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World Resources Institute - Addis Ababa, or flexible within Africa: Regional Director, Africa

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About World Resources Institute

World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research organization that turns big ideas into action at the nexus of environment, economic opportunity, and human well-being. WRI has been working with leaders in more than 50 countries for more than 35 years. WRI's 900 staff are located in offices in Africa, Brazil, China, Europe, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and the United States. WRI works on seven Global Challenges which need to be addressed this decade: food, forest, water, climate, energy, cities and oceans. In addition, WRI mainstreams crucial issues such as economics, working with the private sector and the finance community, and governments – each of which has a Center with dedicated capacity to support the effective delivery of Global Challenge strategies.

The WRI regional office for Africa, located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was established in late 2016 and has 10 staff members who are responsible for strategic oversight and cross-cutting expertise, financial management and risk mitigation, fundraising, outreach and communications. They represent WRI on the continent and is the locus of the Ethiopia country program, with active engagement on, among others, climate mitigation and climate resilience; restoration of degraded lands; urban development and planning; water risk mapping; energy access, food security and land-use change.

About the Role

The Regional Director will support WRI's growing body of work in Africa with their strategic perspective, pairing of research expertise and excellence with insights about local needs and effective programming, as well as a keen eye for operational risk management. The RD role requires a comprehensive focus on development with a special focus on environment, economic and governance issues, which are in line with WRI's mission and mandate. The RD will work in close coordination with relevant counterparts – whether national or regional government, partners, community and the many donors of WRI.

Purpose of the Role

The Regional Director will be responsible for the design, cross-programmatic coordination and implementation of WRI's Africa strategy. The RD will engage with senior management, as well as Africa-based program directors and senior staff, to ensure WRI's engagement in Africa is based on a solid analysis of interconnected challenges in the fields of food, forest, water, climate, energy, cities and oceans. Based on the Africa strategy, the Regional Director will ensure continued geographic and thematic focuses to avoid spreading resources too thin.

The Regional Director will support teams in crafting theories of change that ensure discrete interventions can be brought to scale in a timely, efficient and effective way. This requires a deep understanding of Africa's constraints in managing and mitigating its natural resource challenges, which vary within and between countries. It also requires the identification of partners and the development of deep (inter)national partnerships that are essential to scale our impact in urgent times, despite weak institutional capacities and vested interests at the local level. The Regional Director will not only understand such challenges but have a proven ability to identify creative ways to mitigate such risks. He or she will work with the teams operating in Africa to inculcate a research standard commensurate with our credibility and reputation and provide strategic oversight and support for analytical work, data collection and the development of decision-relevant tools in line with our Africa strategy.

Familiarity with the full breadth of challenges at the nexus of environment and development as well as experience implementing demand-driven solutions steeped in science in Africa will be imperative. A proven ability to lead a team of multiple nationalities and professional backgrounds, and the ability to offer substantive support and instil social cohesion across teams operating in multiple countries is required to succeed in this role.

WRI Africa can only scale its work if adequate resources are available to support our work. Fundraising is a key element of this role, with embassy-level donors in various countries where WRI Africa operates. Donors include Africa-based organizations such as the African Development Bank and UNEP; as well as global funders like GEF and multiple foundations supporting a sustainable, equitable future for Africa. The ability to travel widely for external representation and effective outreach to prospective and current donors, as well as partners more broadly, is a key requirement for this role. Working closely with the Regional Operational Manager, the RD will also be responsible for an efficient implementation of the WRI Africa strategy in a way that minimizes costs as well as fiduciary risks.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Regional Director will join at the foundational phase of WRI Africa, one year into the five-year strategy. The RD will lead the strategic implementation and the team, help detail the engagement and implementation strategy across the continent together with program directors, ensure delivery at scale, and build partnerships and local capacity. The RD will be the linchpin across programs and geographies and work at the nexus of environmental and development challenges. The main areas of responsibility are the following:

- Represent WRI Africa Office in high-level meetings with government partners, (inter)national NGOs, UN-agencies, donors, pan-African and regional organizations, and business partners in Africa and beyond.
- Oversee the implementation of the WRI Africa strategy, working together with relevant program directors, whilst protecting and leveraging the comparative advantage and niche of our research credentials in Africa.

- Support the development of robust theories of change as a prerequisite for effective engagement and an impact commensurate with the size and challenges of Africa.
- Review and support the design of research proposals and knowledge products to ensure local ownership, effective dissemination of findings and to build in opportunities for synergies across WRI programs.
- Act as senior fundraiser on behalf of program teams operating in Africa with government donors, foundations, multilateral development banks and international organizations, working closely together with development staff based in DC and Europe.
- Ensure effective, timely and coherent monitoring of results and enhanced shared learning across teams working in or on Africa.
- Gather evidence and case stories that WRI Africa can use to demonstrate the economic and human development rationale for policy action by governments in Africa, and showcase the impact of (inter)national support.
- Develop MoUs with pan-African and regional organizations such as AU, UNECA, UN RSC to ensure WRI Africa's analysis, data and tools can achieve impact at scale.
- Support the WRI Africa Operations Director in managing and mitigating financial and internal control risks of WRI operations across Africa.

Skills and Experience

- Advanced degree (Masters or PhD) in environment, economics or development studies, or other relevant fields.
- Minimum of 20 years of full-time work experience in relevant field, with experience or prior work in a global organization. Recognized expert in this field in Africa.
- Experience in complex strategy development and effective program management combined with an ability to juggle multiple, competing priorities.
- A track record of independent, people-centered research on the key sustainability challenges facing Africa.
- Excellent social skills and demonstrable experience in managing and mentoring a diverse team of experts in different locations.
- Experience of successful fundraising from multiple sources (government, UN, foundations, private sector).
- Ability to steward relationships with high-level stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as civil society and multilateral organizations, at country and regional level.
- Excellent communication skills and proven ability to represent WRI across the wide range of topics WRI works on in Africa.
- Demonstrated ability to work independently, lead the team as their primus inter pares, and be part of the global WRI team.
- Fluency in English required, preference for French as a second language.