

African Ecological Futures

The issue

How to accelerate a fully-resilient African society with natural infrastructure that supports sustainable development long-term? Africa has experienced unprecedented growth in the past decade and is expected to increasingly assert its role as a global economic player while lifting millions of people out of poverty.

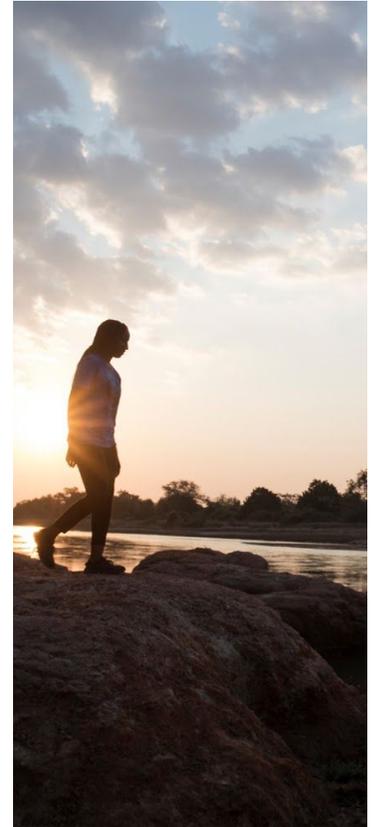
Much of this growth is related to the rich natural capital with which the continent is endowed – fertile agricultural land, minerals, healthy fish stocks and forest resources supplying both local demand and export markets. The continent’s iconic wildlife, coral reefs and other ecosystems also sustain a thriving tourism sector.

However, Africa’s rapid population growth and economic expansion including large-scale agricultural development, growth in extractive industries, urbanisation and infrastructure programmes are putting increasing pressure on the continent’s ecosystems, key habitats and species.

The response

As Africa shifts gear, there are opportunities to ensure that its ecological and natural resource base – the foundation of its growth – is not irrevocably damaged and can continue to support long-term sustainable development. To make the right choices it is critical that policy makers understand the links between drivers such as population growth, socio-economic development, climate change, energy, food and water needs.

African Ecological Futures is a thought leadership initiative with the aim of designing development pathways that will lead Africa towards a long-term, sustainable future in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and other international environmental commitments necessary for its own prosperity.



In 2015, WWF and the African Development Bank published a report entitled [African Ecological Futures](#) as a policy and investment guide for governments, intergovernmental organisations and development banks. It looked at future trends in physical and ecological infrastructure and their implications for Africa's economic development through tools, methods, data and scenarios mapping.

In time, the African Ecological Futures initiative aims to:

- Convene a wide range of stakeholders including WWF, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme to begin discussions on how to map Africa's key natural assets against ongoing and future development plans and investment projects.
- Provide concrete recommendations for several political intervention points at the national, regional and global level. Influence physical infrastructural investment decisions through ecological futures thinking, evidence-based research, capacity development and partnerships.
- Assess cities planning to establish broad trends in physical and ecological infrastructure needs of cities across Africa and test, through pilots, new models of resilient and climate-smart cities.
- Ensure ecological futures thinking, tools and methods are shared and mainstreamed within finance development institutions investing in Africa and national planning agencies, and to foster continued learning among key agencies and institutions.

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