NEWS FROM AFRICAN PROTECTED AREAS

NAPA 196

CONSERVING NATURE IN AFRICA

THIS MONTH IN THE NAPA

EDITO

Ecological Civilization: A Strategic Response to the Triple Environmental Crisis in African Cities

By Rodrigue Castro Gbedomon, Ph.D., Research Director at the African Center for Equitable Development (ACED)

Cities in Africa are population hubs and engines of economic growth. They host more than half of the population (54% in 2020) and contribute on average 30% of the gross domestic product (up to 60% in some countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire). Unfortunately, the accompanying urban expansion and economic development have made African cities epicenters of the triple environmental crisis—biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change—while also exacerbating social inequalities. Urban growth is marked by urban sprawl and major spatial transformations, which significantly—and sometimes irreversibly—degrade natural ecosystems. The conversion of natural areas into built-up zones and the artificialization of land accelerate the retreat of nature and the loss of biodiversity. The concentration of economic activity increases air, water, and soil pollution, while significantly contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. African cities are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. They face increasing occurrences of floods, heatwaves, and rising sea levels. These environmental crises disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations, often living in underprivileged neighborhoods.

By 2050, the urban population in Africa will double, exacerbating the environmental crises mentioned above as well as inequalities. This inevitable urban transformation makes African cities areas of particular concern for conservation, but also for human well-being. It raises important challenges in terms of urban planning and, even more so, in terms of lifestyles and development models. In response to these challenges, the African Center for Equitable Development (ACED) is working to promote ecological civilization in its countries of intervention.

Ecological civilization is a model of society in which human development is organized in harmony with nature. This concept aims to move beyond the current model focused on economic growth at all costs, in order to build a sustainable and fair society that respects nature. It promotes a development approach that reconciles the instrumental view of nature with its relational and intrinsic values.

[1] Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2025 - OECD
[2] Dynamique de l'urbanisation africaine 2022 - OECD

EDITO

"Ecological civilization is a way of life and development with nature and as part of nature, as opposed to a way of life at the expense and to the detriment of nature."

This civilizational shift requires interventions at three levels: in research and innovation, public policy, and practices.

Research and innovation form a fundamental pillar of the transition toward an ecological civilization. Research generates knowledge on the magnitude of the situation and the cost of inaction, in order to raise awareness about risks and opportunities and to prompt action.

Innovation, for its part, proposes new solutions that are contextually adapted and tested, while facilitating their dissemination. Without research and innovation, it is difficult to grasp the limits of the current model, as well as the opportunities and the options for a transition toward an ecological civilization.

Public policies are the other pillar of the transition toward an ecological civilization. They mark a rupture, a deliberate choice, and define the rules, incentives, and collective frameworks necessary to guide individual and economic behaviors as well as public and private investments. They also shape education, research, and innovation to change mindsets. Finally, they ensure that the transition is fair and inclusive, and that it benefits all segments of society. Without political will and a coherent public strategy oriented toward ecological civilization, market pressure and private interests tend to favor the rapid exploitation of natural resources to the detriment of ecological preservation.

The practices of donors, technical and financial partners, the private sector, and households form the third pillar of the transition toward an ecological civilization. They translate policies, research, and innovations into concrete changes on the ground. Donors and financial partners direct investment flows (for example, by conditioning their funding on ecological criteria). The private sector, a major economic driver, has a key role to play by adopting responsible practices in production, energy consumption, and resource management.

As for households, their daily choices (mobility, food, energy consumption, etc.) directly determine the demand for more sustainable lifestyles. If all these actors change their practices in line with the principles of ecological civilization, they make the transition not only possible, but also sustainable and inclusive.

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ACED supports and stimulates change at these three levels through a knowledge engineering approach called Evidence-Policy-Action (EPA), which operates at three levels:

- The relevance of knowledge.

We support our partner countries in formulating a consensual research agenda based on knowledge needs related to ecological civilization, and then facilitate the implementation of this agenda to produce the expected knowledge. We experiment with and test models of nature in cities and their management mechanisms in real-life settings so that the proposed solutions are contextualized and realistic.

- Accessibility of knowledge.

We ensure that existing or newly produced knowledge is made available to policymakers and practitioners in the right format, the right language, at the right time, and delivered to the right person.

- Use of knowledge.

We support our partner countries in understanding the political vision and its connection with their area of work, in identifying windows of opportunity for action, and then in integrating this knowledge into their interventions and practices.

