The Network for Natural Gums and Resins in Africa (NGARA): Status and Way Forward

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1.0 Background

- Idea for regional network for producers and stakeholders was conceived 1995 after an FAO study (TCP/RAF/4557) to review the production, quality and markets of gum arabic in Africa;
  - Africa – adequate resources of Acacia senegal to satisfy market demand but was losing to synthetics due to lack of coordination and competition between/among producing countries.
- Regional conference 1997 Nairobi for producing countries and partners on Conservation, Management and Utilisation of plant gums, resins and essential oils.
- In 2000 – NGARA established in a follow up workshop in Nairobi. 10 countries and 4 partners. Currently there are 15 members countries.

- NGARA Members Countries

  Burkina Faso, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda
2.0 Mission and Objectives

**Mission**
To position African producer countries and partners as major global players in the production, processing and marketing of gums and resins.

**Objectives**
- To promote exchange of information on production, processing, quality control and marketing to enhance the participation of member countries in international trade.
- To facilitate access to technological development and training in all areas of gum/resin business.
- To support relevant research in key areas of the sector.
- To promote strong links among primary producers, processors and end users.
3.0 NGARA Projects

3.1 Activities Related to FAO Funded Projects

FAO Principal partner; nurtured the establishment & strengthening of NGARA through 2 projects:

3.1.1 TCP/RAF/2914 “Strengthening the Production and Quality Control of Gums and Resins in Africa”; Sept ’03 – June ‘06;

Focus: Improving capacity of producing countries in coordinating their potential to get increased benefits from gums and resins through strengthening of national and regional networking.

Countries: All 14 NGARA member countries

Achievements:

✓ Strengthening of the Secretariat and Establishment of Network Structure in 14 member countries
✓ Generation and Exchange of Information
✓ Development of Training materials and Capacity Building
✓ Resource Assessment and Mapping
3.1.2 GTFS/RAF/387/ITA “Acacia Operation Project

3.2 OTHER NGARA PROGRAMS

3.2.1 NGARA/NORTHERN SOMALIA PROGRAM
Goal: Development of Aromatic Resins and Commercial Gums in Northern Somalia (Somaliland & Puntland)

Funding: FAO (Special Emergency Program Services (TCES) of FAO Somalia

Country: Northern Somalia (Somaliland & Puntland)

Approach: Enhance commercial production of aromatic resins, commercial gums and improve the livelihoods of selected rural communities in Somaliland and Puntland
Achievements: Appraisal, mapping and inventory of the aromatic resins & gum producing species completed. Currently piloting development of Myrrh and Frankincense for selected communities in Somaliland through formation of producer associations, capacity building, linking to markets and development of infrastructure.

3.2.2 ACACIAGUM/NGARA

Goal: Scientific Research type project developed under overall coordination of CIRAD FORET entitled: Innovative management of Acacia senegal trees to improve resource productivity and gum arabic production in arid and semi-arid sub-Saharan Africa

The overall objective is to enhance the sustainable management and use of natural Acacia senegal tree resources thereby supporting the environment and livelihoods in arid and semi-arid sub-Saharan Africa.

Funding: EU INCODEV from July 2007 – June 2011

Countries: Cameroon, Kenya, Niger and Senegal
**Approach:** Unique North & South Approach involving European & African partners. 6 objectives elaborated into 6 Work Packages (WP). NGARA taking lead role in WP6 on Information & Tech. Transfer

**Achievements:**

The participating scientists, including MSc and PhD students, have collaborated and conducted research in understanding aspects of tree physiology, genetic control, tree soil interactions on gum quality and yield with so far promising results which are being disseminated through different appropriate pathways.
3.2.3 Development of Gum Arabic, Aloe & Allied dryland Resources in Karamoja Region, Uganda

✓ Initiative of H.E President through the AGOA – empower local people, improve livelihood from Natural Resources and mitigate insecurity

✓ July 2006 – March 2008;
  - Resource Identification, Mapping & Inventory
  - Currently – supporting marketing (market intelligence) & value addition and capacity building
Goal: Sub-sector situational analysis of Gum acacia in supporting poverty reduction, household livelihoods and food security in S. Sudan

Funding: SNV/Government of Southern Sudan/FAO

Country: Southern Sudan

Approach:
A rapid gum sub-sector analysis focusing on three states namely: Upper Nile State (UNS), North Barh El Ghazal State (NBEGS) and Eastern Equatoria State (EES).

