The Africa Regional Collaborative Platform Opportunity and Issue-based Coalitions and Task Forces 2022 Annual Report

TF 2 - Africa Regional knowledge management hub

Driven by the UN SG's recommendation # 2 on institutionalizing and strengthening knowledge management to support the achievement of the SDGs in Africa, the work of Task Force 2 (TF 2) in 2022 focused on two flagship initiatives: i.) Development and operationalization of knowledge hubs, and ii.) Development and operationalization of cross-agency expertise location tool and Communities of Practice (CoP) platform.

Flagship Initiative 1: Development and operationalization of online knowledge hubs

Key Strategic Output 1: African Knowledge Management Hub (AKMH), ensuring integration, interoperability, visibility, and accessibility to Africa regional UNDS knowledge assets.

Activities:

- Concept note of the AKMH developed and approved;
- Regional Repositories identified through survey to be mapped to the hub;
- Content definition and architectural design completed;
- Technological application and standards identified, design template selected and tested;
- Beta version under development.

Key Strategic Output 2: COVID-19 hub (https://knowledge.uneca.org/covid19/), acting as a one-stop-shop for data and information resources relevant to the impact and response to the pandemic in Africa.

Activities

- Developed in an open-source environment under Drupal 8.0, the COVID-19 hub was migrated to Drupal 9.0, with new features and functions integrated;
- An estimated 5.760 knowledge resources (data, publications, news, stories, multimedia, blog post) were captured online, collated, and published in 2022 for the updating of the hub;
- Cumulative usage statistics captured by Google analytics indicate an increase from 5355 users in November 2021 to 30,849 users, in the same period in 2022;
- The COVID-19 hub was nominated and won the WSIS 2022 prize as a Champion project in the AL C11 category: International and regional cooperation: https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/stocktaking/Prizes/2022/Champions?jts=SJDAB6&idx=12&page=18#start

Flagship Initiative 2: Development and operationalization of cross-agency expertise location tool and Communities of Practice (CoP) platform.

Strategic Output 3: Expertise locating tool, facilitating the mapping and identification of expertise across the SDGs, OIBCs thematic areas as well as countries of expertise across the region.

Activities

- Technical Requirements Analysis (RAD), architectural design, and content definition refined and updated;
- Expertise database developed using .NET technologies with backend of MSSQL server, is hosted on Microsoft Azure, fully tested, and secured against any security vulnerabilities;
- New functionalities and features (agencies, OIBCs, Communities of Practice, publications, resources, job opportunities, etc.) integrated and improved;
- Expertise database operational, hosted, and accessible online via: https://expertise.africakm.un.org/;
- Of an expected total of 3.000 experts working across the R-UNDS, the records of 150 experts uniquely from ECA have been captured, and close to 300 experts have been invited to create their profiles, and a strategy is gradually formulated to populate the database;
- Further development of the architectural design and integration of new functions is in progress.

Strategic Output 4: Peer-to-peer knowledge facilitation and networking service to promote discussion and collaboration on issues of common interest to the UNDS.

Activities

- Concept note and architectural design completed, and technological solution and standards identified;
- Platform built in an open-source environment, under Flarum (https://flarum.org/), a next-generation software, which offers innovative and customizable features;
- Key features include discussion and knowledge sharing forum (communities) for the eight OIBCs and one Taskforce; events management calendar; browse menus presenting OIBCs constituent, discussion posts, shared files, and blogs; link to OIBCs expertise database; and a resource gateway to other knowledge Management platforms developed by the UN African regional Knowledge management task Team;
- Platform fully developed, tested, and secured against any security vulnerabilities, hosted and temporarily accessible online via: https://discourse.uneca.org/akmh/public/**);**
- Usage statistics include: 08 communities (discussion forums) created, 13 discussions started, I84 users, and 46 posts;
- Populating by the creation of profiles of OIBC members and further development of new features and functions is in progress.

<u>Challenges</u>

Key challenges faced by Task force #2 in the achievement of its flagship initiatives include:

- Currently due to a lack of Secretariat—wide policy, guidelines, and regulation, the participation by the UNDS entities is poor and only of the willing entities;

- Finalising a single sign-up interoperable option for the Expertise database, CoP platform, and other platforms developed by the African UN Knowledge Management Task Team;

- Compliance with the requirements of the UN Secretariat related to official website domain naming, including translation into a second language of the Secretariat;

- Need for fundings to engage services/expertise needed to achieve planned results in a timely manner;

- Assumptions that the members of the OIBCs should deliver on the Regional KM Hub activities above the assigned duties which requires 200% of staff time.

- A consential agreement on the definitation of the Experise Repository and what information is required. This will facilitate the appropriate functionality development of the Expertise Repository.

Further challenges specific to each of the strategic outputs include:

1. **UN Africa Knowledge Management Hub (AKMH):**

   - The main challenge is the mobilization of the R-UNDS agencies to effectively contribute to the development of the platform and to share their resources.

2. **UN Africa COVID-19 hub:**

   - Decline in the availability of updated and relevant resources online related to the impact and response to COVID-19 across the continent, due to a gradual shift of attention from the pandemic to other emerging societal issues and research concerns.

3. **UN Expertise Database:**

   - Absent of a governance structure to mandate and facilitate participation by all entities of the region and in obtaining personal data of experts across UN agencies to populate the database;
   - Expertise database is not officially launched. Making it difficult to engage agencies to share their existing expertise database for compilation and interoperability, to upload the profile of their experts, or to get experts registered by themselves.

4. **Communities of Practice (CoP) Platform:**

   - Difficulties in obtaining personal data of experts across UN agencies and engaging members of the various OIBCs to create their profiles to populate the discussion forums (communities);
   - CoP platform is not officially launched. Making it difficult to onboard and engage members of OIBCs and Task forces in a network for knowledge facilitation and sharing to achieve the SDGs;
   - Need to appoint moderators of the various OIBC communities.

- Use of the CoP by the OIBC as a means of engagement, collaboration, discussions etc. to facilitate the centralized capturing of the tacit knowledge currently in the several media of engagement such as emails, virtual meeting.

Key Suggestions

To enable Task force # 2 to realize its flagship initiatives and outputs, and in order for these investments to be of benefit, the Chairpersons of the RCP and other stakeholders need to:

1. Understand the resource requirements (Financial and HR) for the development and maintenance of the strategic knowledge outputs, so as to ensure that the sharing of resources is distributed equitably across agencies, and avoid overburdening of the enthusiastic entities;

2. Identification, acquisition, and use of emerging information technologies needed to federate disparate knowledge assets, and common standards in documentation and information management, to support interoperability of the different regional rosters and knowledge platforms, is absolutely necessary. A concept note can be developed;

3. Secretariat-wide discussions and agreement to a common understanding of the knowledge requirements for the development of the AKMH.. Currently, there is a lack of consential principles, design, modality of implementation that drives the development of the strategic knowledge outputs of the Hub. across the regions, concerning the principles, design, modality of implementation, and synergies;

4. Personnel data (Expertise) is very sensitive and a consensus by all entities on the type of information, level of information to be shared, and the mandating of all the entities of the regional UNDS participating is necessary to operationalize the platforms.

5. Modality of ensuring that all UNDS agencies are participating equitably in all aspects of the the development of the AKMH including resourcing, meetings, etc.