand action from government; (b) contacting a government official for help; and (c) participating in a protest demonstration or march. The data showed that, in general, young Africans were less likely to join with others to request action from their government or to contact government officials for help than older people. However, they were more likely to take part in demonstrations and protests. This was particularly the case for young men, more so than young women (14% of young men took part in demonstrations and protests, compared with just 9% of young women).

**Graph 5: Forms of political participation of young and older people in Africa**



Source: Afrobarometer, elaboration JRC

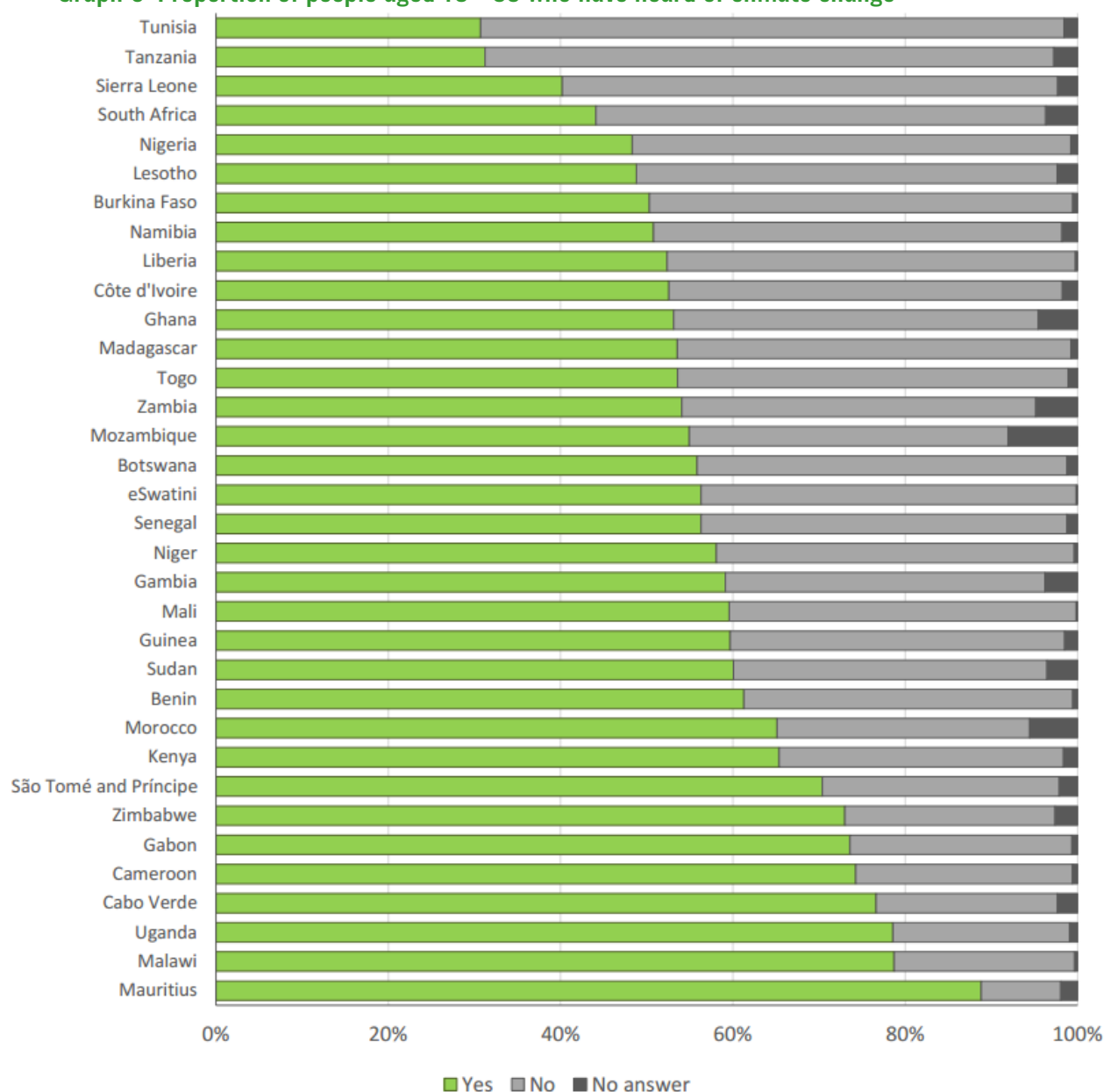
It was also noted that young people had a low level of trust in political institutions compared to others such as religious institutions. This situation is mainly linked to factors such as corruption, which affects young people's perception of political and social institutions

## KNOWLEDGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS

The United Nations has declared that "climate change is the defining issue of our time, and combating climate change and environmental degradation is the defining task of this generation". If radical action is not taken now, it will be more difficult and costly to adapt to these impacts in the future.

