



## Forest and Farm Facility

### Mid-Year Country Experience Sharing

Virtual FFF Facilitators Meeting, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021

#### 1) Introduction – David Kaimowitz

David welcomed everyone to the meeting and handed over to Sophie and Jhony who moderated the session. All countries, except Gambia, were represented today.

#### 2) FFPO's experience of COVID-19

##### a) Ghana – Mark Kebo (deputising for Elvis Kuudaar)

The health situation in Ghana is calming with 1% of the population vaccinated. However, COVID-19 has caused major disruption to GhaFFaP's supply chain and it has been difficult to undertake farming activities. Restrictions to movement have also caused major disruption to labour. On the plus side, COVID-19 has made FFPOs think more about social protection.

##### b) Kenya – Kisoyan Philip

Kenya has just had its third wave of COVID-19 and it has caused challenges, although things are improving now. People are getting used to the 'new normal'. A positive outcome is that the pandemic has increased the use of mobile phones and technology to access markets and supplies.

##### c) Madagascar – Andry Rakoto

Madagascar is just opening up after its third lockdown. The pandemic has limited commercialization and producers have been unable to go to the city to access fertiliser and pesticide. To address this, facilitators have been helping producers to make compost and organic pesticide. By supporting them to learn new practices, producers have been able to continue producing vegetables and cereals.

##### d) Tanzania – Geoffrey Bakanga

Tanzania joined FFF in the middle of last year during the pandemic which was a real challenge. It has been difficult to conduct monitoring of FFF programmes because of all the COVID-19 restrictions.

##### e) Togo – Issifou Aboudoumisamilou (written submission)

COVID-19 has affected agriculture and forestry in particular. Producers have had low yields due to difficulty accessing seeds and fertilizers. There have been challenges with non-recovery of loans and increased food prices. On a positive note, FFPOs have increased their use of ICT for distribution and marketing.

**f) Zambia – Vincent Ziba**

Zambia is now in its third wave of COVID-19 with associated restrictions. The pandemic has had a negative effect on group-working as people are scared of catching COVID-19 and some FPPO leaders have died from the virus. There has been an increase in the use of traditional medicine by FPPOs as a cure or preventative measure for the disease. On the plus side, there has been an increase in use of mobile money by FPPOs to assist and improve trade and to deliver products without physical contact.

**g) Viet Nam – Thang Pham**

Viet Nam is in its fourth wave of the disease. The final solution will be vaccines, but sadly there is a severe vaccine shortage in the country. Children did not go to school. It was impossible to organize meetings.

**h) Nepal – Racchya Shah**

Nepal is experiencing its second wave of COVID-19 which is much worse than the first with major restrictions on movement. Despite limitations on activities and production, producer groups have continued with their plantations and farming activities. Community forestry and farming groups have been supporting local government to provide services on the frontline. At a local level, forest and farm groups have been learning how to use online platforms (like Facebook) to market their produce and ICT skills have been strengthened.

**i) Bolivia – Boris Fernandez**

Now in its third COVID-19 wave, five of the nine provinces in Bolivia are experiencing severe restrictions. Three of FFF's producer organisations have had to almost stop operations and grant-processing is very slow because of COVID-19. As a result of the pandemic, there has been an increase in the importation of illegal food and this has had a negative effect on the economy of producer organisations.

**j) Ecuador – Virginia Vallejo**

The situation in Ecuador is very difficult. They have been trying to support FPPOs with their logistics chains, commercialization and financial mechanisms. Compliance with biosecurity measures (such as face masks) has been poor with many producers not fully appreciating the importance of them.

**k) Liberia – Florence Malorbah Dorley**

COVID-19 has adversely affected livelihood activities. Protocols are being closely observed by producers and partners, but COVID-19 is on the rise again and most programme staff are teleworking.

### 3) Highlights/activities progressing in your country

#### a) Ghana – Mark Kebo (deputising for Elvis Kuudaar)

GhaFFaP have just launched their 10 year roadmap in Accra last week. They have been planning this strategy for the past year and a half. As a result of the launch, there has been an increase in offers of collaboration with the World Cocoa Foundation and Groundswell International both reaching out.

GhaFFaP is working closely with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection on social protection schemes.

The Ghanaese government has recently launched its Green Ghana Initiative to regreen the whole country, which aligns with GhaFFaP's 10 year plan.

#### b) Kenya – Kisoyan Philip

Slow start of the activities this year due to the lockdown. But now they are up and running. They have done a call for proposals and submitted 6 LoAs for review and are recruiting a Project Assistant to support implementation. There are 17 LoAs ongoing from last year and these need to be monitored to check if they have been fully implemented.

A challenge is delays in getting LoAs signed off – this is delaying progress.

Big highlights: the Nyandarua Tree Growers Association becomes a Marketing Cooperative which will be officially launched this Friday.

#### c) Madagascar – Andry Rakoto

Supporting the government's vision to cover Madagascar in trees, FFPOs planted 300 hectares of trees in the field during January and February 2021.

7 LoAs have been signed with 4 partners including the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Women Platform. FFF now works in seven of the 22 regions of Madagascar. Negotiations with three new partners are ongoing. Beginning of July the LoAs will be signed.

Challenges include COVID-19 and renewing LoAs each year. The process is very heavy and obliges to start in some cases the activities before the LoA has been signed.

#### d) Tanzania – Geoffrey Bakanga

Tanzania Growing Association is a promising model for the production of charcoal which is also helping to conserve natural forests.