Ecological civilization is an evolution of development models. It is not just an option for development; it is the only one that allows for an effective response to the challenges of urbanization and the triple environmental crisis in African cities, and everywhere else.

For more information about ACED, visit our website.

Also, follow us on our social media (X, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube). @acedafrica

OUR ONLINE COURSES: MOOCS, TUTORIALS AND ESSENTIALS

Our 7 MOOCs, 4 Essentials and 3 Tutorialsa are open and available right now!

MOOC Conservation is the platform that hosts IUCN-Papaco's online training courses, developed in partnership with the Senghor University, in Alexandria.

See you on:
www.mooc-conservation.org

THE MOOCS
THEME-BASED TRAINING

MOOC PA management
Goal: understand the essence and goals of PAs. Students will be able to grasp the importance of PAs, their role and the different management aspects.

MOOC Ecological monitoring
Goal: understand the different techniques used in protected areas to assess the impact of managment by monitoring the ecosystem.

MOOC Law enforcement
Goal: understand the different legal contexts in Africa, their strengths and weaknesses as well as the techniques used to effectively enforce rules in parks.

MOOC Species conservation
Goal: understand the techniques developed to conserve species in PAs, in situ and ex situ. The MOOC covers the main threats, as well as solutions that can help face these threats.

MOOC Valorisation of resources
Goal: knowing how the valorisation of different protected area resources can take place, and understanding protected area valorisation through tourism.

MOOC New technologies
Goal: context of new technologies applied to conservation, existing techniques, prerequisites for their implementation, their opportunities and limitations, their uses in the field...

MOOC Marine protected areas
Goal: understanding as the design and creation of MPA networks, governance, ecological monitoring, but also surrounding economic activities, and how to include all this to MPA management.

ESSENTIALS
PROFILE-BASED TRAINING

RANGER Essential
For protected area (PA) professionals who apply decisions and ensure the implementation of activities inside or around the PA.

MANAGER Essential
These two courses are for protected area professionals who need to plan, manage and assess the work carried out by field agents.

MANAGER LAW focuses on law enforcement and the valorisation of the PA and its natural resources.
MANAGER RESEARCH focuses on research activities, monitoring-evaluation and ecological monitoring.

LEADER Essential
For managers working in central management of parks or large NGOs, they elaborate national and regional policies, they proceed to cross-sectoral coordination and manage complex plans and programmes. This course focuses on more general skills to enable a better understanding of the stakes of bio-diversity conservation, all for better decision-making.

MOOC CONSERVATION IS FUNDED BY THE **FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL**

NEW IN 2025 :

INTERNSHIPS FOR LEARNERS WITH ONLINE CERTIFICATE

OC: ONLINE CERTIFICAT IN PA CONSERVATION

15 ECTS

WHAT IS IT?

The OC is an official diploma obtained after taking (and passing) a supervised online exam. Before taking the exam, you must have completed all the Papaco MOOCs (excluding tutorials and Essentials) and be available on the day of the exam. Each candidate has only one chance of passing, so it's important to be well prepared!

NEXT DATE?

The next test will take place on **25 June 2025**. So there are still a few weeks left to validate MOOCs and register. All the details are **>>here<<**.

WHAT ABOUT THE INTERNSHIPS?

INTERNSHIP PRESENTATIONS

To enable MOOC learners to apply the theoretical content of the MOOCs, and thanks to funding from the FFEM (French Global Environment Facility), IUCN Papaco and Senghor University are joining forces to enable a limited number of the OC graduates to undertake a 3-month field placement.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Nationals of French-speaking African countries who have been awarded the OC with a coherent career plan.

TRAINEES SELECTION

A first phase of trainees selection is underway and the first trainees should be sent out into the field in a few weeks' time. A second phase will take place after the OC exam on 25 June, so don't forget to validate your MOOCs and take the exam.

2025 MOOC CONSERVATION CALENDAR

20 May: PAs in Haiti (French)

20 June: Q&A with the MOOC team.

24June: exam for the Online Certificate in PA Conservation - *French-speakers*

25 June: exam for the Online Certificate in PA Conservation - *English-speakers*

The registrations link to the Youtube Lives will be available on MOOC Conservation under Live Sessions.

YOUTUBE LIVE

This year we launched the Live Youtube, a live interview with our MOOC Conservation ambassadors. For now we've only been ably to hold these in French. If you're interested in sharing your expertise on a matter related to PA conservation in Africa, please send and email to moocs@papaco.org.