The Afrobarometer survey shows that young people are generally aware of climate change: 59% of them have heard of the term "climate change", with differences in appreciation depending on the country, as shown in the graph below.

**Graph 6: Proportion of people aged 18 - 35 who have heard of climate change**



Source: Afrobarometer, elaboration JRC

This dataset also showed that factors such as education, gender and territorial location (rural/urban) determined young people's perceptions. Young people in urban areas and those with higher levels of education responded that they had more knowledge and awareness of climate change than those in rural areas and those with lower levels of education. 65% of young men were more familiar with the term than 53% of young women.

52% of those questioned directly on the question of their involvement and participation in activities related to climate change or nature and biodiversity conservation indicated that they had participated at least once in conservation activities in the recent past.

The analysis also reveals a duality when it comes to young people's involvement in decision-making and governance platforms. There is every reason to believe that young people, despite their acknowledged importance, continue to remain passive and are content to participate in a very low-key way in biodiversity decision-making, management and governance bodies.

## YOUTH AND LEADERSHIP

A recent report by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) highlights that in most OIF member countries in Africa, over half of young people are not members of any association or community group, except in Guinea, where this figure is lower at 46%. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the situation varies: in countries like Guinea, Mali, and Senegal, about half of young people (54% in Guinea, 48% in Mali and Senegal) are affiliated with community or associative organisations. In contrast, countries like Burundi, Burkina Faso, Benin, Ghana, and Cape Verde have lower rates of civic engagement, with only one in four or five young people involved.

Despite the high proportion of young people aged 15-29 who are not part of any organisation, a notable number are active members or leaders in their communities. Sahelian countries (Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Cape Verde) and Cameroon show 20-30% of young people as active members or leaders in community associations. For example, in Senegal, 11% of young people are official leaders, and 18% are active members, while in Guinea, nearly 8% are leaders, and 18% are active members.





**Table 11: Young people (aged 15 to 29) involved as active members or leaders in an association or community group (Source: IOF report)**

Country	Youth Involved as Active Members (%)	Youth Involved as Leaders (%)	Country	Youth Involved as Active Members (%)	Youth Involved as Leaders (%)
Senegal	18	11	Mauritius	14	2
Guinea	16	8	Burundi	5	2
Cameroon	21	5	Niger	7	0
Benin	12	4	Tunisia	1	1
Togo	14	3	Morocco	11	2
Burkina Faso	9	3	Madagascar	1	1

Participation and involvement in programs, initiatives and bodies promoting bio-cultural diversity is also lacklustre. The level of involvement and commitment of young people is judged mediocre by 41.3% of respondents to the consultation. Only 10.9% thought the level of youth involvement was excellent, while over 15% rated it as poor.

## LEVEL OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE OF INDIGENOUS CULTURE, TRADITION AND KNOWLEDGE

It is increasingly acknowledged that there is a strong connection between biodiversity and cultural diversity. However, this understanding has not yet been formalised into a comprehensive framework that connects these two forms of diversity within a sustainable development vision. Given the close relationship between cultural diversity and biodiversity, traditional knowledge systems should be integral to conservation and management strategies.

In some African cultures, certain species are protected because they hold spiritual significance; they are viewed as totems, fetishes, or are essential for traditional medicine. These cultural practices have traditionally helped regulate and maintain a balance in the use of resources. Unfortunately, such practices are declining across much of Africa, often replaced by new belief systems and practices, such as Christianity, which have significantly impacted indigenous knowledge systems.

Another concern is the shift from extended to nuclear family structures, weakening intergenerational links and disrupting the transfer of knowledge between generations. This is further exacerbated by an education system that favors written over oral traditions, leading to the erosion of traditional knowledge. As younger generations find it harder to learn and retain these traditions, the cultural heritage passed down through centuries is increasingly at risk of being lost.

The survey revealed that 87% of respondents were aware of traditional practices in their communities, such as rituals around major life events, traditional medicine, agriculture, animal husbandry, and governance. However, most urban respondents rarely engaged in these practices unless visiting rural areas or during extended family events. Few could connect traditional practices directly with nature conservation, instead associating them more with social and economic activities.

Understanding of cultural biodiversity and bio-culturality varies widely among generations and needs reinforcement. About 23.9% of respondents admitted to lacking knowledge of these concepts. Over 45.7% believed that young people's understanding of these ideas was low, with only about 9%

considering it good or excellent. This highlights the need to enhance young people's knowledge to foster their involvement in preserving cultural biodiversity in Africa.

The survey also showed a significant disparity in understanding bio-cultural diversity, with many young people unable to define the concept accurately. This inconsistency is evident in the varied definitions provided by those who participated in the consultation.

