



Third Meeting of the African Forest Forum “Members’ Forum” : 28-30 June 2022

ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES AT AFF





PROJECT ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

1. Working in the COVID19 environment

- Staff worked on the two projects without any serious problems until 2020 when many African countries started implementing the COVID19 protocols which seriously restricted travel within and between countries and holding large gatherings like workshops and training sessions.
- This affected studies that required experts to travel to multiple countries and large regional stakeholders' meetings and training workshops.
- In response, the AFF Secretariat prepared quarterly COVID-19 Business Continuity Plans (BCP) which identified strategies and measures to provide stability to experts and partners engaged to deliver on the project objectives and outcomes.

Measures included in the AFF's BCP:

(a) Increased use of digital technology to execute project activities.

- Virtual communication platforms were used to gather experts and partners from various countries in the continent to deliberate on details of commissioned studies such as discussing and harmonizing methodologies for undertaking same tasks in different African sub-regions.
- Meetings of staff (working from home for two years), and the Governing Council and its committees were also done virtually to allow timely decision-making on execution of AFF's programmes.
- Improved stakeholders' access to AFF's knowledge products and services, which is a core function of the institution, was also sustained through these virtual means.

The use of digital technologies has resulted in savings since travel related expenses for experts and participants to meetings, workshops and trainings were not incurred, as well as lowering AFF's carbon footprint.





PROJECT ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

Measures included in the AFF's BCP cont.

(b) Adoption of hybrid approach

- For trainings and information sharing events like workshops, AFF adopted a hybrid approach to meetings where AFF staff and experts in various countries in the continent were digitally connected to face-to-face meetings that were organized at the same time in the relevant countries.
- This hybrid approach continues to be employed for countries where face-to-face gatherings are permitted.

(c) Recruitment of national experts to support regional and sub-regional experts

- For planned regional and sub-regional studies, recruited experts could not undertake international travel since this was restricted.
- To support them, AFF recruited national experts, in the countries where data was to be collected, who conducted field research by collecting and analysing country specific data and submitted their country reports to the regional or sub-regional experts who supervised this work, and then developed the regional and sub-regional deliverables.
- Engagement of national consultants enlarged the administrative and supervisory requirements than originally envisaged; however, this approach has enabled the project to make progress in generating empirical data on targeted countries, and this eventually contributed to the achievement of the project outputs and outcomes.
- Quality assurance for the process and of the deliverables was secured by the staff at the AFF Secretariat who supervised the studies.





Knowledge Management and Communication Unit (KCOMM)

This is a critical Unit for AFF because it adds considerable value to the knowledge products developed by the institution; for example:

- knowing how to better reach our stakeholders,
- what information they are taking up from our outreach avenues,
- what other data bases are relevant to our stakeholders, among others.

On Knowledge Management

- **AFF is guided by its Knowledge Management Strategy: 2020-2025**
- The strategy views knowledge management as a dual challenging activity:
 - managing information and processes; and
 - managing people and their environment through knowledge that is created and shared by AFF and applied by stakeholders systematically and effectively.
- **The AFF website serves as a knowledge and information hub on African forestry for its members and other stakeholders.**
- The website has been expanded considerably in terms of functionality to include two new knowledge portals.
 - The portals link to 109 databases on forest resources to provide a one-stop shop for forestry knowledge in Africa.
 - Cross links to 48 third party sites and partner organizations have also been provided to facilitate sharing of forestry information in a different format that may be useful, interesting or facilitates increased opportunities to stream content.





Knowledge Management and Communication Unit (KMCOMM)

During this period, AFF:

- developed a robust Knowledge Management Strategy (2021-205) which aims:
 - to strengthen AFF's position as a leading forestry knowledge brokerage institution;
 - to enhance coordination and integration of knowledge management at AFF;
 - to institutionalize a knowledge management culture that is conducive to collaboration internally and externally with stakeholders, and cohesive to the structure of the organization.

The Strategy is anchored on the following strategic objectives, which are to:

- 1: Generate, customize, and connect knowledge.
- 2: Use knowledge for policy and action.
- 3: Leverage knowledge through collaboration and partnerships.
- 4. Mobilize resources and building capacities.

The Strategy spells out the guiding principles for implementation, roles and responsibilities, resources requirements, and monitoring and evaluation considerations.

AFF is now recruiting a full-time Knowledge Management specialist.





Knowledge Management and Communication Unit (KMCOMM)

Youths in forestry

- The KMCOMM Unit has pioneered the production of a “Youth in African Forestry” podcast, a joint activity between AFF and the Hanns Seidel Foundation (Kenya and Ethiopia) with support from Strathmore University in Kenya.
- The process of making the podcast provided a platform for young people to engage with researchers and practitioners to address critical issues about the African forestry sector and explore how they could be resolved in an effort to enhance sustainable forest management and use on the continent, as well as link these processes to today’s global society.
- Example issues broached included: why forests and trees are important, how they can be sustained, benefits from them, threats facing them, and the future of forests.

