



16th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
4-6 May 2021, Virtual Conference Format

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AEWA AFRICAN INITIATIVE

Introduction

This report covers the activities of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat regarding the coordination and implementation of the AEWA African Initiative (AI) including the related AEWA Plan of Action for Africa (PoAA) 2019-2027 for the period of November 2019 to March 2021.

Daily routine activities of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat which contribute towards the implementation of the African Initiative are not specifically mentioned in this report. Fundraising efforts relating to the AI and collaboration with partners are described in each relevant section below, rather than in a separate section.

1. Coordination of the AEWA African Initiative

1.1. AEWA African Initiative Unit

The AEWA African Initiative Unit based within the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat maintained one Associate Programme Officer (P-2 Officer) and one Programme Assistant (G5) and is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the AEWA African Initiative. The AEWA core budget 2019-2021 approved by Resolution 7.12 allocates 50% of the funding required for both positions while an additional 50% (P-2) and 30% (G-5) had to be provided through voluntary financial contributions, in order to be able to maintain the two AI positions at the required minimum level of 100% full-time (P2) and 80% part-time (G5).

During the current reporting period, providing the two AI positions at this minimum operational level (i.e. 100% P2 and 80% G5) proved challenging, but was made possible thanks to the generous voluntary financial contributions received from the European Commission (in 2018 and 2020) and from the Governments of Luxembourg (in 2019 and 2020), Germany (in 2019), Switzerland (in 2019) and United Kingdom (2019 and 2021). These contributed to supplementing both positions up to the current level of functioning. In addition, in August 2020, the AEWA Standing Committee approved the reversal of funds from the AEWA 2020 core travel budget line to the staff budget line for both AI positions, to urgently supplement both positions during that period. This was possible due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions which prevented use of the AEWA core budget travel allocation in 2020. While the AEWA Secretariat continues fund-raise in this regard, it is worth noting that significant effort and time are invested to secure voluntary contributions required to supplement both African Initiative positions at the current operational level (100% P2 and 80% G5 staff) and the Secretariat hopes for more sustainable solutions for the future funding of these positions.

1.2. Technical Support Unit

The Technical Support Unit (TSU), a multi-disciplinary team of experts offered by the Government of France, continues to provide technical support to the African Range States in various areas of waterbird conservation.

In June 2020, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat participated in the 4th Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting of the RESSOURCE Project. The project is a joint initiative of several institutions (including the TSU) and funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) and the European Union (EU) through the SWM Programme, among others and aims to improve the management of natural resources, especially waterbirds, in some major Sahelian wetlands in Africa (Chad, Egypt, Mali, Senegal and Sudan). Section 2.6 of the current report details some follow-up actions resulting from this PSC meeting.

1.3. Sub-Regional Focal Point Coordinators

Based on the revised Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the AEWA Sub-Regional Focal Point Coordinators (SRFPCs) in Africa¹, adopted through Resolution 7.1, new SRFPCs have been confirmed and are in place for four out of the five sub-regions in Africa since MOP7 (i.e. Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western Africa²). As per the revised ToRs, the nominated AEWA Standing Committee (StC) regional representatives/alternates for these four regions by default assumed the role of SRFPC. For the Central African sub-region which has no regional representative/alternate on the AEWA Standing Committee, the Secretariat has been in close contact with the NFPs of the sub-region to guide and facilitate the process of nominating a SRFPC. Feedback is however still awaited from the sub-region in this regard.