## **PRESENCE OF ACTIVE PLATFORMS AND SPACES PROMOTING BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

Biological and cultural diversity are deeply interdependent. Many cultural practices rely on specific elements of biodiversity, while significant portions of biological diversity are cultivated, preserved, and managed by distinct cultural groups, whose languages and knowledge serve as essential tools for this management.

The relationship between cultural practices and biological diversity is multifaceted. One clear example is the variety of domesticated plants and animals developed and maintained by cultures worldwide. In tropical agricultural ecosystems, farmers often cultivate numerous plant species, including varieties suited to different environmental conditions and cultural needs. Additionally, communities create and maintain cultural landscapes to uphold specific ecological and cultural values.

The reason why some cultures closely link their preservation with that of surrounding biodiversity is rooted in knowledge. Indigenous knowledge, conveyed through local languages, directly connects cultural diversity with biological diversity. Cultures possess unique knowledge about biodiversity, from which they have evolved and continue to thrive.

Cultural diversity is not a static collection that merely needs preservation; it is a dynamic, ongoing dialogue that unites all expressions of identity. Recognising this daily dialogue as a foundational principle is essential for both cultural and biological diversity. This interaction is reciprocal; breaking this link risks undermining sustainable development. Cultural diversity thus becomes a shared language of humanity, fostering mutual understanding and unity. It invites each culture, like each individual, to find part of its own humanity in others. Instead of dividing, cultural diversity binds individuals, societies, and nations through a shared heritage, present experiences, and future aspirations. This shared heritage, to which everyone contributes and benefits, ensures sustainable development for all.

In the face of globalisation, which brings new challenges and risks of cultural and biological homogenisation, it is crucial to recognise this interdependence. Globalisation is not just an economic phenomenon; it also has cultural, technical, and environmental dimensions. To protect the diversity of cultures and prevent the loss of biodiversity, political and legal measures must be implemented at both national and international levels. African youth must be actively involved in the process of preserving the cultural and biological diversity of our communities.

## **ACTIVE SPACES FOR INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING, DIALOGUE AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE IN THE REGION**

Africa's youth is increasingly connected to the world, with cell phone penetration now over 50%, having doubled in less than a decade. This surge in connectivity has been eagerly embraced by young people, who are now better educated, more globally aware, and heavily engaged with social networks. These platforms played a notable role during the Arab Spring, showcasing their influence. As a result, young Africans are voicing strong expectations regarding the political and social choices of their societies. Their global outlook is also fostering a greater commitment to their countries' development.

However, how are young people leveraging this increased connectivity? While social networks dominate their attention, many young people miss out on opportunities for intergenerational learning, dialogue, and experience-sharing about cultural biodiversity and environmental governance. A survey revealed that 73.9% of young people were unaware of any programs or spaces dedicated to these topics.

Despite this lack of awareness, several initiatives and programs exist that facilitate intergenerational exchange on cultural biodiversity, such as:

- Cultural Biodiversity Week, now the ABC Agro Bio Culture Festival, initiated by NGO JVE in Togo.
- The month of cultural biodiversity in Danyi, Togo.
- The Vodou festival in Benin, celebrated annually on January 10.
- The Shared Resources, Joint Solutions (SRJS) program in Benin, funded by IUCN and run by a consortium of NGOs, including JVE BENIN.
- The GRAINE FUTURE program by GRABE BENIN.
- The Animal Species Conservation Program by NGO BEES.
- JVE's Ecology and Consciousness Program (PEC).
- The Biodiversity Forum in Benin, initiated by Nature Tropicale ONG.
- JVE's communication platforms on WhatsApp (e.g., Ecology Forum).
- APAC consortium forum.
- Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN).
- Regional nodes of the African Biodiversity Network (ABN).

This list is not exhaustive but highlights young people's limited awareness of these programs and spaces. When asked about platforms, networks, or spaces available for youth to discuss cultural biodiversity at national or regional levels, 63% of young people stated they were unaware of such opportunities. This gap in knowledge poses a significant challenge in disseminating information and engaging youth effectively.

Consequently, youth involvement in these platforms remains limited. For young people to engage meaningfully in cultural biodiversity issues, they first need to be informed about the existing opportunities. The study shows that most young respondents perceive the current level of interest and engagement in these spaces to be low, indicating a need for better outreach and education efforts.

## GAPS AND CHALLENGES IN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

**Respect for biological diversity implies respect for human diversity.** Both are fundamental elements of stability and peace on earth. Creating forms of sustainable development, in harmony with the needs and aspirations of each culture, requires abandoning models that fundamentally attack the lives and perspectives of these cultures. Tolerance and reciprocal respect for cultural singularity are indispensable conditions for greater mutual understanding between peoples and recognition of our common humanity.

