

# TBA AFRICAN ALUMNI GROUP: SCOPE AND STRUCTURE



## PURPOSE

The TAAG has three main aims:

- to promote the sharing of knowledge in conservation science and practice
- to help identify and develop synergies within the alumni networks in Africa
- to be a voice for young conservationists across Africa, raising the profile of their research and helping them to shape policy.

The TAAG African student conference is the main forum for achieving these aims. The first conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2013. The second conference is being held in Accra, Ghana in 2015.

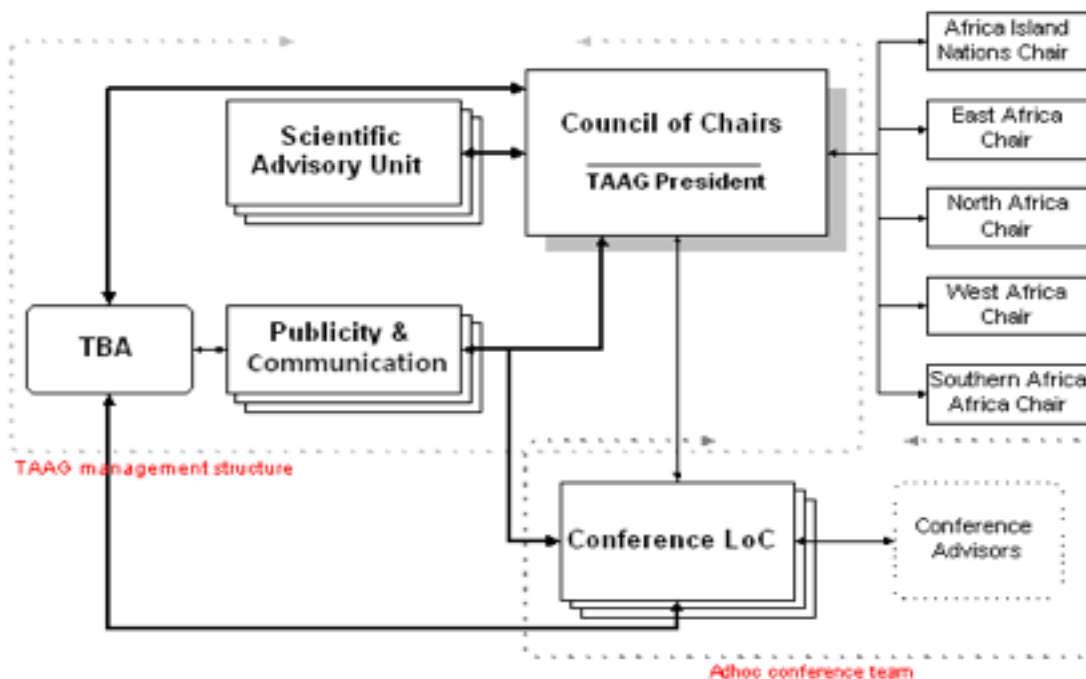
## HISTORY

The TAAG was conceived in 2011 when a number of TBA alumni met at a TBA workshop in Amani, Tanzania. While they were there, they shared a dream of organising a conference to bring TBA African alumni together, and in doing so, to create an umbrella group to unite all TBA African alumni.

The dream came true, and the TAAG was officially launched at its first conference, held in Nairobi in 2013.

Two years on, the TAAG, now run by an elected executive, represents the growing network of national TBA alumni groups from all over Africa. Ghana plays host to a second conference in June 2015.

## STRUCTURE



All positions are occupied by TBA alumni representatives drawn from different regions in Africa on a voluntary basis.

The **TAAG Council of Chairs** is made up of six elected regional members (known as co-chairs). It is the decision making body of the TAAG and its main role is to guide TAAG activities and the student conferences.

The Council of Chairs members elect a **TAAG President** from among them, who coordinates TAAG Council activities. For the TAAG conference, the President works in close collaboration with the Local Organising Committee of the host country (LOC).

The **TAAG Scientific Advisory Unit** is made up of experts in different fields of biology, conservation and ecology. It is the TAAG's scientific powerhouse, whose role is to:

- Provide scientific advice to the Council of Chairs as required — and especially concerning the themes of TAAG student conferences.
- Recommend plenary speakers
- Advise on which journals would be interested to publish papers presented at student conferences
- Review abstracts, papers and posters to be presented at the student conferences

The **Publicity and Communication Unit** liaises with the Council of Chairs, the Local Organising Committee and the TBA in advance of the TAAG conference. Its role is to:

- Prepare and edit TAAG communication and publicity material
- Communicate information to conference participants, speakers and other audiences of interest
- Coordinate media liaison

## **TAAG COUNCIL OF CHAIRS**

Below are the current elected members of the TAAG Council of Chairs (Co-chairs) heading each of the six regions of Africa:

### **Ishmael Dodoo (TBA 00/1, Naivasha/ Taita) -TAAG President and Western Africa region Co-chair**



*"I pledge my commitment to help take TAAG to another level of excellence and influence on regional and global environmental policy/ scientific advisory issues; especially as they relate to Africa's interest where our deep passions lie."*