The Knowledge Management and Communications Unit is now operational and growing well; the two SPOs and ES continue to monitor and supervise its development and growth.

For administrative purposes the Knowledge Management Specialist and the Senior Communications Officer are directly supervised by the Executive Secretary in order to ensure that information that leaves AFF conforms to expectations





Finance and Administration Unit

- This strategic Unit supports practically all activities undertaken by AFF, making it collaborate with other units within institution to ensure AFF's mandate is fulfilled
- It provides financial and administrative support in implementing the programmatic activities of AFF, facilitating the institutional operations, while ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the way AFF activities are carried out.
- AFF collaborates with ICRAF through a 5-year hosting Management Agreement signed between the two institutions. This Unit plays a key role in linking up ICRAF and AFF in the facilitation of AFF activities in the context of this Agreement.
- The Unit continues to ensure proper tracking and care on the AFF books of accounts. This has led to favourable financial and audited reports for AFF, donors, and other stakeholders; therefore maintaining AFF as an institution of right standing.
- The Unit has two staff: a Senior Administrative Officer and a Senior Finance Officer and its activities are supervised by the Executive Secretary. Occasionally the two staff are supported by short term hired labour, especially at peak hours of operation, like when undertaking annual financial audits. A Finance and Administration Assistant will soon join the Unit.





Staff development

- Apart from exposure to short term courses, there has not been extensive staff training in their areas of work that has been supported by AFF.
- On their own volition and at their own cost, the SFO and SAO are at different stages of doing masters' degrees in areas that will be useful to their jobs. Given such study loads during off working hours it will therefore not be advisable to load them with additional heavy training at this time.
- The scientific staff, i.e., the three SPOs, two POs and ES, continue to strengthen their scientific knowledge and skills by directly working together on some project activities (through learning from each other and mentoring), as well as supervising the work done by AFF's experts. This is in addition to being consulted widely by the international community on issues related to their areas of specialisation.
- This has led to considerable scientific publishing, either by themselves, or jointly with the experts. This contributes immensely to building their scientific exposure, contacts, and publishing record. In fact, several have already risen to higher professional ranks like professors in their own institutions.
- Knowledge Management, Communication, and PMER staff work with the scientific staff at the Secretariat, as well as in producing knowledge products . This broadens and sharpens their scientific skills.

Staff movement:

- **Prof. Marie Louise Avana Tienctheu** as replacement of Prof. Mahamane Larwanou
- **Dr Mercy Ojoyi**, Programme Officer, as replacement of Dr Paul Donfack.
- **Dr Daud Kachamba**, Programme Officer,, as replacement of Dr Vincent Oeba.
- **Dickson Kobong**, Planning Monitoring Evaluation & Reporting Specialist, as replacement of Dr. Leon Awiti.
- **Dr. Djibril S. Dayamba**, Senior Programme Officer, as replacement of Dr Noel Henri-Bouda.





Office of the Executive Secretary

The responsibilities of the ES are defined in the Constitution of AFF. In short, the office:

a) Oversees the undertaking of all AFF's activities

- In this regard the office has ensured that all annual project plans and budgets are made and approved by relevant organs, their deliverables achieved as desired, relevant communication made to donors (financial and operational reports), financial audits undertaken, accountability made to the Governing Council and its committees, and information generated shared as planned. This requires supervision of activities undertaken by the SPOs, POs, SAO, SFO, PMER Specialist, and the Senior Communication Officer.
- All these activities are supported by numerous other activities undertaken by the SAO and SFO, including procurement of relevant materials, support to recruitment of experts and AFF staff, and organization and support services for running of events like workshops and training courses. All these and many other activities undertaken by the FAU are supervised by the ES.

b) Oversees the growth and functioning of AFF's Units and liaison office

- In this regard FAU, PMER, KMMCOMM, and PMU units are operational and have contributed to give AFF a clear institutional structure for its growth and development. These four units had better remain as they are in the short to medium term in order to consolidate gains achieved. Potential for further future expansion of AFF exists.
- Further, the liaison office at the Royal Swedish Academy of Forestry and Agriculture (KSLA) continues to render useful support to AFF. The services KSLA has provided to AFF under their MOU have over the years enabled AFF to successfully deliver on its programmes in a cost-effective manner.