**Cultural diversity** guarantees mutual enrichment for the future of humanity because it is a source of innovation, creativity and exchange. Cultural diversity is not an immutable repository that simply needs to be preserved; it is the site of an ongoing, unifying dialogue between all expressions of identity. It is the recognition of this daily dialogue as a founding principle that must be affirmed and preserved. Thus, there exists between diversity and dialogue a relationship of reciprocity. The causal link that unites them cannot be unraveled on pain of compromising the sustainability of development. It is this process that makes cultural diversity a common language of humanity that can be understood and spoken by all. Thus defined, this diversity implies the discovery of the presence of the other within oneself, given that each culture, like each individual, encounters in others an irreplaceable parcel of its own humanity. Far from dividing, cultural diversity unites individuals, societies and peoples.

**Sustainable development** requires that the ethical vision of human beings be as much as possible in harmony with local cultural aspirations. Cultural diversity becomes a guarantor of sustainability because it links the goals of universal development with ethical, credible and specific visions. To this end, biodiversity offers a propitious framework.

The African region faces many challenges, the main ones being:

- A. Lack of awareness of the value of biodiversity: Many stakeholders, including policy and decision-makers, and the general public, do not fully understand and recognise the real value of biodiversity and ecosystem services. There is a lack of communication and reporting on the importance of biodiversity. Scientific information on the state of biodiversity needs to be communicated in a language that politicians, policy-makers and the general public can understand, a language that inspires people to act;
- B. Acceleration of biodiversity loss by other sectors: Several sectors, including oil and gas, mining, infrastructure development and agriculture, are having a negative impact on biodiversity. Ways must be found to persuade other ministries, agencies and companies responsible for these sectors to eliminate the possible consequences or impacts of their plans, policies and programs on biological diversity. In this respect, the development and implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework must involve the full participation of all relevant segments and sectors of society;
- C. The non-participation of young people: young people in the country, region and world must be given the opportunity to play an important role in implementation in their own countries, and to participate in the various policy-making and training processes;
- D. Limited access to data and knowledge: Reliable data and information are essential for tasks such as land-use planning, ecosystem valuation and awareness-raising. Many countries do not have good data management systems for reporting;
- E. Limited access to relevant technologies: Countries and regions must Collaborate to facilitate the transfer of scientific knowledge and innovations;
- F. Unrealistic plans and targets: Many NBSAPs are too ambitious and therefore not fully implemented. Parties need to set realistic and measurable targets;
- G. Delays in implementation: There has been a delay between the time Parties agreed what needed to be done and the time the agreed measures were implemented. For example, the Strategic Plan for Biological Diversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets were adopted in 2010, but most Parties have implemented only a small part of them, and no



enabling environment has been created. The fact that the indicators were agreed almost five years after the adoption of the Strategic Plan exacerbated this situation. In addition, there was a delay between the development of the NBSAPs and the actual start of their implementation;

- H. Competing priorities: it is difficult to get politicians and decision-makers to prioritise biodiversity conservation and sustainable use above other issues such as food insecurity, unemployment, health and infrastructure;
- I. Lack of coordination between ministries and sectors: The work of different ministries and agencies needs to be coordinated and harmonised in order to effectively achieve biodiversity goals and targets.
- J. Other difficulties were identified, such as lack of capacity and expertise at several levels, limited financial resources, lack of policy and legal coherence at national level, poor governance and corruption, ineffective institutional frameworks and lack of political will to apply and support the implementation of NBSAPs.



## PART FIVE

# TOWARDS GREATER YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL BIODIVERSITY



# ASSESSING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE PRESERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY – A SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis was based on the content of the various chapters of this study. These chapters have highlighted the various constraints, gaps and challenges linked to biodiversity preservation and the participation of young people to this end.

**Table 12: SWOT on the participation of African youth in biodiversity conservation**

Strengths	Weaknesses
Existence of organisations, frameworks, networks, platforms and initiatives promoting cultural biodiversity and youth leadership on cultural biodiversity and multilateral environmental agreements	The inadequacy of biodiversity-related regulatory frameworks and implementation mechanisms;
Existence of frameworks for grouping and organising youth (CLJ - ex youth focal points) in countries	The lack of information and communication on biodiversity among young people, and the absence of appropriate information and communication strategies;
Existence of education-climate focal points, biodiversity focal points and climate focal points in countries	Lack of data on biodiversity in most African countries;
Gradual awareness among young people of the need to preserve their cultures and African history.	Weak participation and involvement of populations and youth in the preservation of cultural biodiversity;
Involvement of young people in reflection and initiatives to restore biodiversity in their countries	The lack of a concerted strategy, of resources for the players behind biodiversity preservation initiatives, and of youth participation to this end.
Diversity of cultural and artistic events in countries	
Existence of ministries in charge of culture and tourism, and of tourism planning and development tools National tourism development plans that promote local cultures and youth participation in tourism promotion	