YOUTH CONSERVATION
DISCOVER, UNDERSTAND AND ACT FOR THE PLANET

Online platform, 100% free of charge, brings together dedicated resources:

- For children and young people: 6 didactic and interactive courses on the major themes of nature conservation: terrestrial and marine biodiversity, climate change, nature and health, etc.
- For educators: downloadable teaching resources to facilitate learning and the running of educational sessions (posters, guides, etc.).

VISIT WWW.YOUTH-CONSERVATION.ORG !

AND ON THE GROUND? STORIES FROM PASSIONATE STAKEHOLDERS

TRAINING YOUTH IN CONSERVATION: AN INSPIRING INITIATIVE AT THE MUNICIPAL HIGH SCHOOL OF BASSINKO (BURKINA FASO)

BY *EWENDPAYANGDÉ EDGARD BOUGMA*, *VOLUNTEER MENTOR IN BURKINA FASO*

Raising awareness about nature conservation starts at an early age.
With this in mind, a month-long series of awareness and training activities took place at the Municipal High School of Bassinko, in Ouagadougou, led by Edgard, Youth Conservation tutor in Burkina Faso.
This initiative, aimed at introducing students to conservation issues, combined theory and practice for a hands-on immersion into environmental protection.

A MONTH OF COMMITMENT TO NATURE

✅ February 13, 2025: Nature Conservation Awareness Session

Officially launched on that day, the program began with an in-depth discussion on reforestation and plant protection. A collective reflection led to the implementation of a seeding operation, turning the concepts discussed into concrete actions.

✅ February 20, 2025: Learning Seedling Production Techniques
During this second session, students stepped out of the classroom to practice seed sowing techniques. The goal? To help them develop practical skills in seedling production and directly experience the essential role of vegetation in the fight against deforestation.

✅ March 13, 2025: Feedback and Concrete Actions
The highlight of the program was the presentation of the students' seedling trials. Each student had the opportunity to showcase their own plant, sharing their experience and the challenges they faced. The day continued with an outdoor activity focused on maintaining and watering the school's trees—a vital gesture during the dry season.

WHY ARE SUCH INITIATIVES SO IMPORTANT?
These actions highlight the importance of integrating environmental education into schools and training future generations in the sustainable management of natural resources. Protected areas and natural spaces cannot be preserved without strong societal engagement—especially from young people.
Alongside this awareness day, Youth Conservation resources were used to help students understand the need to protect their environment in their daily lives.

TOWARD BROADER ENGAGEMENT?
The example of the Municipal High School of Bassinko shows that it is possible to mobilize youth around conservation through concrete and engaging projects. This type of initiative could be extended to schools located near protected areas, to build a strong connection between local communities and their natural heritage.

Kudos to Edgard for his dedicated volunteer work within the Youth Conservation mentor network!

If you too want to get involved in environmental education, contact Hélène at the following email address: info@youth-conservation to find out how to get started!

TOGO: WHEN FAITH AND ECOLOGY MEET – AN INSPIRING AWARENESS SESSION IN ADÉTIKOPÉ

BY KOKOUVI TONA ADANDOGOU, *VOLUNTEER MENTOR IN TOGO*

Last March, Kokouvi, our volunteer tutor in Togo, led an unforgettable awareness session with 32 children from the CVAV association in Adétikopé, part of a religious community.

Using Youth Conservation's educational tools (including posters), these young people, aged 7 to 15, were introduced to the fundamental concepts of the environment: its components, their roles, and the essential actions to protect our planet.

But beyond learning, it was a true awakening of consciousness. By connecting religious values with nature protection, Kokouvi created a space for intense dialogue. The children responded enthusiastically, asking numerous questions and expressing a desire for more in-depth training, particularly on waste recycling.

A beautiful demonstration of the power of environmental education rooted in local cultural and spiritual realities!

Kudos to Kokouvi for his volunteer commitment, and best of luck in his ongoing missions!

EDUCATING ON WASTE SORTING: A STEP TOWARD MORE SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS (IVORY COAST)

BY YVES AMANY, *VOLUNTEER MENTOR IN IVORY COAST AND MEMBER OF THE ESADEVCI NGO*

On March 2, 2025, our volunteer mentor Yves Amany, a member of the NGO Esadevci, led an awareness conference on waste sorting at Les Oscars Middle School in Cocody, right in the heart of Abidjan.

