

YAFP Book Launch events: A Resounding Success Story

By Annie Biju

Nelson Mandela said “*Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world*”—this is what the Joint IUFRO-IFSA Task Force on Forest Education (JTF) was created for. Our primary objective is to enhance forestry students’ mobility and education opportunities. We help to identify, compile and communicate gaps and challenges in forest education, especially highlighting the new fields of forest education.

The [Young African Forestry Professionals Publication project \(YAFP\)](#) was a book project jointly undertaken by the [Joint IUFRO-IFSA Task Force on Forest Education](#) and the [International Union of Forest Research Organisations - Special Programme for Development of Capacities \(IUFRO-SPDC\)](#). The goal of this project was to motivate and inspire young people to pursue forest-related studies and careers in Africa by increasing the visibility of career options and young African role models working in forest-related fields.

The book “[Building a Successful Forestry Career in Africa: Inspirational Stories and Opportunities](#)” was published in English and French in 2021. It highlights the stories of 23 students, and young and established forestry professionals from 12 African countries who have defied all odds and built themselves a successful career in the forestry sector. The book also gives information about universities in Africa offering forest-related degree programmes, and local and international organizations providing networking opportunities to forestry students and early career professionals. The book additionally provides information on scholarships for pursuing forestry courses and exciting career opportunities beyond the forests.

More than 500 copies of the book have been distributed to libraries in around 20 countries. The [International Forestry Students’ Association](#) (IFSA has about 20 Local Committees in the African continent and the [book](#) was widely promoted in African LCs by organizing book promotion events along with workshops and networking opportunities with funding support from IFSA to six LCs selected from an open call. The funding for organizing the local events for bringing awareness and promoting this book among high school students to master students was given to four local chapters from Nigeria, one from Sierra Leone and another from Uganda. The summarized report on the activities done by each LC is given below:

1. Forestry Association Makerere University, Uganda

The event was conducted by the School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences, Makerere University from 17 - 19 March, 2022. The event gave a forest outlook on forest education for three days and the activities included a public lecture by Mr. Tom Obong Okello, the Executive Director of National Forestry Authority (NFA). Previous to the events, tree tagging was done within Makerere University and tree planting in College of Agriculture and

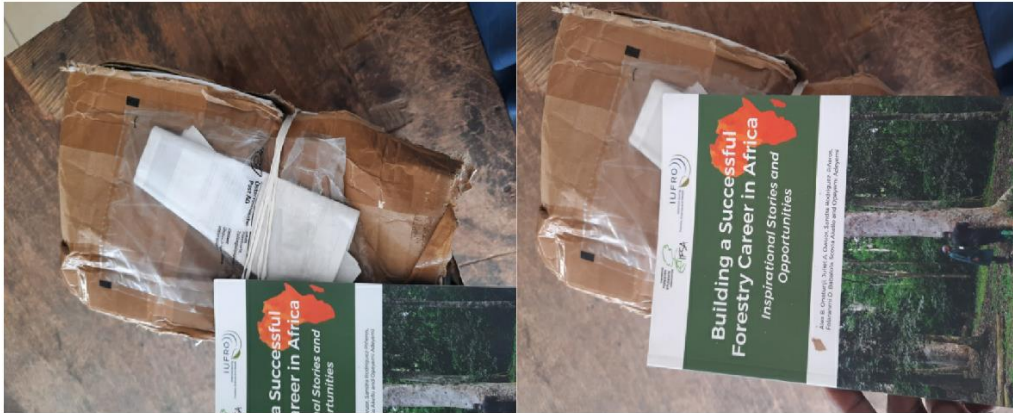
Environmental Science - School of Forestry Environmental and Geographical Sciences (SFEGS) botanical garden at Kabanyolo-Gayaza. Many speakers including Mr. Thomas Obong Okello, the Executive Director of NFA, Prof. Babweteera Fred, Dean of SFEGS, Prof Edward Mwavu Nector, Head of the department FBT, and others gave unique insights on the book. The event helped to create awareness about the book and inspire more students to take up forestry as a career.



Mr. Tom Obong Okello presenting to the students and faculty on “Forestry in a changing landscape”

2. University of Ilorin Forestry Students Association, Nigeria

The book launch and promotion was a one day event organized by the University of Ilorin Forestry Students Association on 15th February, 2022. The theme of the event was ***“Forestry: the impediment?”*** and had several speeches aimed at enhancing and building the capacities of forestry students and its association were given and a tree planting exercise was done within the university. The event also had a leadership workshop by Dr. F. D. Babalola followed by Mr. Alex Onatunji giving a presentation of the book as well as launching the book. Other speakers at the event include the IFSA Northern Africa Regional Representative, Mr. Samuel Japhet; Mr Abdulkareem Taofiq Oluwatob and Mr Aromoye Abullateef Kajogbola. The event was a success with students benefiting from the leadership workshop, several engaging lectures and tree planting exercise within the university.