Opportunities	Threats
<p>High proportion of young people in African demographics</p> <p>Regional and international corpus favorable to the promotion of biodiversity and the involvement of youth in biodiversity preservation initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Main conclusions of the CBD10</li> <li>- New UN Biodiversity Strategy 2020</li> <li>- UN Resolution 372</li> <li>- Convention 69 ILO</li> <li>- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights</li> <li>- Decisions (Article 12 of the Paris Agreement)</li> <li>- Existence of NDCs in countries</li> </ul> <p>Regional and global initiatives to promote cultural biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Platform of local communities and indigenous peoples</li> <li>- United Nations Forum on Forests</li> <li>- Indigenous peoples' conventions</li> <li>- National and international revoisement initiatives</li> </ul> <p>A sense of pride in belonging to Africa, a return to one's roots and values, is taking shape among African populations.</p> <p>Decentralisation movement in countries, with the transfer of state powers closer to the people</p> <p>Appeals and initiatives by religious and spiritual movements to preserve the environment</p> <p>Opportunity for traditional and harvest festivals to involve young people</p> <p>Gradual shift towards local consumption and promotion of organic produce</p>	<p>Poverty and its consequences</p> <p>Global sectoral practices leading to accelerated biodiversity loss</p> <p>Climate change</p> <p>Genetic engineering with the manipulation of living organisms</p> <p>Competition from other priorities such as food insecurity, unemployment and health</p> <p>Poor mobilisation of financial resources by developed countries to support biodiversity protection and preservation initiatives</p>

The consequence of these shortcomings is the degradation of cultural biodiversity and the low level of youth participation in its preservation.

However, regional or global frameworks, platforms, networks and diversified initiatives at country level are helping to reduce these shortcomings.



# THE CHALLENGES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

Africa is the youngest continent, with over 70% of its population being young people. Despite their significant numbers, youth are often excluded from political and socio-economic spheres. Recognising the importance of youth, there is a call to include them in decision-making at various levels, from organisational boards to national governance.

The African Youth Charter, signed in 2006 by the African Union, outlines the rights, duties, and freedoms of African youth. It aims to involve young people in shaping Africa's development agenda and participating in decision-making. The Charter provides a framework for integrating youth issues into all development policies and ensures youth participation in government structures at national, regional, and continental levels. It is guided by:

- ➔ Article 14.2, which facilitates youth involvement in policy-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development plans.
- ➔ Article 26, which highlights the youth's responsibility to be active citizens, including in voting, decision-making, and governance.

The Charter has been signed by 43 AU member states and ratified by 39. Additionally, the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service, adopted in 2011, aims to enhance public service delivery for all Africans. However, despite these frameworks, youth remain largely marginalised and excluded from key political and decision-making processes.

## STRATEGIC PATHS TO FOLLOW AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

### ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN TO ACHIEVE VISION 2050

Stakeholders have identified several possible ways and means of achieving Vision 2050 of "living in harmony with nature". They recognise that current trends in biological diversity are alarming and that things need to change. They also said that we need ambition to get the future we want, and that the post-2020 framework won't make much difference if we underestimate ourselves. We need to act now, not wait until 2050. The following ideas were expressed in this regard:

- A. **A Theory of change:** We need to develop a clear theory of change for the Convention based on concrete outcomes for Vision 2050; emphasise benefit sharing and the inclusion of indigenous peoples and local communities and their traditional knowledge in the experience of real societal transformation; use existing agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063, to develop sustainable targets for biodiversity;
- B. **Communication strategy:** We need an action-oriented communication strategy tailored to different target audiences. It should include clear communication objectives and core messages. In addition, a communications and outreach working group may be needed to improve communications with decision-makers, parliamentarians and policy-makers;
- C. **Stakeholder participation and engagement:** Processes and mechanisms need to be established at national, sub-regional and regional levels, to welcome input from indigenous peoples and local communities, and community-based environmental non-governmental organisations, from the bottom up;