#### e) Togo – Issifou Aboudoumisamilou (written submission)

FFPOs in Togo have launched an Action Plan on Family Farming, a reforestation campaign and increased awareness of ecosystem restoration. This action supports AFR100 and the government's 2020-25 roadmap which pledges to plant one million seedlings and to increase forest cover to 25%.

FFPOs are holding a big event on June 17<sup>th</sup> which is World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

**f) Zambia – Vincent Ziba**

FFF has been successful in promoting a sustainable charcoal value chain.

A new field office from ZNFCA has been set up in Choma which is supporting FFPOs to report and plan.

The Choma's tree nursery Association in Choma has increased incomes and employment of youths.

LoAs have been signed with women's groups which have helped them diversify their income and build more climate-resilient livelihoods.

There have been two major challenges. There have been delays in accessing funds and in communications because LoAs are directly with government. These bureaucratic processes have presented a real obstacle. There have also been issues relating to FFPO internal governance which have diverted time and energy away from the implementation of FFF core works.

**g) Viet Nam – Thang Pham**

VNFU is implementing 2 LoAs. They are also supporting cooperatives to prepare small grant applications for 2021.

Advisory committee meetings and FFF planning meetings have had to be postponed because of COVID-19. Work plans are being reviewed in light of COVID-19.

**h) Nepal – Racchya Shah**

Nine LoAs are currently in operation – five are closing, two are being drafted, two are ongoing.

They are supporting groups to apply for small grants.

They are also supporting producers with online follow up of market analysis, business plans and providing coaching.

They have been focusing on national level webinars with FECOFUN.

**i) Bolivia – Boris Fernandez**

They are working with government on a new national strategy for Family Farming. The programme will receive US\$ 60-80 million a year.

A key challenge is to finalise LoAs – three have almost come to a halt and two are experiencing severe delays.

They have been providing support for producers who have applied for direct beneficiary grants. Following the call for proposals, 23 were submitted; 13 were pre-selected by the national advisory committee and 6 have been put forward. Boris is helping these producers with their applications but this is proving challenging as face-to-face meetings are not possible because of COVID-19.

**j) Ecuador – Virginia Vallejo**

7 LoAs of the second call of proposals (2020) have been implemented.

Third call of proposals (2021) is ongoing. In this call, the operations of the FFF will be in three regions Amazon (provinces: Napo and Orellana), “Sierra”(Provinces: Imbabura, Cotopaxi, Tungurahua and Chimborazo) and Coastal (Province: Manabi) and at national level

The main challenge at a national level is the transition to a new government.

**k) Liberia – Florence Malorbah Dorley**

2 LoAs have been signed with the Farmers Union of Liberia and the National Charcoal Union of Liberia. A key challenge is that they cannot meet the 300 producers in the field because of COVID-19 and that training numbers have had to be restricted to 20 because of the pandemic. Business incubation training is being provided by the Farmers Union business and finance team. FUN is supporting now the Cashew famers to organize themselves.

**4) General discussion**

- **Duncan MacQueen, IIED** suggested that when countries (such as Nepal) are supporting small grant applications they encourage applications in a region along a theme eg distilling essential oils, paper production etc. as it makes sense to encourage a critical mass of a certain type of connected project, rather than lots of unrelated ones.

He also welcomed the fact that there are many high-level tree-planting efforts ongoing and suggested the need to support politicians to think of how to turn tree-planting into viable business through strong local organisations.

- **Anna Bolin, IIED** asked if any FPPOs were engaged in any country’s COVID recovery plans (recognising that many countries are still in the midst of the pandemic). Mark gave the example of the stimulus package in Ghana requested for by GhaFFaP.
- **Sophie Grouwels, FFF** wanted to know more about FPPO’s involvement in negotiating with the Bolivian government on the Family Farming programme. This experience would be useful to share with Togo.
- **Racchya Shah, Nepal** wanted to know how to customize calls for proposals (DBGs) and what would add value
- **Vincent Ziba, Zambia** asked about governance training and if anyone had good experience of supporting FPPOs that were having challenges with leadership and accountability and if anyone could recommend good tools to use. Thang suggested holding training events so people could use these skills; Sophie suggested the OCSAT tool which Ghana has used successfully and which can quickly help identify gaps and risks; Jhony suggested speaking to Tanzania about this.

## 5) Conclusion

David Kaimowitz summed up the meeting in the following 6 points:

- 1) It had been **great to hear from everyone** and a good use of our time to learn from each other
- 2) It has been a good reminder that we are still in the middle of a **pandemic** that is still very much affecting our activities and will most likely affect activities into 2021. It has created some opportunities, such as social protection and new markets, but overall has made our work more difficult, so we must be patient
- 3) Several frustrations have been shared today about **administrative difficulties, bureaucracy and delays around LoA slow procedures** which create extra work for all of you. This is not something that is easily fixed but we are grateful for everyone's patience and hard work.
- 4) In spite of COVID-19 and these bureaucratic challenges, every single country shared great **success stories** and real progresses, which is really inspiring!
- 5) Although there were some examples of **gender balance** (Madagascar and Zambia), we would like to see more on that.
- 6) The **mid-term evaluation of FFF** is complete and will be shared with facilitators by 30 June. The input provided by facilitators has been very useful and is appreciated. The management response to the evaluation is being drafted and will be shared on 29 June with AgriCord/IUCN/IIED; with the Donor Support Group on 8 July; and with the Steering Committee on 15 July. After we have also received input from the country facilitators, we will discuss with you how best to implement the response.