AfriAlliance

AfriAlliance is a five-year project funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. AfriAlliance facilitates the collaboration of African and European stakeholders in the areas of water and climate innovation, research, policy and capacity development by supporting knowledge sharing and technology transfer.

AfriAlliance activities

- Africa-EU cooperation is taken to a practical level by identifying (non-) technological innovation and solutions for local needs and challenges. AfriAlliance also identifies constraints and develops strategic advice for improving collaboration within Africa and between Africa and the EU.
- To help improve water and climate Monitoring & Forecasting in Africa, AfriAlliance is developing a triple sensor approach, whereby water and climate data from three independent sources are geo-spatially collocated: space-based (satellites), in-situ hydro-meteorological station observation networks and data collected by citizens.
- Sharing of knowledge is facilitated through a series of events and through an innovative online platform. Demand-driven AfriAlliance Action Groups’ bring together African and European peers with relevant knowledge and expertise to work jointly towards solutions.

Realisation

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References

- Description
  - An Action Group in AfriAlliance is a demand-driven, problem-focused community of practice to share knowledge between stakeholders and networks at all levels and to identify and address local water and climate vulnerabilities effectively.
- Technical solutions
- Governance structures
- Capacity development
- List of acronyms
  - AAA: Arid African Aluvial Aquifers for Agriculture
  - AG: Action Group
  - CC: Climate Change
  - CD: Capacity development
  - EISSI: Efficient and Innovative Small Scale Irrigation
  - WWRM: Integrated Water Resources Management
  - RSR: Really Simple Reporting
  - GIF: Social Innovation Factsheet
  - SR: Systemic-Relational
  - SIRAF: Sustainable Intensifications for Resilience and Food Security

Further reading
Managing a broad range of Action Groups with Information Technology.

The 10 Action Groups that include a vast array of focus areas, group members, tasks, outcomes, expected impacts, countries and cultures required a stringent set of management processes and the use of Information Technology.

- **Task monitoring matrix** in order to control the Action Group activities, an activity monitoring matrix was developed. This process has allowed the plethora of individual actions, expected outcomes and impacts from the 10 Action Groups working across Africa and Europe to be well controlled.
- **IT Tools to build partnerships** One of the most important aspects of building a community of practice is for participants to share similar experiences around a mutual topic [b]. Hence, finding participants with common interests can be challenging. The following IT platforms aided in this regard: The AfriAlliance Market Place, the AfriAlliance Network Map, Really Simple Reporting (RSR) and the AfriAlliance Online Platform:
  - The Online AfriAlliance Market Place: An Action Group applicant could “advertise” their idea for an Action Group or alternatively a potential partner seeking an Action Group could “advertise” their skills on the site.
  - The Network Hub (c): In order to achieve improved interactions and to aid in building communities of practices to overcome knowledge fragmentation in climate and water issues, the AfriAlliance project created the AfriAlliance Stakeholder Network Map. The innovative map has more than 500 connected elements: simple (organisations), combined (network, associations, platforms, etc) and temporary basins (projects). The Action Groups placed themselves on the map thus they could link with other stakeholders across Africa and Europe.
  - The AfriAlliance Online Platform provides the AfriAlliance Action Groups with a Knowledge hub of online learning including funding opportunities, knowledge materials, Akivopedia (free, open-source water, sanitation and hygiene knowledge and technology transfer resource) and career opportunities.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

- **GEWAY** is not the sole purview of the state through government, but rather emerges as a part of social, economic and political systems. Governance structures are essential for the effective implementation of projects, programmes, and policies. In the context of the AfriAlliance project, governance structures were developed to ensure the effective management of the project, the coordination of activities, and the achievement of project objectives.

social innovation

In this sense, the Action Groups have at their core the concept of capacity development manifested through the following activities:

- **Thematic knowledge co-creation:** The AfriAlliance Action Group transferred capacity through experience sharing visits of the shallow alluvial water harvesting schemes in Tigay, Ethiopia, for 33 experts and decision-makers from Somalia, Somaliland, Uganda, Ghana and Nigeria. In order to promote dry season farming in semi-arid Ghana by enhancing the capacities of vulnerable farmers and local agriculture stakeholders, the P4D Action Group organised a field visit to a model farm where farmers were exposed to new and innovative irrigation installation systems and efficient water management and agronomic practices. Nature Based Solutions (NBS) at demonstration sites in Egypt gave local users (mostly affected communities) the means to easily manage the NBS through a participatory management approach as part of the SoWat Action Group. The Ubuntu Action Group facilitated the demonstration to 25 delegates from several SADC countries (South Africa, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mauritius, Lesotho) and also Italy, in the use of innovative and low-cost citizen science tools recently developed for improved integrated water resources management. IWRM and Ethics Action Group trained citizens in South Africa, Botswana and Tunisia on how to use the low cost hydrogen sulphide test kits for monitoring faecal coliforms in water.