- D. **Generational succession:** Young people must be empowered, as they will be the leaders in 2050. They need to be empowered (through mentoring and training) and encouraged to share their innovative ideas about the world they would like to see in 2050. Collaboration with relevant youth organisations needs to be improved;
- E. **New financial architecture:** A Global Biodiversity Fund and Biodiversity Finance Group (comprising the CBD Secretariat, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Economic Forum, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), regional development banks and the private sector) is to be established. In addition, national funds must be allocated to biodiversity, and additional resources must be obtained from bilateral and multilateral development aid partners (e.g. ADB, AfDB, IFC, EIB, KiW). GEF support should not only target conservation, but also equitably support the other two objectives of the Convention, i.e., sustainable use and fair and equitable benefit sharing. The sustainable use of non-grant funds and instruments for sectoral transformation should be encouraged to support implementation;
- F. **Technology and nature-based solutions:** Parties and stakeholders must embrace and influence technology and build confidence in benefit sharing. They must also raise the level of awareness of nature-based solutions to replace technological solutions and take advantage of scientific advances and technological innovations;
- G. **Justice:** The post-2020 framework must include legal measures linked to the right to a clean and healthy environment. Similarly, an international legal body (criminal court) must be created or designated to monitor crimes against nature and biodiversity;
- H. **Responsibility:** Name and shame the biggest operators: target investors and operators;
- I. **Role of national correspondents:** The role of national correspondents in this in this process should be defined and facilitated;
- J. **Support mechanisms:** A regional database of experts working on biodiversity-related issues should be established as a resource for Parties, so that they can find the necessary expertise in a timely manner.

#### **Ideas to broaden the strategic avenues proposed by the various players:**

- A. Develop national systems to discover, map and mobilise existing information, and make it easily accessible to support national planning, policy and decision-making processes;
- B. Establish national laws, administrative frameworks and incentives to encourage knowledge sharing;
- C. Institutionalise knowledge management to nurture an established culture of knowledge sharing, and establish policies and processes to ensure the capture and retention of knowledge when national correspondents and other staff retire or move on to new challenges;
- D. Develop national infrastructure and capacity for data collection, management and exchange;
- E. Take advantage of the latest information technologies to set up dedicated, dynamic and user-friendly platforms aimed at facilitating the easy and rapid exchange of information; ii) Complement existing global databases with national and regional databases tailored to the specific needs of the Parties, and ensure that these databases are up to date and well maintained;
- F. Examine different knowledge-sharing tools, other than online systems, such as radio, farmer field schools and cell phones, to reach different audiences at different levels.

#### **About Clearinghouse Mechanisms**

- A. Further develop and strengthen the central clearinghouse mechanism and the national clearinghouse mechanism, in order to improve the exchange of data at national, regional and global levels, and ensure that they are always up-to-date and available, with no downtime;

- B. Develop data sharing protocols and standards to ensure interoperability with different regional and international knowledge management systems and databases;
- C. Make the clearinghouse mechanism more visible to different audiences (beyond national correspondents) to encourage them to consult and use it. Parties should designate, train and authorise more national users to contribute information to the clearinghouse mechanism;
- D. Identify innovative ways to encourage use of the clearinghouse mechanism, including the development of applications (apps) to facilitate easy and timely access to the information contained in the clearing house mechanism;

### **About Quality of information and knowledge**

Establish mechanisms to verify the quality of shared data and information;

### **About Knowledge Utilisation**

- A. Encourage and support the capture, compilation, analysis and sharing of best practices and lessons learned in an easily accessible and usable format;
- B. Organise, structure and aggregate available data, information, tools and knowledge by theme and target audience, to make them more easily accessible in a user-friendly and relevant way.

### **About local communications and activities**

Stakeholders discussed several issues related to communications and outreach, including how the post-2020 global biodiversity framework should address communications and outreach to drive transformational change and achieve the 2050 Vision of living in harmony with nature. Here is a summary of the main suggestions:

- A. **Education and awareness:** Greater emphasis needs to be placed on public education and awareness. Objectives and target audiences must be defined before choosing the most appropriate communication tool and language (terminology). To do this, communications need to be broken down into various elements, such as political versus mass communications. It is also important that communications also target those who are seen as adversaries;
- B. **National communications strategies:** We need to develop national based on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. These strategies must include clear, catchy and consistent messages based on research and science. Messages must be consistent and resonate with people's realities and propose concrete solutions and actions. Everyone needs to communicate and participate in communications;
- C. **Communication Campaigns:** Communication campaigns and resources should not be offered only online. The internet and social media are excellent tools, but they exclude women, young people, rural communities and other marginalised groups. Multiple communication methods such as radio and print materials need to be used, and community organisations and civil society need to be involved in communicating key messages to local communities;
- D. **Formal engagement with the media:** There is no permanent formal engagement with the media. This takes place informally, behind the scenes of major events. Journalists need to be encouraged and trained to cover and promote biodiversity issues. It has been suggested that a recognition award be offered to journalists covering biodiversity, as an incentive;
- E. **National communications correspondents:** Specialised national communications correspondents and a dedicated communications clearing-house mechanism should be created to reduce the communication gap between CBD national correspondents and communications experts;

