



## **Strengthening the Gum Arabic Sector for Sustainable and Resilient Landscapes and Livelihoods of Women and Youth in Africa's Drylands**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to approximately 926 million people with most of the area classified as dryland where about 50% of the population lives. The greatest challenge facing the drylands is desertification brought about by an interplay of factors including population growth (average population growth rate for Africa is 2.4%), rural poverty, market and policy failures, poor policies, unsustainable agriculture and over-exploitation of natural resources, among others. Climate change is aggravating the problem of desertification affecting livelihoods of the rural farming and pastoral communities in these areas. Women and youth make up a large number of poor people in the drylands that are highly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods and are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by climate change.

Forests are among the most important natural assets found in the drylands with plant resources that are well adapted to the harsh conditions that can contribute to adaptation and mitigation to climate change and hence sustainable development of the areas, if well managed. Among the forest resources are trees of *Acacia senegal* and *A. seyal*, which play an important role in the farming systems in many parts of dryland Africa, acting as natural barriers against expanding desertification and providing fodder for the animals in critical dry and drought periods. These forests and trees sequester huge amounts of carbon and therefore contribute to mitigation of climate change. The tree species are also adapted to the harsh climatic conditions prevailing in the areas and will definitely survive the vagaries of climate change, thereby providing opportunities for adaptation. Additionally, they provide important environmental services like water conservation, erosion control, habitats for plants and wildlife (Biodiversity) and soil fertility improvement.

Of greater significance however, these tree resources produce gum Arabic, one of the most useful commodities most sought after in the food and pharmaceutical industries internationally. Gum Arabic is one of the commodities, which is produced during dry seasons when most agricultural activities are not operational and therefore complementary in the farming cycle and is an alternative source of income that can be used to build resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change among vulnerable

communities in drylands. Africa supplies about 98% of the world requirement of Gum Arabic with a demand of about 150,000 MT though supplies have remained at about 80,000 MT. Sixteen countries from Sub-Saharan Africa are known to produce gum Arabic with the bulk coming from Sudan, Nigeria and Chad. The Gum Arabic sector is dominated by women, which underlines its value as an entry point in efforts to improve livelihoods of women though the monetary benefits are mainly captured by men (middle men and processors outside Africa).

However, the gum Arabic sector is experiencing various challenges that need to be addressed if the sector is to realize its real potential for growth and wealth of national economies and for the sustainable development of the forest landscapes in Africa in addition to building a green economy in support of SDGs and Africa Agenda 2063. Key among these include: inadequate technical capacity and business skills among actors for efficiency gains in gum Arabic value chains; lack of financial support; absence of or weak collaboration and networking with the private sector investors and/or microfinance institutions to provide startup funds; and weak organizational capacity of collector groups to foster cooperation and coordination in the collection of gums and resins as well as in trade. Additionally, there is urgent need for the development of value-adding technologies, identification and employment of right marketing strategies, building the required capacities, instituting and supporting legal procedures/frameworks, proper assessment of the resource base and market conditions. If all or most of these issues are addressed could uplift women and youth from poverty and generate business opportunities and wealth while contributing to conservation of the environment and mitigating effects of climate change.

## **2.0 Rationale and Purpose of the Work**

In recognition of the challenges facing the drylands and the opportunities inherent in the resources for sustainable development, the Second Drylands Week Conference held in Ndjamena, Chad in 2014 identified the sustainable production and marketing of gum Arabic as one of the ways of alleviating poverty in rural communities in Africa and contribute to sustainable development of land in the drylands. The workshop mandated the African Union Commission (AUC) to explore ways of putting together strong institutional mechanisms for better coordination of the production and trade in gum Arabic. The AUC reached out to its key partners, the FAO and the African Forest Forum (AFF) who in turn identified the Network for Natural Gums and Resins in Africa (NGARA) as a suitable institution in spearheading the development of the Gums and Resins sector considering its vast experience in this area. Under the FAO-TCP, NGARA worked closely with AUC, FAO and AFF to organize two regional workshops in Nairobi (August 2015) and Dakar (March 2016), which culminated in the publication of the NGARA Strategy: Overview and Framework of Priorities 2017-2030. The strategy was published with support from FAO and is a very valuable tool that will form the basis for driving the gums, resins and allied dryland resources and commodities for improving livelihoods and conservation of the environment, especially with the advent of Climate Change. FAO has secured some funds to support implementation of the NGARA

strategy in member countries and signed a letter of Agreement (LOA). This study is therefore the first step in the implementation process.

