

THE AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FOUNDATION

Without a healthy, diverse and productive environment, the people of Africa cannot survive. International relief aid to Africa can only be a short-term solution if people do not have a healthy environment to sustain them in the long term. Already, environmental degradation across Africa is causing widespread poverty, which not only leads to humanitarian disasters of alarming proportions, but creates instability and discontent, ultimately requiring international intervention.

Lack of awareness lies at the core of most threats to Africa's environment. The majority of Africans have very limited access to environmental education. Without knowing the consequences of current destructive practices, and without knowing that there are practical and more lucrative alternatives, there is no way that people can adapt to secure a better future for themselves and their communities. The key here is education that is both understandable & practical to the people of Africa, enabling them to become more self-reliant and less dependent on international aid.

The AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FOUNDATION's mission is "Environmental Education through Film".

AEFF is making educational films about environmental, wildlife and conservation issues, for the people of Africa, in their own languages. The films show how environmental degradation and destruction of wildlife cause poverty, and illustrate the direct financial benefits that African communities can gain by conserving their environment and wildlife - probably the greatest long-term, self-renewing resources the continent will ever have.

Many organizations try to alleviate environmental crises after they have occurred (usually at great expense). Through widespread education, AEFF is aiming to prevent these crises happening in the first place.

Environmental problems are global problems and what happens in Africa will ultimately affect everyone. AEFF's films are also narrated in English (& other languages) for dissemination through international NGOs and educational institutions, creating an interesting cross-cultural "bridge of information".

Documentaries made by AEFF will never lose their relevance. Even when events covered in a film are no longer current, each film will remain an important informative and historical document, providing inspiration and education to each new generation of children for years to come.

Film is a particularly effective mode of communication in Africa where there is a high rate of illiteracy. Film can also reach a wide audience in a relatively short time – important when disseminating information about issues as critical as environmental protection.

With camera crews on the ground all year round, and with 40 years' experience of film-making and conservation work in Africa, AEFF's team is in a unique position to make in-depth, broadcast-quality documentaries, which deal with real issues, in a profound and balanced way.

AEFF currently has an audience of 3 million adults and children in East Africa alone. AEFF's educational films are distributed free of charge so that all people may have access to them, whatever their financial status.

International investment in AEFF's environmental documentaries can help to alleviate poverty and discontent in Africa and providing a brighter future for Africa's children, by disseminating capacity-building education at a grass-roots level, thereby enabling people to find a self-reliant way forward (without destroying their environment, which is the basis for a healthy future). This will not only help to create more prosperous and stable societies in Africa, but ultimately also a more secure international community.

By June 2002, AEFF will have completed 6 one-hour educational documentaries. Four of these films constitute AEFF's "Elephant Encyclopaedia" series, a comprehensive study of elephants and their role both in the economy and in the ecology of East African countries.

AEFF's first film, "The Great Ruaha River" illustrates how mismanagement at the source of one of Tanzania's main rivers has far-reaching repercussions for thousands of people and animals living downstream, and indeed for the country as a whole.

"Running Dry" is an urgently needed documentary about water issues and specifically how forests and vegetation cover are vital in creating and regulating rainfall. With the scarcity of water being one of the greatest threats to East African countries, this film is of critical importance.

All of AEFF's films are narrated in at least two languages (English and Swahili), and some of our films are available in as many as eight different languages, and as such have the capacity to make an impact on a global level. For example, AEFF's latest film about elephants, "Wanted Dead or Alive?" will be screened in Santiago, Chile, during the CITES conference in November 2002, as well as being widely distributed internationally in advance of the meeting. It is hoped this film will influence countries around the world to uphold a total ban on international ivory trading. This film will be narrated in English, Swahili, French, Arabic, Spanish, German, Mandarin and Japanese.

Over the next two years (January 2003 – December 2004), AEFF will produce and distribute 3 new educational films about environmental and wildlife issues in East Africa. In addition to this, AEFF plans to convert 8 exiting documentaries into Swahili. AEFF cannot produce these important educational films without the support of organizations like Amara Conservation who, through their foresight and dedication, have committed themselves to supporting worthy conservation and education endeavors, for the good of both people and wildlife, not only in Africa but all over the world.

Amara Conservation can play a significant and active role in disseminating widespread education in Africa by assisting AEFF in its mission to provide "Environmental Education through Film", in the following ways:

- Screening AEFF's educational films to schools and rural communities in East Africa using mobile units. AEFF's films are also accompanied by "Information Packs for Teachers" to stimulate continued interest from students in schools and colleges. AEFF's films and Information Packs constitute an integral part of Amara's educational initiatives in East Africa;
- Raising funds to assist AEFF with the development and production of new educational film projects;

- Providing vital camera, editing and projection equipment;
- Linking people in America and Europe with organizations like AEFF who are addressing the realistic needs of African communities and are providing long-term solutions for sustainable development;
- Offering facilities for a central distribution point for AEFF's films in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city.

AEFF believes that the key to success is for people and organizations sharing the same vision to work together, combining their respective strengths to achieve their mutual goal. Amara's support for AEFF (an organization which is already operating successfully on the ground, with positive results) will make a meaningful difference to the overall capacity of AEFF, allowing us to continue making educational films about pressing environmental issues for many years to come. In turn, the success of AEFF's projects will ensure that Amara Conservation achieves its aim of providing environmental and conservation education to the adults and children of Africa, as a long-term investment in the future of both people and animals – and the healthy environment which sustains all life.

Lori and Heidi Bergemann of Amara Conservation, first visited AEFF at work in the field in Kenya in May 2001. Since then, Lori has spent a lot of time getting to know the AEFF team (Simon Trevor, Ian Saunders and myself), learning about our educational film projects and plans for the future, and ensuring that AEFF's objectives are in line with Amara's priorities (and vice versa). The AEFF team appreciates the amount of time Lori has set aside to get to know our organization well, and to explore with us the best ways in which we can cooperate to achieve significant and positive results. Amara has already donated some useful equipment to AEFF, and AEFF has provided Amara with Swahili and English copies of our first film. It is clear that cooperation between Amara and AEFF can greatly enhance the effectiveness of both our organizations, and we very much look forward to working alongside Amara in pursuit of our mutual goals.

Thank you for your support of AEFF and Amara in our vital educational work. Without your help and commitment, we could not bring much needed environmental education – and a brighter future - to the children of Africa.

Tanya Trevor – AEFF Director