In front of students and staff, Yves captivated his audience by explaining in a concrete way **how to sort waste and why this action is important in the fight for a healthier environment. The initiative didn't stop there: the session concluded with the installation of adhesive posters on the school's bins, clearly indicating which types of waste should be disposed of in each.**

A simple yet powerful gesture, which was praised by the school's leadership team, who were present in force: the Principal, the Director of Studies, and the First Cycle Educator all made sure to personally support this initiative.

A beautiful example of how awareness can be sustainably integrated into daily school life to educate eco-citizens from a young age!

Kudos to Yves for his volunteer commitment. If you would like to learn more, you can contact the NGO Esadevci directly via their Facebook page.

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE - IUCN BRIEF

IN SHORT

• Invasive alien species (IAS) are animals, plants, or other organisms that are introduced into places outside of their natural range, negatively impacting native biodiversity and in some cases ecosystem services or human well-being.

• IAS are one of the biggest causes of biodiversity loss and species extinctions, and are also a global threat to food security and livelihoods.

• IAS are compounded by climate change, which facilitates the establishment and spread of many alien species and creates new opportunities for them to become invasive.

• IAS can reduce the resilience of natural habitats, agricultural systems, and urban areas to climate change. Conversely, climate change reduces the resilience of habitats to biological invasions.

• It is essential that IAS be incorporated into climate change policies. This includes biosecurity measures to prevent the introduction of IAS to new regions, and rapid response measures to monitor and eradicate alien species that may become invasive.

What is the issue?

An alien species is an animal, plant, or other organism that is introduced by humans, either intentionally or unintentionally, into places outside its natural range.

Globalisation has increased the movement of people and goods around the world, leading to a rise in the number of species introduced to areas outside their natural ranges.

Some alien species – classed as “invasive” – become established and negatively impact native biodiversity and ecosystems, and in some cases nature’s contributions to people and good quality of life.

A 2017 study found that over one-third of all introductions in the past 200 years occurred after 1970, and the rate of new introductions is showing no sign of slowing down. In fact, a 2020 study predicts that under a "business as usual" scenario the number of established alien species will increase by 36% through 2050. Current predictions suggest that the situation will be much worse as climate and land- and sea-use change are worsening (IPBES, 2023).

Examples of IAS are presented here after:

The **Water hyacinth** (*Eichhornia crassipes*) forms a dense cover on the surface of freshwater bodies. Its populations are known to double in as little as 12 days, blocking waterways, limiting boat traffic, and affecting fishing and trade. In Lake Victoria in Eastern Africa, it can grow to such densities that ships are unable to leave docks.

Rats are frequently identified with catastrophic declines of birds on islands, and transmit the plague bacterium via fleas in certain areas of the world.

The **Argentine ant** (*Linepithema humile*) is the greatest threat to the survival of various endemic Hawaiian arthropods, including insects and crustaceans. It displaces native ant species, some of which may be important seed-dispersers or plant-pollinators, leading to the disruption of native ecosystems.

The **Emerald Ash Borer beetle** (*Agrilus planipennis*) is decimating some of the most prominent ash tree species in North America. It has the potential to destroy over eight billion ash trees.

Interactions amongst drivers of environmental change, including climate change, exacerbate and compound the problem. Extreme climatic events such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts can transport IAS to new areas and increase their spread by decreasing the resistance of habitats to biological invasions. Climate change is also opening up new pathways of introduction of IAS. For example, emerging Arctic shipping passages due to melting ice caps will greatly reduce the time taken for ships to travel from Asia to Europe, increasing the risk of alien species surviving the journey.

Many IAS have the ability to expand rapidly to higher latitudes and altitudes as the climate warms, outpacing native species. Alien species that are regularly introduced by humans but have so far failed to establish themselves may succeed in doing so as a consequence of climate change creating more favourable conditions for some of these species.

Some habitats, such as temperate forests and freshwater systems that currently have thermal barriers limiting the establishment of IAS, will become more suitable for alien species as the climate changes.

Why is it important?

The increase in the number and spread of IAS will have major and diverse societal and environmental impacts. Invasive alien species are a major threat to global food security and livelihoods. People with the greatest direct dependence on nature may be disproportionately affected by IAS. Developing countries that have high levels of subsistence and smallholder farming are highly vulnerable because they often lack the capacity to prevent and manage biological invasions.