2. Implementation of the AEWA African Initiative and Plan of Action for Africa

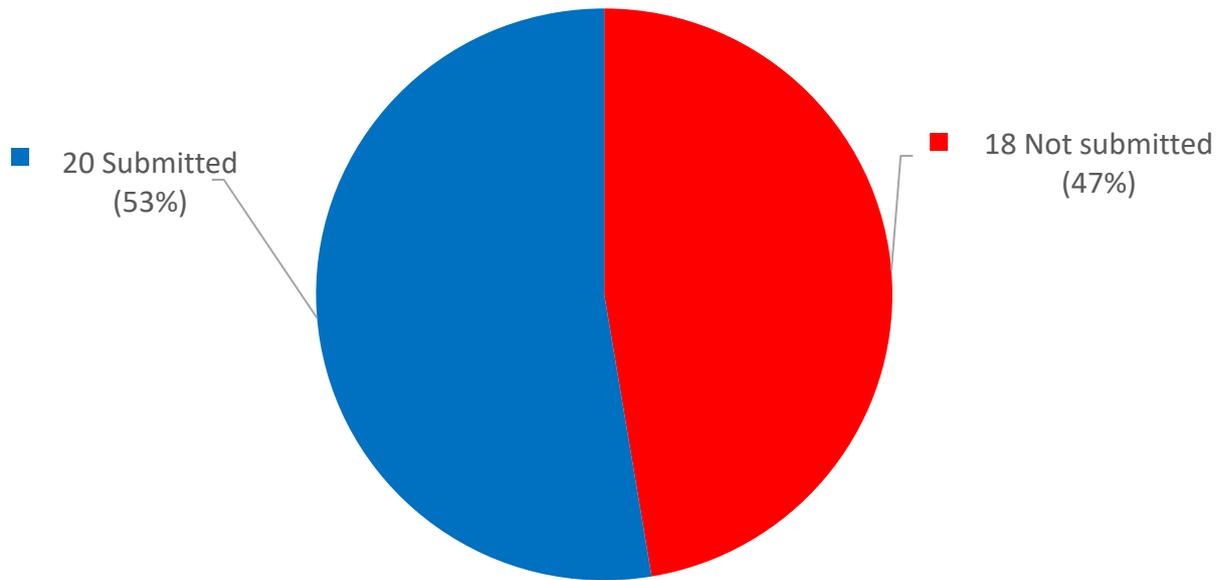
2.1. Reporting on the implementation of the AEWA PoAA 2019-2027

Resolution 7.1 of MOP7 instructed the Standing Committee, working with the Technical Committee and the Secretariat, to establish a module on the implementation of the AEWA PoAA 2019-2027 in the national report format and to integrate the module in time for the reporting cycle to MOP8. The draft template for the AEWA PoAA reporting module for the period of 2019-2020 (for the purpose of reporting to MOP8) was prepared by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat. It was then reviewed by the AEWA Technical Committee in September 2020, as well as by the AEWA Standing Committee in October 2020, with the latter approving the development of the online PoAA module for reporting to AEWA MOP8 based on the approved PoAA reporting template. The developed online PoAA module was rolled out in December 2020 for the purpose of reporting MOP8, with the submission deadline of 7 February 2021 in line with Resolution 7.1 (i.e. 240 days before the opening date of MOP8). By the submission deadline of 7 February, only 5 out of 38 expected PoAA reports had been submitted in the online system, equivalent to a 13% submission rate. As such, the submission deadline was extended initially to 19 February 2021 and eventually to 24 March 2021 (the latter being the cut-off date after which PoAA reports were extracted from the Online Reporting System to initiate the analysis). During this extension period, the Secretariat provided substantive comments on some 15 reports that had been submitted in due time to benefit from such advisory services, with the aim to improve the quality of the reports. By the cut-off date of 24 March 2021, 20 out of the expected 38 reports had been submitted/re-submitted, resulting in a **53% submission rate** for this first ever reporting cycle for the AEWA PoAA. The contractual and substantive processes for the analysis of the reports has been initiated with UNEP-WCMC, and the analysis has been made possible thanks to a voluntary financial contribution from the United Kingdom.

¹ AEWA SRFPCs: https://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/uploads/tor_srfpc_adoptedmop7_en.pdf

² http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/activities/african_initiative/poa_for_africa_ai/srfpc_coordinators

Rate of submission of AEWA PoAA Reports to MOP8 as at 24 March 2021



Meanwhile in the period of January 2021, the AEWA Secretariat prepared the draft template for reporting on the AEWA PoAA over the period of 2021-2023 for the purpose of developing the PoAA reporting module to AEWA MOP9. This draft was submitted to the 16th meeting of the AEWA Technical Committee (TC) in January 2021 for review and comments. A revised draft of this document has been shared on the AEWA TC workspace for further comments as recommended by the TC16 meeting and a final revised draft will be submitted to the 16th meeting of the AEWA Standing Committee in May 2021.

