



Conserving Biodiversity in a Changing Climate

(Preliminary information, 24 January 2007)

Multiple pressures including fragmentation of habitat, land degradation, deforestation, invasive species, and pollution threaten the rich biodiversity of Africa, the loss of which is negatively affecting food security, agricultural and other livelihoods, human development, ecological services and cultural values. Human driven climate change is adding to and interacting with these and other pressures. Many of the traditional tools of conservation may need to be adapted to the changing risks if they are to be effective and innovative approaches also may be needed. START and the Institute for Resource Assessment (IRA) of the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, with funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, are implementing a program of education and training to build capacity in Africa for conserving biodiversity in a changing climate. Emphasis will be given to capacity building in the Albertine Rift countries of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

Masters' level courses and externships targeted to early to mid-career conservation professionals and researchers will be offered at the campus of the University of Dar Es Salaam and will be open to participants from across Africa. The courses will focus on changing risks to biodiversity from climate change and other pressures and strategies to incorporate management of climate change risks into conservation practices. Externships will give participants an opportunity to apply concepts learned in the classroom to the field. Successful participants will receive credits toward a masters of science degree and will acquire enhanced knowledge and skills that will enable them to contribute substantively to adapting biodiversity conservation practices to changing risks in a changing climate.

Program Activities and Timeline

1. Baseline Assessments (February-August 2007): Two baseline assessments will be performed. One will focus on current research to learn the main lines of research in Africa related to biodiversity conservation in a changing climate, the institutions and researchers that are leaders in these areas, general findings, main conceptual approaches and analytic tools used, and unmet research needs. A second baseline assessment will be made of the capacities and practices of institutions that have significant roles in biodiversity conservation, focusing primarily on institutions in the Albertine Rift. The assessment will seek to learn their scientific and technical needs and existing capacities, perceptions of the main threats to biodiversity, knowledge of climate change related risks, extent to which current conservation practices incorporate climate change concerns, and perceptions of knowledge or skills needed to address climate change risks. Results of the assessments will be circulated by the end of 2007. How can you help?: Information related to the above issues is invited. Sources of information used in the baseline assessment will be appropriately referenced.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.



2. Develop Course Curricula (July-December 2007): Curriculum and teaching materials will be developed for two masters level courses, one on climate change risks to ecosystems and biodiversity and a second on conservation strategies in a changing climate. START and IRA will consult with institutions in the Albertine Rift countries

about educational needs and with educators in Africa and elsewhere about curriculum design and content. *How can you help?*: We invite you to share with us relevant curricula, teaching materials, case studies, and reading lists. The curricula and teaching materials that we develop will be made freely available to all via the internet.

3. Conduct the Courses (January-September 2008): The two courses will be offered once each in 2008 as 3-week intensive study seminars. The 3-week format will facilitate the participation of conservation professionals and students from across Africa. In future years the University of Dar es Salaam will incorporate the courses into its normal course offerings. Working professionals and masters level students from across Africa are eligible. Financial support for course fees, accommodation and living expenses is available for African nationals, with priority given to nationals of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. *How can you participate?* Applications will be invited for 2008 starting in summer/fall 2007. Applications are not currently being accepted. You may, however, send us your email address to assure that you receive the announcement and application form when it is available.

4. Externships (April-December 2008): Following successful completion of the training courses, participants will be placed in externships with institutions that have missions related to biodiversity conservation, wildlife management, land and water management, agriculture and forestry extension, community based development, and research. The externships will provide an opportunity to apply lessons from the classroom in the field. *How can you help?* If your institution would like to host a student for an externship, please contact us.

5. Replication of the Program (2009 and beyond): Other institutions and educators are welcome to use and adapt our course curricula and teaching materials. These materials will be made freely available on the web and we will also share our experiences to assist you in implementing similar courses. *How can you participate?*: Contact us to let us know of your interest in offering similar courses at your institution.

Contacts:

Dr. Neil Leary,
Senior Scientist, START
nleary@agu.org

Professor Pius Yanda, Director, Institute
for Resource Assessment, University of
Dar es Salaam
yanda@ira.udsm.ac.tz