



CONCEPT NOTE

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF AFRICAN FORESTRY STAKEHOLDERS FOR TECHNICAL WRITING AND PUBLISHING SCIENTIFIC PAPERS

20-24 JUNE 2022, DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

1. INTRODUCTION

The African Forest Forum (AFF) is a pan-African non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. It is an association of individuals who share the quest for and commitment to the sustainable management, use and conservation of the forest and tree resources of Africa for the socio-economic wellbeing of its people and for the stability and improvement of its environment. The purpose of AFF is to provide a platform and create an enabling environment for independent and objective analysis, advocacy and advice on relevant policy and technical issues pertaining to achieving sustainable management, use and conservation of Africa's forest and tree resources as part of efforts to reduce poverty, promote gender equality, and economic and social development. Through all its programmes and activities, AFF seeks to promote the empowerment of all marginalized groups particularly women who have remained vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and whose representation, priorities and needs are seldom addressed in the forestry sector.

AFF operates through seven main Programmatic Areas namely (i) better management of forests and trees outside forests, (ii) forests and trees in economic development and poverty eradication, (iii) contribution of forests and trees to environmental health, (iv) contribution of forests and trees to food and nutrition security, (v) policies and governance, (vi) capacity building and skills development and (vii) information management and impact assessment.

Since 2011, AFF, through a grant from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), has been implementing a project titled "*African forests, people and climate change*" that is in its third phase. The overall objective of the project is to enhance the role of African forests in assisting people adapt to the effects of climate change in various landscapes in ways that will improve livelihoods, sustain biodiversity, and secure the quality of the environment, as well as to strengthen the capacity of Africa's forests to adapt to climate change and to contribute to mitigation efforts.

Another ongoing project at AFF is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and is entitled "*Strengthening management and use of forest ecosystems for sustainable development in Africa*". The overall goal of this project is "to generate and share knowledge and information through partnerships in ways that provide inputs into policy and decision-making options and capacity building, for improved forest management that better addresses poverty eradication and environmental protection in Africa".

The question of how to sustainably conserve, manage and use forest and tree resources to meet the social, ecological and economic needs of present and future generations is a big challenge for Africa. Achieving sustainable management in Africa requires access to relevant, timely, reliable forestry and related information and knowledge for use in supporting policy review and formulation, decision making and taking appropriate investment actions.

AFF is among the practice leaders in supporting sustainable forestry management at the national, regional and global levels; with a focus on bridging science-based knowledge and strong policies to support sustainable forest management in Africa.

The focus on knowledge is well articulated in AFF's strategic direction and programmatic agenda. The AFF Strategy (2021-2025) articulates a framework to maximize learning, capture emerging experiences and facilitate convergence through enhanced knowledge management. The AFF Knowledge Management Strategy (2021-2025) further defines a conceptual framework for the generation, management, sharing, communication and transfer of knowledge of forest related information among the many stakeholders involved in the African forestry sector.

As a leading forestry knowledge brokerage institution, AFF facilitates activities that generate science-based knowledge; collects and collates information; analyzes and synthesizes information to meet various ends dictated by stakeholders needs; and disseminates the same widely. AFF seeks to ensure that the right African forestry information is available to all stakeholders, at the time they need it and in the format they prefer. The continuing problem in many African countries has been how this knowledge is presented. This training workshop seeks to address this issue.

2. BACKGROUND

Capturing the readers' attention and enticing them to start thinking critically about a topic is the objective of any writing, particularly for technical / scientific ones. Scientific writing is predicated on the rigors of scientific inquiry, so it must reflect the same precision as that demanded in the research process. Good (technical / scientific) writing is an essential skill every writer should be proficient in as it will determine the success and effectiveness of his / her writing.

Each year, AFF works with a transdisciplinary team averaging 40 African experts and 20 postgraduate students to produce a considerable amount of outputs, at various levels and in various fields, including books, journal articles, monographs, reports, policy briefs, fact sheets, among others. And these are accessed by very many people. For example, the total number of information materials freely available on the AFF website by December 31, 2021 was 229. They include journal articles (56), policy briefs (20), factsheets (8), reports (41), publications under AFF Working Paper Series (58), training modules (2), newsletters (17), edited proceedings of meetings (1), books (5), compendium (9), and corporate documents (12). In 2021 there were 18,505 pdfs downloaded from the website, with 3,486,334 pages opened by 299,085 visitors from 152 countries who visited the website 729,596 times.

To ensure that the knowledge products remain continuously of high-quality standard and meets the needs of stakeholders at various levels, there is need to strengthen capacity of AFF stakeholders on technical and scientific writing skills. Issues of such capacity building are in line with the AFF programmatic area number 6 and 7 (viz. (vi) capacity building and skills development and (vii) information management and impact assessment) and contribute directly to the objectives of the SDC and Sida funded projects, as well as to the 'purpose' of AFF. In this way, such activities combine to strengthen the institutional capacity of AFF.

In this respect, AFF is collaborating with the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Tourism at Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania to organize a training workshop on "*Technical writing and publishing scientific papers*" to be held on 20 – 24 June 2022, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. AFF intends to reach many of its stakeholders in future with such training.

3. PURPOSE OF THE WORK

The overall objective of the training workshop is to strengthen the capacity of African forestry stakeholders, on (a) technical writing and (b) publishing scientifically sound knowledge products. The training will provide participants with the skills, knowledge and confidence to publish in peer reviewed journals and write good technical documents. This is expected to contribute to enhancing the impact of their research outputs on forestry and related issues.

More specifically, the training targets to :

- Enable participants to understand the fundamentals of technical writing
- Help participants to identify all the steps in the writing process
- Understand the use of technical writing tools to improve publications
- Develop the capacity of participants in writing manuscripts for publication in high quality peer reviewed journals
- Familiarize participants with the publication process and interaction with journal editorial and reviewing teams
- Equip participants to revise and edit publications effectively
- Familiarize participants with ethics of science

The training will be structured as a write-shop, that includes theory, practice and tips on technical and scientific writing and their application to participants' circumstances. Selected participants will be required to bring a draft knowledge product they have developed to be used as case study during the training. The detailed content of the training will be shared with selected participants

4. WORKSHOP EXPECTATIONS

At the end of the training, the participants will be able to:

- Describe what makes an effective, well-organized, professional scientific paper;
- understand the research cycle and develop the culture of scientific writing in order to promote their research outcomes through well-structured scientific articles published in reputable peer reviewed journals or as technical documents;
- Appreciate the protocols and ethics of scientific publication
- Understand editorial decision-making and the peer-review process

5. WORKSHOP APPROACH AND DURATION

The workshop will be conducted physically in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, over a duration of 5 days from the 20 to the 24 June 2022.

6. PARTICIPANTS

The event is expected to convene about 30 participants, mainly earlier career forestry professionals, consultants and postgraduates from Anglophone and Lusophone countries.