- F. **Exploiting culture: Communications** should draw on culture and tradition to bring out the message. For example, many African cultures have revered totems or proverbs, many of which have a direct link with biological diversity. Cultural and religious leaders are highly influential and can act as champions of biodiversity;
- G. **Communications in the African context:** Nature and biodiversity conservation must be relevant in an African context. Communications can show African countries how to use biodiversity to address the challenges they face. The story must resonate with Africans, and the perception that conservation messages are imposed by outside bodies must be eliminated;
- H. **Behavior change communications:** Consideration should be given to using communications strategies to change behavior and communicate a sense of urgency to act on biodiversity. Messages should emphasise the impetus given to the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the need to create an enabling environment before the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
- I. **Evaluation:** Suitable methods and/or tools will be needed to determine whether communication campaigns are achieving the desired results. This will enable lessons to be learned and analyses to be carried out to build on successes and learn from past experience.

## PERSPECTIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE ARISING FROM FRAMEWORKS FOR REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE ON BIODIVERSITY

Following the conclusions of the various frameworks for reflection, dialogue and governance of biodiversity in Africa that have been held over the last two years, and the consultations carried out with organisations and resource persons, certain prospects and opportunities have emerged that it is important to note and take into account:

- A. The involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth, the academic and research community, and the private sector, in the preparation and eventual implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework was recognised. All stakeholders agreed that the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework must be carried out in an integrated manner, taking into account the views, perspectives, interests and concerns of different stakeholders.
- B. Indigenous peoples and local communities are the best custodians of biodiversity and ecosystem services, as their lives are intimately linked to nature, and nature is integrated into their traditional knowledge, customary laws and practices. In addition, women often work closely with nature and influence the actions of young people.
- C. The role of the business sector was also highlighted. This stakeholder group has significant influence and could help promote sustainable policies, practices and technologies that could help ensure the sustainable use of biological diversity.
- D. Stakeholders proposed the following actions to facilitate stakeholder involvement in the development and implementation of the framework, while making it clear that different stakeholder groups need to be involved from the outset and on an ongoing basis, even if this requires considerable resources including:
  - i. **Stakeholder mapping:** Identify stakeholder groups in different social sectors, establish their needs and define and recognise their role in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;
  - ii. **Consultation platforms:** Develop tools (such as virtual platforms or collaborative networks) that provide dedicated spaces for diverse stakeholders to interact and share experiences and opinions within their group or with other groups;



- iii. **Inter-community exchanges:** Encourage and facilitate the efforts of indigenous peoples and local communities, and community groups, to share experiences, views and perspectives through existing traditional mechanisms, and communicate them through broader processes such as national consultations, regional consultations, the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation;
- iv. **Awareness-raising:** Organise knowledge-sharing and awareness-raising activities to improve stakeholder participation, as stakeholders may not participate enthusiastically if they are not aware of their rights or if they do not understand the issues and actions to be taken in the context of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;
- v. **Highlighting the value of biodiversity:** The commitment of stakeholders (countries) to biodiversity must be clearly linked to the value of biodiversity and its contribution to livelihoods in the context of the different stakeholders. For example, joint management of protected areas and benefit sharing in some African countries enables communities to clearly recognise the benefits of protecting natural assets through socio-economic development activities supported by park revenues.
- vi. **National implementation, and national biodiversity strategy and action plans:** Stakeholders discussed how the post-2020 framework could influence the development and implementation of NBSAPs, the requirements for aligning NBSAPs and the post-2020 framework, and the elements to be included in the framework to enhance the effectiveness and implementation of NBSAPs. The NBSAP, as the primary mechanism for nation-wide implementation of the Convention, is essential to the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. It is therefore important to continue implementing the updated NBSAPs adopted by the Parties in recent years, as most of the priorities, targets and challenges identified therein remain valid.



In addition, stakeholders have pointed to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, and the work related to Article 8(j), as good examples of ways to gather and take into account the perspectives of indigenous peoples and local communities. The Protocol clearly sets out the rules and procedures for obtaining the prior informed consent or approval and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in access and benefit-sharing arising from genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, and provides guidance to ensure that all stakeholders involved in the process work together effectively.