Office of the Executive Secretary

c) Supports the Governing Council and its committees

- The ES is secretary to meetings of the Governing Council (GC) and its Executive Committee (EC). Organises meetings of the GC and its committees and ensure implementation of recommendations that come from them. Both the EC and GC approve the work plans and budgets for the two projects together with reports emanating from them, monitor their implementation, oversee staff performance, and collaborative arrangements/partnerships with relevant institutions, among other things.
 - The Task Force on Resources Mobilisation developed a Resources Mobilisation Strategy for AFF that guides the way AFF mobilises resources.
 - The Finance Committee oversees the handling of all finances at AFF, and the auditing of AFF's finances.
 - The Technical Support Team to Raise the Profile of Forestry (TST) ensures that AFF supports effectively African delegates and the development of an African opinion in preparation for COPs of UNCCD and sessions of UNFFF, as well as effective representation and mounting side events. The TST also prepared African delegates to UNFF sessions, the latest being UNFF17, as well as supporting them technically and logistically during the deliberations.
 - The Working Group on Climate Change continues to monitor the performance of the SDC supported climate change project and other climate change related developments in order to guide the development of AFF's work on climate change. The committees of the GC effectively supported the implementation of various activities.

d) Maintains good relations with the host institution and host country

- The ES continued to liaise with various CIFOR-ICRAF staff and senior leadership in an effort to cultivate good working relationships with the host institution. Fortunately, some of them are AFF members and one senior CIFOR-ICRAF staff represents the institution on the GC.
- The ES continued to work closely with the parent ministry in Kenya together with key forestry institutions in the country including Kenya Forestry Service (KFS) and Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI)..





Office of the Executive Secretary

e) Provides strategic guidance to the institution

This has been done in various ways, but only two stand out, namely;

(i) Guiding activities of AFF during the COVID 19 pandemic.

As reported earlier under “Project administration and management”, the AFF Secretariat prepared COVID-19 Business Continuity Plans (BCP) which identified strategies and measures to provide stability to experts and partners engaged to deliver on the project objectives and outcomes during this period. These BCPs are still being used because the pandemic is not over yet.

(ii) Growth of the institution and its ability to link better with development partners.

AFF developed and adopted a programmatic approach to its work, that has six programmatic areas that have been identified through extensive consultations, including feedback from the previous Members’ Forum meeting. Details on this can be obtained from the AFF website at <https://afforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2017-A-PROGRAMMATIC-APPROACH-TO-THE-WORK-OF-THE-AFRICAN-FOREST-FORUM-FINAL-2018-6.pdf>





Office of the Executive Secretary

f) Guides development and growth of AFF as an institution

- Since our previous meeting in 2017, AFF has strengthened its institutional structure considerably; it has strategies to develop and grow its administrative units which are now operational. Its Secretariat has grown to ten staff, of which six are females. Its membership is now 2,731 members. AFF has increased its global reach with its products; for example, in 2021 its website was visited by people from 152 countries. More details of this will be given in a separate report. It also has revised its earlier five -year strategy (2015-2020) to a new one for 2020-2025, to guide its future development. Its programmatic approach holds potential to better inform others about what it can do and guide development of good partnership arrangements. The institution has two key donors, SDC and Sida; however, we are working hard to cultivate other development partners to participate in AFF activities.
- Over the years, AFF has considerably increased its convening power by capitalizing on the confidence African governments and other partners have in the institution. This is ably demonstrated by its support to government initiatives for which assistance is sought from AFF. For example, the African Union Commission engaged AFF, with a grant from FAO, to develop a “Sustainable Forest Management Framework for Africa”-SFMF. This was approved by Heads of States and Governments in February 2020 for use by Member States and Regional Economic Committees like SADC, ECOWAS, ECCAS etc., to guide them on how to sustainably manage and develop their forestry sectors for social-economic development and environmental protection of the continent.
- Further, with a contract from FAO, AFF contributed to an initiative led by FAO in supporting six Great Green Wall countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal), and the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall (GGW) in collaboration with the African Union Commission and partners in preparing a Green Climate Fund (GCF) co-financed multi-country project to scale-up successful climate actions for the implementation of the AU GGW Initiative. The proposed Scaling-Up Resilience in Africa’s Great Green Wall (SURAGGWA) Project will aim to achieve specific climate change impacts (mitigation & adaptation). AFF assessed the potential of non-timber forest products to contribute to this initiative.
- On the global scene AFF was a member of the organizing committee for the XV World Forestry Congress that was held Seoul, South Korea in May 2022. Also participating in Global IUFRO Day in 2021 (<..\..\..\..\Desktop\IUFRO\IUFRO-Science Policy Forum\Programme for panel discussion.pdf>) the upcoming IUFRO Congress in 2024 (<https://iufro2024.com/iufro-world-congress-2024/organization/>) and support KEFRI to bid for IUFRO 2029. Further, AFF is accredited to sessions of UNFF, COPs of UNFCCC and UNCCD. Also, AFF works very closely with many other global institutions like FAO, IUFRO, UNFF, UNEP, CIFOR-ICRAF and many individuals from inside and outside Africa, some of whom are members of AFF.

Overall, AFF continues to grow strongly on the continent and globally in terms of its reach, influence, and credibility.

• AFF Secretariat-June 22, 2022