IAS reduce the resilience of natural habitats, making them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. For example, some grasses and trees that have become IAS can significantly alter fire regimes, especially in areas that are becoming warmer and drier. This increases the frequency and severity of wildfires and puts habitats, urban areas, and human life at risk. IAS can also impact agricultural systems by reducing crop and animal health.

The economic costs of IAS and their management are estimated to be $423 billion annually. Of these costs, which are a gross underestimate because of the difficulties in accessing information, 92% are associated with impacts of the IAS and only 8% to their management.

Invasive alien species are among the top drivers of biodiversity loss and species extinctions across the world (IPBES, 2019). Indeed, IAS are responsible either solely or as a contributing factor for 60% of all global extinctions (IPBES, 2023). The majority of known global extinctions (90%) with invasive alien species as one of the major causes have been reported from islands.

What can be done?

The impacts of IAS are amplified and compounded by our changing climate. Policy responses addressing both biological invasions and climate change are critical.

Climate change policies can incorporate IAS by including IAS prevention and control, and by ensuring that measures to address climate change do not increase the threat of IAS. For example, native tree species should be used for carbon sequestration or erosion control rather than introduced species such as Acacia or Eucalyptus occurring outside their native range.

Climate change should be also explicitly incorporated into prioritisation approaches for IAS, including risk assessments, to robustly identify those alien species that could become a threat in the future. Those species – known as "sleeper species" – need to be identified and prioritised for eradication or control before they spread and become invasive.

Prevention is the most effective approach to mitigating the impacts of invasive alien species. Managing the pathways of introduction for IAS, including strictly enforced pre-border quarantine, import controls, and border biosecurity is critical to slowing the rate of IAS arriving and establishing globally.

Island ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to climate change and IAS. Measures to prevent the introduction and establishment of IAS on islands, and other vulnerable ecosystems, include effective biosecurity to manage priority pathways of introduction, supported by early warning and rapid eradication to tackle alien species before they become invasive. Cross-border collaboration and international cooperation across sectors is key.

And finally, adequate and sustained resourcing, including capacity building, is critical to ensuring the effectiveness of management programmes. The success of eradication programmes depends on the support and engagement of relevant stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

More on this topic

IUCN Species Survival Commission

IUCN Global Invasive Species Database (GISD)

IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG)

Global Register of Introduced and Invasive Species (GRIIS)

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 6 on invasive alien species

CBD and IUCN. (2024). Invasive Alien Species Toolkit for Target 6 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'Today, the only condition for survival lies in establishing a more humble relationship with the planet.'
Alain Gras, French sociologist

MEDIA OF THE MONTH

PODCASTS CHANNEL "LES RENDEZ-VOUS DE LA CONSERVATION"

Launched in July 2024, the channel currently has around 40 episodes and aims to inform, inspire, and train conservation stakeholders, whether professional or amateur.
Some episodes have been particularly popular with our listeners (ONLY IN FRENCH):

- **Fighting Wildlife Trafficking by Adams Cassinga** (listen HERE)
- **Community Conserved Areas: An Effective Lever to Protect Wildlife?** by Bertrand Chardonnet (listen HERE)
- **For Sustainable Community Development** by Cédric Dubois Muliri (listen HERE)
- **Environmental Rights and Children's Rights in the DRC**, by Didier Amuli (listen HERE)

You can find all of our episodes on Spotify ou YouTube. Happy listening!

NEWS ON CONSERVATION

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY - 22 MAY 2025

This global campaign, led by the United Nations General Assembly since 1993, raises awareness about the richness of plant and animal species on Earth. This year, the theme is "Harmony with Nature and Sustainable Development."

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY 2025
Harmony with nature and sustainable development

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) sets an ambitious path toward transforming our relationship with nature, in harmony with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda.
This framework is based on a strong idea: biodiversity is vital for humanity and the planet. Its protection is linked to crucial issues such as food, health, water, energy, and resilience to disasters.
The KMGBF includes 23 action targets, closely aligned with the 17 SDGs. Their success depends on stronger integration into national policies through the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) aligned with sustainable development strategies.
This transition requires the engagement of all of society: states, local governments, businesses, indigenous peoples, women, and youth. It is together that we can realize the vision of the KMGBF: "living in harmony with nature."

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To contribute to a NAPA (article or publication on protected areas, cover photo, job offer, etc.), contact us at moocs@papaco.org.