**Suggestions have been made to facilitate and improve implementation in countries:**

- A. The post-2020 framework should advocate an adaptive approach whereby Parties would revise and align their NBSAPs with new and emerging biodiversity-related issues identified in the post-2020 framework;
- B. The post-2020 framework should highlight the benefit-sharing component as an incentive for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In this respect, the post-2020 framework should focus more strongly on access and benefit-sharing, and NBSAPs should be adapted accordingly to facilitate the achievement of this objective in countries;
- C. Plans, programs and timetables for the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in countries should be harmonised with those for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- D. Enabling mechanisms should be established or strengthened to facilitate the implementation of NBSAPs and enable Parties to meet their national targets. For example, the post-2020 framework should include a proposal for the creation of a dedicated biodiversity fund into which countries, organisations and foundations would make a quota or voluntary contribution as a complement to existing funding mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund;
- E. Global partnerships and cross-border collaborative projects on border-related issues in the context of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development should be expanded to support and complement national implementation programs.

## ROADMAP TO REINFORCE BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY CONSERVATION ACTIONS

...based on best practices and mechanisms and contribute to the emergence of an African youth movement on BCD

The actions proposed in this roadmap are intended to intensify initiatives to protect and preserve the BDC, and to put young people at the heart of these actions in order to contribute to the emergence of an African youth movement with the protection and preservation of the BDC as its priority area of intervention.

This roadmap is defined over a five-year period, from 2023 to 2027. It will be implemented in the African sub-regions covered by this study.

**Table 13: Bio-Cultural Diversity Roadmap**

Strategic Axes	Objectives	Main actions	Deadline
Political advocacy for the protection and preservation of BCD	Mobilise more resources for the preservation and protection of BCD  Make regulatory frameworks, legislation and territorial planning tools biodiversity-sensitive	Advocacy for the adoption of biodiversity-related regulatory frameworks and application texts  Advocacy for the integration of notions of cultural biodiversity preservation into training curricula at primary school level.  Advocacy with governments, local authorities, national and international organisations and the private sector to ensure that the protection and preservation of BDC is a priority.  Development of tools for taking cultural biodiversity into account in territorial planning tools	2023-25
Information, formal and informal education on CID	Make BCD accessible to all levels and components of society	Development of appropriate communication, information and training tools on cultural biodiversity.  Triggering decision-makers to protect and preserve BCD  Advocacy for the integration of cultural biodiversity into primary school curricula  Advocacy for the integration of a biodiversity dimension into cultural events at school level (cultural week).  Training SC actors on biodiversity, its usefulness for generations and its preservation  Training of pools of young people by region on biodiversity, its usefulness for generations and its preservation.	2023-2025
		Setting up intergenerational dialogue frameworks to share ancestral practices on the culture, protection and preservation of BCD.  Organisation of youth academies on biodiversity preservation in the wake of traditional festivals.	2023-2027
Actions to preserve biocultural diversity by young people	Put young people at the heart of strong, concrete actions to preserve	Establishment of community-based reforestation initiatives throughout the territory.  Setting up community initiatives to preserve and protect sacred forests	2023-2027

	and protect the BCD	<p>Calls for youth projects to preserve the BCD</p> <p>Organisation of in-country youth forums to share best practices in protecting and preserving the CID.</p> <p>Organisation of awards on cultural biodiversity to reward young people involved in protecting and preserving the CID</p>	
Economic value of BCD	Make the BCD a source of job creation	<p>Promotion of local product processing</p> <p>Promotion of local tourism</p>	2023-2027

## CONCLUSION

The view that biological and cultural diversity are dissociated phenomena obscures the reality that they are mutually reinforcing and interdependent. Indeed, we cannot understand or conserve our natural environment without understanding the human cultures that have shaped it. Each culture has its own set of representations, knowledge and practices. Human intervention in the environment, including its management, is a social act and a cultural expression.

Indeed, it is clear that the development models elaborated since the 1970s, though constantly revised, have failed to live up to the expectations they raised. The concept of sustainable development must not be viewed solely through an economic prism in which technological advances play a driving role. On the contrary, sustainable development is based on a precise understanding of the role played by biodiversity and by cultural diversity in maintaining ecosystems. The context of globalisation tends to favor interdependence, which is often to the detriment of less-developed countries and in disregard of the diversity of cultures, and their expressions. These new challenges of globalisation make it increasingly necessary to redefine the relationship between culture and development or, more precisely, between cultural diversity, biological diversity and sustainable development.

Cultural diversity guarantees mutual enrichment for the future of humanity because it is a source of innovation, creativity and exchange. It thus becomes, like biodiversity, the pledge of the sustainability of development, in both its material and immaterial dimensions. Cultural diversity and biodiversity, together, hold the key to the sustainability of our ecosystems.

In view of the important information gathered by this study on the levels of knowledge and involvement of young people in biodiversity governance and in the conservation of cultural biodiversity, there is an urgent need to take concrete action based on the battery of leads and suggestions listed in this document.

It's time to engage Africa's youth in the real issues of identity and sustainable development. It's not tomorrow or the day after, it's NOW.