2.2. Species conservation and monitoring

White-winged Flufftail: In the framework of a project funded under the European Commission (EC) Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) Thematic Programme Cooperation Agreement with UNEP (valid for the period of 2015-2020 and recently extended to 2021), and with co-funding from the United Kingdom over the period of 2019-2021, the Secretariat, in collaboration with BirdLife South Africa and the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), has been conducting activities to promote Community-based conservation and sustainable use of the Berga wetland in Ethiopia as well as its designation as a Protected Area under national legislation. To this end, a supplementary assessment of the upper Berga Floodplain as recommended by the 3rd meeting of the White-winged Flufftail International Working Group (November 2019, in Dullstroom, South Africa, permitted the development of a draft Community Based Management Framework Document, with input from key partners. This activity aims to guide the sustainable use and management of the Upper Berga Floodplain with the involvement of the local communities, while contributing to safeguarding the site as a suitable breeding habitat for the White-winged Flufftail. Furthermore, activities aimed at promoting the designation of the Berga Wetland as a Protected Area under were initiated by EWCA in March 2020 but met with limited progress due to the COVID-19 related restrictions. Activities under this project continue with a multi-stakeholder consultation workshop planned for July 2021 with the aim to review, consolidate and approve the draft Community Based Conservation Programme for the Upper Berga floodplain.

Slaty Egret: In the framework of a recently approved EC-GPGC funded project for the period of 2020-2023, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has initiated activities to organise the first meeting of the AEWA Slaty Egret

International Working Group, which is scheduled to take place in end-2021 or early 2022. The Government of Botswana (working in close collaboration with BirdLife Botswana), has confirmed hosting of this meeting. The Slaty Egret IWG meeting will be complemented by two seed-grant funded projects aimed at supporting implementation of the Slaty Egret International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) in key range states.

Northern Bald Ibis: Also, under the EC-GPGC 2020-2023 project, funds have been allocated for a feasibility assessment of the Northern Bald Ibis reintroduction in Algeria as well as to implement other priority activities from the 2017-2020 implementation plan for the specie.

Lesser Flamingo: The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has been collaborating with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) in the framework of their Bio-Bridge Initiative (BBI), to support the transfer of knowledge and expertise to local experts in Senegal and Mauritania on satellite tagging and ringing of Lesser Flamingos, and subsequent monitoring of their spatial and temporal distribution in breeding and non-breeding sites. The project is being implemented in collaboration with Senegal Directorate of National Parks (DPN) and the French-based research institute, Tour du Valat. Under this project, four satellite transmitters have been acquired. Meanwhile, the theoretical training and field expedition for capturing and tagging of the birds which was initially scheduled for December 2020 has been rescheduled for a second time for November 2021, due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Benguela Coastal Seabirds: The AEWA AI Programme Assistant supported with the organization of a virtual [Benguela Current Forage Fish Workshop \(November 2020\)](#), hosted by the Government of South Africa and facilitated by the AEWA Secretariat as well as [1st meeting of the AEWA Benguela Coastal Seabirds IWG \(March 2021\)](#). Both meetings were made possible thanks to financial contributions secured from the Government of the United Kingdom over the period of 2019-2021. Details on these workshops are available in document AEWA StC 16.5.

Madagascar Pond-heron: Through a recently approved grant from the United Kingdom to support the implementation of the AEWA African Initiative over the period of January to June 2021, funds have been allocated to support the implementation of the Madagascar Pond Heron ISSAP in Madagascar. The project activities aim to prospect two potential breeding and foraging sites for the species in Madagascar, assess the status of the sites and promote sustainable, community-based use and management of one of the sites.

2.3. Operation of the AEWA Small Grants Fund (SGF)

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat monitored and provided guidance towards the implementation of the last ongoing SGF projects from the 2014 and 2015 project cycles, as well as provided support towards all required administrative and technical processes. In 2019, three SGF projects from the 2015 cycle were completed (in Kenya³, Nigeria and Zimbabwe) as well as one from the 2014 project cycle (in Côte d'Ivoire). This brought to a successful completion all ongoing AEWA SGF projects.