The arrival of the books, 19th of January 2022.



UFSA Executives and YAFP Local events Organizing committee 2020/2021.

3. Forestry and Wildlife Students' Association UNIZIK, Nigeria

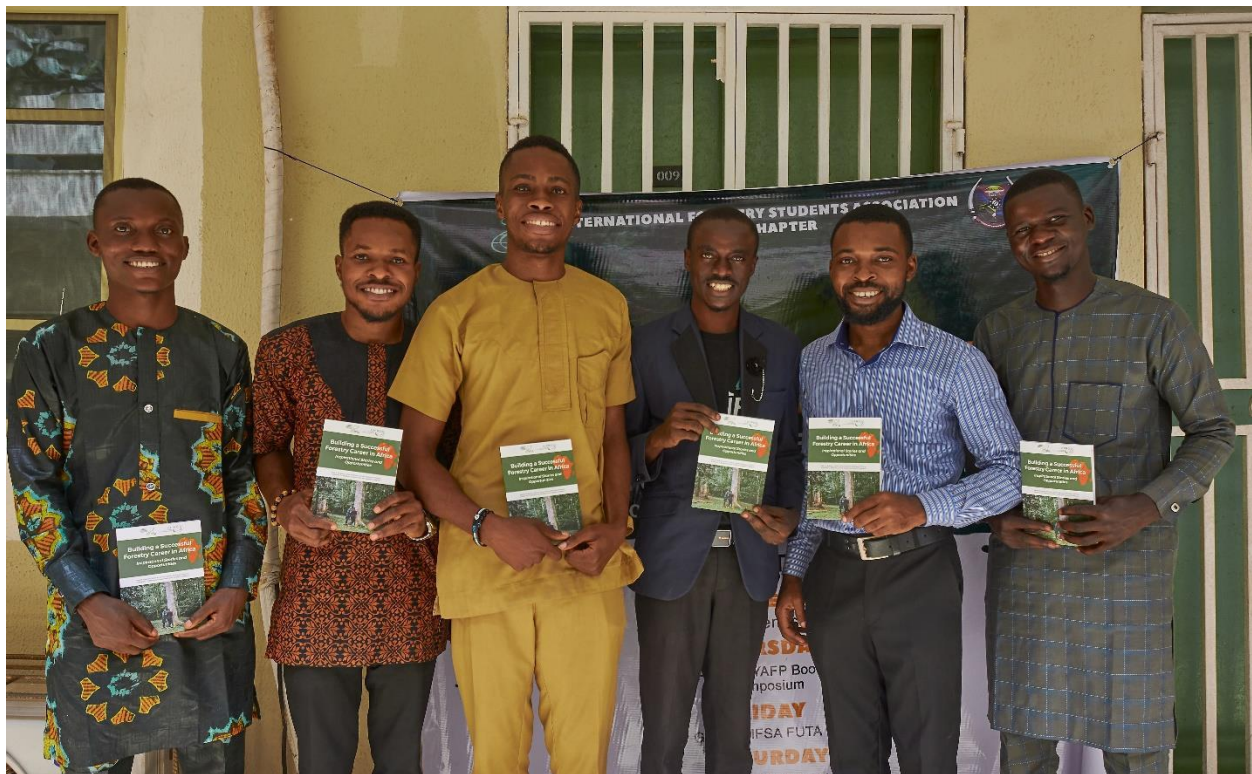
The event was organized on 21 March 2023, International Day of Forests by the Forestry and Wildlife Students' Association, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria. The theme of the event is **“Building a Successful Forestry Career”**, and was attended by forestry students, well-respected dignitaries of the University, Government officials and by different NGOs who partook in presenting activities surrounding sustaining the forestry in the society. The opening remark was given by the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Prof. Peter C. Nnabude, who described Anambra State as the erosion capital of Nigeria, which, he said is partly as a result of destruction done to forests by the people. Dr. A. E. Ekwuatum presented the keynote address and noted that there is no waste in the forest, as every single thing inside the forest is essential to mankind. Several others also spoke on the occasion including Prof. Nkiru T. Meludu, Prof. Caleb Ezeano and Engr. Felix Odimegwu. Mr. Onyekachi Chukwu, a lecturer and staff adviser in the same university whose inspiring story was featured in the book, officially launched the book at the event. The event also featured a special presentation by students of Igwebuikwe Grammar School and UNIZIK High School as well as presentation of awards to some deserving individuals who have made indelible contributions towards the growth of Forestry and Wildlife. It was a successful event and the purpose of the launch was indeed achieved.