- **Demonstration of existing (adapted) or new solutions**, enabled by the AfriAlliance Online Platform, where the Action Groups can share their experiences and results of these consultations.

Thematic knowledge co-creation

Co-creation of knowledge is not only about sharing and exchanging existing knowledge and experiences but also about developing new knowledge and perspectives. In the context of the AfriAlliance project, co-creation of knowledge was achieved through the creation of communities of practice (CoPs), which are groups of people who share a common interest or concern, and who engage in knowledge sharing activities (meetings, events, conferences etc).

- **Employee salaries**
- **Overhead costs (secretarial support, personal computers, renting of office space etc.)**
- **Costs related to the elaboration of reports layouts and designs.**
- **Employee salaries**
- **Laboratory activities.**

To incentivise the Action Groups to develop their activities to come together and to build a community around a particular theme of their choosing, they were provided with seed funding.

- **The concept of seed funding is not to cover the entirety of the costs of the Action Groups but to incentivise the Action Groups to leverage this funding with other larger funding, it is the initial funding used to bring participants together.**

- **The key principles of the seed funding were**
  - All 10 Action Groups was supported equally with the same amount of funding
  - The seed funding was administered by the Action Group Leader.
  - The AfriAlliance project partners who participated in an Action Group, their activities were financed via their existing AfriAlliance budget. They were not eligible to receive Action Group Funding.

- **The seed funding was to be used to directly support the activities of the Action Group**

- **The types of activities that the seed funding covered and those that did not cover was as follows: Eligible:**
  - Thematic knowledge co-creation by bringing participants together.
  - Demonstration/piloting/field testing of existing (adapted) or new solutions.
  - Development and/or implementation of innovative business models/tools.

- **Implementation of effective communication strategies including knowledge sharing activities (meetings, events, conferences etc).** Not eligible:
  - Overhead costs (secretarial support, personal computers, renting of office space etc.).
  - Costs related to the elaboration of reports layouts and designs.
  - Employee salaries
  - Laboratory activities.

Based on the Acidic Aquifers labs initiative securing water for development, AAA AG started to co-develop, test, share and compare with farmers and other relevant stakeholders a set of methodologies to create a reliable and sustainable source of water for agriculture in three arid and semi-arid regions of South-Saharan Africa.

- **Implementation of unique or innovative communication strategies:** The AfriAlliance Action Group developed stories of Change reports regarding regional experiences of the field visits that were organised throughout the Action Group activities. Delegates attending the AFRESH II workshop were taken on an excursion to interact and exchange ideas first-hand with the highly successful Enviro-Champs operating in Mopomopheni, KwaZulu-Natal as part of the Ubuntu Action Group. The Enviro-Champs demonstrated the use of GeoODK, an innovative open source smart phone app that has been customised to collect, store and manage geo-referenced information, helping them to bring about necessary action and change.

- **Knowledge sharing/capacity development activities** (meetings, events, conferences, etc.). The SIARAF Action Group held community meetings, where they gathered and shared knowledge with local farming communities in Ghana and Burkina Faso, including different types of stakeholders, to feed the results into a number of policy and development dialogues in these countries. The P4D Action Group held two of the workshops that was facilitated by irrigation officers and Agriculture Extension Agents (AEAs).

Methodology 2: SMART Network Governance

While Competence Coordination focuses on the individual members of the group, the SMART Network coordination is about managing the activities of the group as a whole. The methodology of SMART Network Coordination developed under the project SMART-Net details activities of the Network in this case the Action Group can be effectively and efficiently coordinated between members and other Action Groups. The SoWat Action Group showed an example of this type of governance in closing the gap between science, technology and policy with a focus on community needs and demands. They further adapted this approach by including a participatory management methodology in order for local users to easily manage the proposed and adapted NBSs.