Ishmael currently works at the UNDP in New York as the Country Advisor/ESA, Regional Bureau for Africa. He previously worked at UNDP Liberia before moving to UNDP Tanzania as the Head of Management Support (Strategy and Partnerships). Ishmael has vast experience in environmental policy and governance, gained both from his MSc in Environmental Change and Management degree and his work in UNDP. Contacts: [ishmael.dodoo@undp.org](mailto:ishmael.dodoo@undp.org)



**Sylviane Volampeno (TBA 02/2, Kibale) - Islands States of Africa region Co-Chair**

*“I would like to encourage the TAAG in my region to attend conservation events such as trainings, workshops and conferences, in order to increase their skills and knowledge for their career development. I would like also to push them to contribute the conservation effort of the island's biodiversity”.*

Currently, a part-time lecturer at the Animal Biology Department, Faculty of Sciences, at the University of Antananarivo, Sylviane is also a founder and president of the Madagascar conservation association "Mikajy Natiora", which aims to protect the Malagasy endemic biodiversity by combining ecological research and local community involvement.

Sylviane holds a PhD in Zoology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. She is convinced that the TBA field course she attended 12 years ago in Kibale forest was a very helpful guidance for her career development. She also benefited from a TBA scholarship to support her studies in Primate Conservation at Oxford Brookes University.

Sylviane attended the MTBA workshop on publishing results and fundraising in 2013, and received a TBA small grant in the same year. Her areas of interest include primate conservation, biological research, local community development and education. She has experience in lemur study project implementation, and in management and environmental education activities.

Contacts: [svolampeno@yahoo.fr](mailto:svolampeno@yahoo.fr)



**Hassan Shombe (TBA 94/2, Kibale) Eastern Africa region Co-chair**

*“I am very optimistic that the Tropical Biology Association shall continue to be a fountain of conservationists all over for sustainable development.”*

Shombe is an Associate Professor in the Department of Wildlife Management at the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), Tanzania. He has previously worked at Tabora Beekeeping Training Institute; the Royal Netherlands Academy of Science; Njiro Wildlife Research Centre; and the College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka.

Shombe has training in ecology and wildlife management, and has immense experience in savanna fire ecology, plant-animal interactions, human-wildlife interactions and overall wildlife management issues. His background in ecology dates back to 1987, when he completed a National Diploma in Beekeeping at Tabora Beekeeping Training Institute in Tabora, Tanzania. That led to a BSc degree in Zoology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Dar-es-Salaam (UDSM).

Shombe was a pioneer of TBA field courses, participating in the second course, in Kibale Forest in 1994. He went on to gain an MSc degree in Conservation Biology (1998) at the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), UK. In 2007 he received a PhD from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), for research on the effects of fire on herbivores and their forage resources.

Contacts: [hassanshombe@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hassanshombe@yahoo.co.uk)

### **Tiwonge Ivy Gawa (TBA 05/1, Kibale) - Southern Africa region Co-chair**



*“I hope to strengthen links between TBA alumni in the Southern Africa region by encouraging collaborations in regional research and institution exchange visits between alumni and their students or work colleagues.”*

Tiwonge is a Conservation Biologist specialising in the conservation of avifauna. She currently works as the Ornithologist at the Museums of Malawi and has completed her PhD in Ecology at the University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. She also holds an MSc in Conservation Biology from the University of Cape Town and a BSc degree from Chancellor College, University

of Malawi.

Tiwonge is a LEAD (Leadership for Environment and Development) fellow and has also trained in various other skills such as GIS, Ecosystem Service assessments and participatory tools for Climate Change adaptation.

She is a strong believer in volunteering and currently holds a number of voluntary posts, including: Conservation & Research Officer and BirdLife Desk Officer for the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi; Country coordinator (Malawi) for the African Bird Club, and country coordinator for the TBA Malawi Alumni group.

Contacts: [ngewoti@gmail.com](mailto:ngewoti@gmail.com)



### **Jean Paul Ntungane (TBA 09/2, Amani) - Central Africa region Co-chair**

*“My vision for TAAG Central Africa Region is a strong and more dynamic conservationists’ network that contributes to the local and regional conservation work”.*

Jean currently works with the BirdLife Africa Secretariat in Nairobi. He holds a BSc in Biology, majoring in Zoology and Conservation from the National University of Rwanda.

Jean attended the TBA course in 2009, shortly after he completed his BSc, and maintains it was a great foundation on which to grow his conservation career. He has been involved in several conservation projects in different Albertine Rift Key Biodiversity Areas, which have given him good exposure to the region’s ecosystems. Jean Paul has a passion for birdwatching and drawing. He loves learning new languages, and currently speaks French and English.

Contacts: [ntungane7@yahoo.fr](mailto:ntungane7@yahoo.fr)

### **Yared D. Desta (TBA 11/2, Amani)- Northern and Horn of Africa region Co-chair**

*“I am really excited about winning the position. It means a lot to me as it offers me an ample opportunity to serve TAAG to my level best”*

Yared currently works as a researcher at the Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute.

Contacts: [papioan@gmail.com](mailto:papioan@gmail.com)