From YAFP Book Launch event at Nnamdi Azikiwe University

4. Federal University of Technology Akure Local Chapter, Nigeria

The event was held on 17th February, 2022 at the Department of Forestry and Wood Technology, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. The event was aimed at building desires to contribute to the betterment of the Association as well as help them mount to the apex of their career in Forestry, provide learning and career opportunities for students across Nigeria. The event was titled: **“The Future Forestry - What are the opportunities for now and the Future?”** The opening ceremony of the event began with a welcome speech Oyebode Oluwafunminiyi Joshua, followed by the Former IFSA Northern Africa Regional Representative – Mr. Ebunoluwa Ogooluwa Gideon who delivered the speech on IFSA while Mr. Samuel Japhet delivered the Success Story of the Book on behalf of Mr. Alex Onatunji. The former Local Committee President; Mr. Olaoluwa Adetula delivered on behalf of the Head of Department; Prof. A. G. Adedayo a lecture note prepared by him. Various speeches aimed at enhancing, building the capacities and showcasing the opportunities of Forestry in Africa for the students and Associations were presented. Some of the speakers include Prof. Shadrach Olufemi Akindele, Mr. Olaoluwa Adetula, Miss Annie Biju and Mr. Dare Adeagbo. The event was a huge triumph with students and staff celebrating and benefiting from the book launch.



From YAFP Book Launch event at Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria

5. Njala University, Sierra Leone

A one-day workshop and a book launch for secondary school students who are aspiring for university requirements and choosing a career path from high school. The event was held on 15

March, 2022 at the St Joseph's Convent Secondary School Hall, Moyamba. The workshop is a "Catch-Them-Young" approach and is primarily aimed at exposing young secondary school pupils to the knowledge of the importance of forests and the various social, economic and environmental benefits accruable from both natural and plantation forests around them. The theme of the workshop was - **"Student's Mentor Relationship: The Myth, The Prospects and The Benefits"**. The event also captured activities like keys to identifying prospective mentors, hands-on training with forest professionals on career enhancement, and IFSA Hour. Mrs Victoria Blango in her keynote address emphasized on how important the theme of the workshop was selected. The event also included speakers Ms. Frances Pessima, Mohamed Dukuray and Alfred Momoh. The event was highly successful as it helped to inspire secondary school students and facilitate training to forestry professionals.



From YAFP Book Launch Event at Njala University, Sierra Leone

6. Ekiti State University International Forestry Students' Association, Nigeria

The event was incorporated into the Local Committee Week which lasted for 4-days. The event started on 5th December, 2022 with an awareness and sensitization rally. The EKSU LC Executives and the student populace of the department came out to march sensitizing the university community on the need to conserve the environment through nature jobs – planting of trees and environmental cleaning and resuscitation of available forests. Students came out with cardboards with different captures such as "Operation plant trees" , "its YAFP-IUFRO Book Launch", "trees the life saver" and many more to pass information across to the public on the necessity to appreciate forest. Mr. Uthman Ayoku trained the students in various forestry practical aspects ranging from wildlife photography, bird watching, and taxidermy, to ecological surveying

with modern gadgets that are moved down from the University of Ibadan to Ekiti State University. Mr. Akinradewon Stephen at the same time gave intensive training on forest inventory and mensuration. The YAFP book was launched by the Head of the Department of Forest Resources and Wildlife Management, Prof. Olujobi Olagunju. Dr. Agbelade Daniel (Staff Adviser), Lecturer in the department gave a speech on the topic **“Mentor and Mentee: Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships for Prospective Forestry Professional”**. The event was widely appreciated by both students and staff at Ekiti State University.



From YAFP Book Launch Events at Ekiti State University, Nigeria

Conclusion

The book was well-received and appreciated by students, professors, scientists and forestry professionals throughout the African Continent. The success of this project is that it was spearheaded by young people for the benefit of other youths in forestry and produced a tangible output that is now in the hands of hundreds of youth across Africa and also freely accessible online in French and English. The distribution of the book was supported through shipment of hard copies to libraries of municipalities and forestry universities throughout Africa and through events hosted by selected IFSA local committees, as well as individual efforts to share and promote the book. Now the initial objectives of the YAFP have been achieved, we encourage you

to build on this work in any way that you see fit, and especially by using and sharing this special book to motivate and inspire young people to pursue forest-related studies and careers in Africa.