With no funding earmarked in the AEWA Core Budget towards SGF projects since 2016 and no voluntary contributions received to this end, no additional SGF project cycle has been launched by the Secretariat during the current reporting period. In February 2021, the substance and layout of the [AEWA SGF website](#) was however updated to better portray the outcomes of all SGF-funded projects and facilitate access to these.

³ <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/aewa-sgf-contributes-increased-capacity-conservation-rift-valley-lakes-kenya>

2.4. Expanding membership to AEWA in Africa

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat continued to promote the accession of new Contracting Parties, with a focus on the Central and Southern African regions, as well as on Portuguese-speaking African countries, where major gaps in membership to AEWA in Africa have been identified.

During the current reporting period, Central African Republic joined AEWA on 1 January 2019⁴ while Malawi became Party no. 80 to AEWA on 1 September 2019⁵.

The Secretariat worked closely with other non-Party African Range States to support and facilitate accession, including Angola, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Zambia, while significant progress was registered in the following:

- **Cameroon:** where the decree on accession was signed by the President in July 2019 and the instrument of accession deposited for his signature in November 2019;
- **Angola:** where the request for accession to AEWA was submitted to the National Assembly in October 2019.

2.5. Capacity-Building and CEPA in Africa

Training

In follow-up on the AEWA Flyway Training of Trainers course which was conducted for 44 experts from 18 francophone West and Central African countries and regional wildlife training institutions, (Benin, May 2019)⁶, a survey was conducted in February 2020 to assess dissemination of the knowledge and skills gained at national level, given that this was considered the main means of ensuring the sustainability of the regional flyway ToT courses. Based on this survey, out of the 18 countries represented at the Benin Flyway ToT course, seven countries reported having conducted follow-up national training courses. Meanwhile, in other countries, other methods/means of sharing/using the knowledge and skills gained were applied, including restitution information sessions, awareness campaigns, conduct of related field activities (such as waterbird monitoring), information sessions at education institutions or incorporation of flyway conservation in educational curricula. Details on the reported follow-up national ToT courses can be found here: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/aewa-training-trainers-flyway-conservation>

In the framework of the 2020-2023 EC GPGC funded project, the AEWA Secretariat has initiated preparations for a similar flyway ToT course, targeting experts from the African Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Madagascar and scheduled for the second quarter of 2022. Also under the same EC GPGC funded project, the Secretariat will deliver dedicated training on National Reporting for some African Contracting Parties in 2023, in view of reporting to AEWA MOP9.

Communication

In response to the request from the African Contracting Parties for a professional and vibrant layout for the Plan of Action for Africa in order to make it appealing and user-friendly for the wide range of stakeholders involved in its implementation, the Secretariat produced a new [layout⁷ for the PoAA 2019-2027](#), which was published in June 2020. A generous financial contribution was received from the government of Germany in

⁴ Accession of Central African Republic to AEWA: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/central-african-republic-accedes-aewa-party-no-78>

⁵ Accession of Malawi to AEWA: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/malawi-%E2%80%93-party-no-80-aewa>

⁶ AEWA Benin ToT workshop: [AEWA Flyway Training of Trainers course which was conducted for 44 experts from 18 francophone West and Central African countries and regional wildlife training institutions, \(Benin, May 2019\)](#)

⁷ New PoAA layout: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/fresh-layout-aewa-plan-action-africa>

November 2020 to support printing of this document, which is now available as hard copies, in both French and English language.

Furthermore, to better communicate to the wide range of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the AEWA African Initiative, the content and layout of the [AEWA African Initiative web pages](#)⁸ were updated in July 2020.

Public awareness

In October 2020, the AEWA Executive Secretary and the Coordinator for the AEWA African Initiative (AI Coordinator), took part in a Webinar organized by BirdLife International to commemorate World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) 2020 along the East Atlantic Flyway. The Webinar, entitled “[Birds connect people along the East Atlantic Flyway](#)”⁹ brought together a number of national BirdLife partners from across the flyway, and attracted over 100 participants.