Achievements: A multi stakeholders’ workshop was held in July 2009 to share the results of the study. A more detailed resource assessment and mapping study supported by FAO was undertaken in May 2010 and a probability map showing gum resources of Southern Sudan was produced.
3.2.5 **NGARA/IGAD - Formulating a strategy for production, value addition and marketing of products from the ASALs of IGAD member countries**

- Organized and exhibited NWFPs from the ASALs at the Kenya Pastoral Week (Dec 2010)
- National Reports were developed by country experts selected from NGARA Experts Database on the status of NWFPs in each of the IGAD Member Countries
- NGARA in collaboration with IGAD developed a Compendium and Online Database for NWFPs
3.2.6 Linking Producing Communities to Markets

- Linking national, regional and international gum and resin buyers to communities and producer associations in member countries through emails and the ngara website.
- In July/August 2010 NGARA organized a fact finding mission for the Managing Director of a Brazilian company MILAGROS, the largest importer of gum resins in South America, to Kenya and Somaliland. The mission explored opportunities to buy myrrh and frankincense directly from producers and traders in both countries.
- MILGRAOS is now buying frankincense directly from traders in Hargeisa. In addition they are currently investigating using frankincense from Kenyan Boswellia spp for use in perfumery of church furniture with a hope to buy directly from Kenyan traders.
4.0 Other NGARA activities

Promoting exchange of information

- NGARA Information made available nationally, regionally and internationally through emails, enquiries on NGARA website (www.ngara.org), visits to the Secretariat office and telephone calls
- NGARA represented at various national, regional and international fora
- Updating and maintenance of NGARA website
- Collaboration with the Marketing News Service of the ITC, Geneva
  Providing information for production of Quarterly edition bulletins for gum arabic and gum resins
5.0 Lessons learnt and Challenges

- Communication and exchange of information and experiences among NGARA member countries and partners has been enhanced and increased collaboration between Anglophone & Francophone countries. However communication between focal points and Secretariat has not been efficient as expected partly because of insufficient feedback from focal points. Effective National Focal Points required.

- Synergies with related programs, NGOs, CBOs, private sector, international organizations and local institutions facilitate an integrated approach in intervention areas and need to be established and strengthened. However the different approaches need to harmonized.

- Establishment of Producer associations is a major strategy to empower rural communities to meaningfully participate in trade and marketing of dryland commodities as well as sustainability manage their environment. National associations should also be established or strengthened to develop national policy on the management of these resources and develop markets to improve benefit sharing and stabilize supply and market prices.

- Adequate resources need to be mobilized to implement programs in member countries and expand and upscale existing programs.
6.0 Way Forward

- Restructure **NGARA** to **NEFOLA** (Network of Forest Livelihoods in Africa) to broaden the mandate to include other forest commodities impacting on the livelihoods of communities in line with requests from stakeholders.
- Continue seeking collaboration with other partners and strengthen synergies and complementarities with ongoing initiatives in the region.
- Support regional cooperation through information generation, exchange and dissemination and networking between and among member countries.
- Strengthen the commercialization of dryland commodities through:
  - Access to micro credit and markets
  - Reliability of supply
  - Consistent quality
  - Value addition
  - Detailed value chain analysis to streamline trade chains
  - Capacity building (entrepreneurship and sound post harvest and harvesting technologies)
- Enhance the capacity of local producers in member countries.
- Undertake research for sustainable resource management for optimal production of yield and quality.
THANK YOU

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