### **3.0 Tasks to be Carried Out**

Under the supervision of NGARA, the experts will;

- i. Carry out a review of the gum Arabic producing areas (including species supported by photos, production and productivity, conservation/management status), potential areas of production and related landscapes (including existing maps) for further resource assessment in updating the existing maps and identify restoration needs,
- ii. Identify and profile Gum Arabic produced by different species in the country (supported by samples and photos),
- iii. Identify and describe the roles of key players in gum Arabic business including benefit sharing & volumes traded along the value chain. Highlight the role of women/youth/disadvantaged groups and recommend strategies for empowerment.
- iv. Assess the existing capacity in the gum Arabic sector in terms of value addition and markets in the countries, highlighting issues, opportunities and challenges
- v. Analyze needs and opportunities from the business sector perspective: from where they are getting the material: Quality, Quantity, Consistency and the market opportunities. Characterize the status and perspectives of gum Arabic markets (domestic, trans-boundary/Africa, international) and opportunities for its expansion. Particular attention will be given to the diagnostic of the European private sector strategy for supplying in Africa and opportunities for its involvement in quality improvement approach and resource sustainable management and livelihoods through labeling.
- vi. Review Programmes/projects/ activities of key actors involved in the management of the resource, production, processing and trade of Gum Arabic in selected countries. This review will include the ongoing changes and upgrading operated or planned in a 5 years perspective in light of NDC planning and donor initiatives as Great Green Wall
- vii. Carry out a review of existing national policies and institutional frameworks relevant to gum Arabic in your country, identify gaps and recommend appropriate policies, regulations and institutional frameworks.

### **4.0 Expected Deliverables**

Each national expert will be expected to deliver the following at end of the study period;

- i. A report of about 40 pages on the stipulated tasks
- ii. A report of about 15 pages on strengthening relevant institutional framework at country level with proper coordination at national and regional levels

### **5.0 Qualifications and Skills of the Experts**

- i. Be a scientist with proven knowledge and experience in forestry or related natural resources development in Africa;
- ii. Have experience in forest resource assessment tools and methods;

- iii. Have a master's degree in any of the following areas: forestry, natural resources management, environmental issues or any related area;
- iv. Excellent written and oral communication skills in English for Anglophone countries (Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Sudan) and French for Francophone countries (Chad, Mali and Senegal).
- v. A good knowledge of NGARA will be an added advantage

## **6.0 Application Requirements**

The applicant shall submit the following:

- i. Cover letter stating how the above requirements are met;
- ii. A brief proposal/concept note containing:
  - a. key results area and corresponding specific activities;
  - b. draft work plan (clear deliverables plotted against work weeks for each key results); and
- iii. Curriculum vitae.

## **7.0 Duration**

The work, including field work and reporting by national experts, is expected to be carried out in a period of two-person months, spread over a period of three calendar months.

## **8.0 Datelines**

- i. Applications must be received by the NGARA Secretariat before October 4, 2019.
- ii. The successful applicant will be informed by October 14, 2019.

## **9.0 Application Requirements**

All applications must be submitted by e-mail with the subject line: “ Strengthening the Gum Arabic Sector for Sustainable and Resilient Landscapes and Livelihoods of Women and Youth in Africa’s Drylands” to Dr Ben Chikamai (benchikamai@ngara.org),(bnchikamai@gmail.com) and Maisharou Abdou (maisharou.abdou2015@gmail.com) and copied to info@ngara.org