Also in October 2020, in relation to the 2020 WMBD celebration, the AI Coordinator attended a Webinar organised by the Association “Les Amies des Oiseaux” in Tunisia, in collaboration with the Forestry Department, which permitted sharing information on the country’s achievements in relation to the conservation of critical sites for migratory waterbirds for the benefit of a wide range of participants.

2.6. Partnership

In November 2019, the AEWA AI Coordinator participated at the CMS African Pre-COP13 session which took place in Bonn, Germany. During the Pre-COP13, side meetings were held with African representatives to discuss various AEWA-related issues and promote accession in the case of non-Party range states, e.g. Angola, Benin, Cabo Verde, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. This also served as an opportunity to distribute AEWA MOP8 proceedings to these countries.

In December 2019, the AEWA AI Coordinator represented the Secretariat at workshop (in Zeist, the Netherlands) aimed at developing a proposal which was submitted to the International Climate Initiative (IKI) for a project entitled “Climate Resilience for Critical Sites for Migratory Birds and People along the East Atlantic Flyway” (in short, “Climate Resilient East Atlantic Flyway”). The workshop was organized by the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, in collaboration with Vogelbescherming (the Dutch BirdLife Partner). The AEWA Secretariat was retained as a political project partner, taking into account the useful intergovernmental framework and policy mandate for migratory waterbird conservation as well as its established network of Focal Points, experts and partners in the flyway. Delivering priorities of the AEWA PoAA in the framework of such a project have been prioritised, with emphasis on providing support to key African countries along the East Atlantic Flyway. In December 2020, the project outline was selected by the IKI Secretariat for the second phase of the concept development. In follow-up, in March 2021 the AI Coordinator participated in a virtual meeting of the project stakeholders, organised by the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat. This meeting aimed at providing responses to the comments and suggestions from the IKI Secretariat aimed at further developing the project proposal.

In January 2020, the AEWA AI Coordinator participated at the 8th Programme Steering Committee Meeting for the EC GPGC/ENRTP¹⁰ corporation agreements with UNEP. This resulted in the formal confirmation of

⁸ Updated AEWA African Initiative web pages: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/activities/africaninitiative>

⁹ WMBD webinar: <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/news/east-atlantic-flyway-webinar-held-mark-world-migratory-bird-day>

¹⁰ Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy

funding for the AEWA GPGC funded project which will span over the period of 2020-2023 and includes capacity building activities (training on National Reporting and SIDS flyway ToT course) and species conservation activities (supporting the implementation of the Slaty Egret and Northern Bald Ibis ISSAPs).

In June 2020, the AEWA Executive Secretary and AI Coordinator participated at the virtual 4th Steering Committee (PSC) meeting for the RESSOURCE Project. This permitted taking stock of the project outputs and planning activities for the rest of the project implementation, which had been extended up to December 2021. In follow up from the PSC meeting, the AI Coordinator attended a July 2020 briefing session on an information service portal developed for the Senegal River Delta waterbird observatory. The tool combines various data types and sources (e.g. from waterbird monitoring, global observatory systems, land use and land allocation in wetlands, etc.) from different institutions which agree to bring the data together for common/shared goals. Recommendations were provided to make the data available to a wider range of stakeholders as well as consider input/sharing of data with existing waterbird-related data portals such as the Critical Sites Network Tool and Globe Wetlands Africa Toolbox. Also, in follow-up to the PSC meeting, input was provided for the further development of the compliance-related component of the RESSOURCE project, to better reflect AEWA-related compliance indicators aimed at assessing compliance at national level.

In November 2020, the AEWA AI Coordinator undertook an interview in view of contributing towards the development and organisation of an [online training course on Multilateral Environmental Agreements](#). This was organized by the UNEP Law Division team at the Centre for Governance and Sustainability of the University of Massachusetts Boston. In follow-up, in December 2020, the AEWA AI Coordinator attended one of the online MEA course sessions, partaking in a panel discussion with representatives from other MEA Secretariats, to respond to questions from the course participants.