



AFRICAN SOCIETY
OF ASSOCIATION
EXECUTIVES

AFRICAN ASSOCIATION LANDSCAPE

The Capacity Project:
Scoping Out African Associations' Potential



Prepared by:
Ms. Mercy Cheronó

GainingEdge Scholar 2018
Learning, Building and Contributing to the Future

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
OBJECTIVE	1
HOW WE GATHERED THIS INFORMATION?	1
WHAT DID THE RESPONDENTS SAY?	2
AFRICAN ASSOCIATIONS' CHALLENGES	4
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ASSOCIATION EXECES ON OVERCOMING CHALLENGES	5
SUCCESS STORIES	7
METHODOLOGY	8
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	10

INTRODUCTION

The African Society of Association Executives invited its members and other association executives from the African continent to participate in a survey seeking to discover the current capacity of African associations and identify impactful solutions with a focus on using training as a means to enhance the growth of the associations.

The findings from the survey indicate that association members join associations for professional development, education and training. Some of the challenges African associations face include funding, inability

to meet regularly, poor governance and management of associations. Training was identified as one of the key ways in which African associations can harness their maximum potential.

The survey also shares a few success stories from different African associations. Members would like to see their associations undertake more capacity-building activities on the continent in the form of more member events and further developed networking.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the research study was:

- To identify new potential member associations from countries throughout Africa.
- To develop market intelligence on African association meetings which will help AfSAE attract more supplier members/sponsors.
- To scope out the current capacity of African associations and identify the key challenges they are facing.
- To recommend training priorities that will help AfSAE members address challenges and develop stronger capacities for themselves which in turn affects their association members.

HOW WE GATHERED THIS INFORMATION?



The first phase of the project involved a Google search where 1252 new African associations were identified and added to the database. We then collected responses from the African association executives (both members and non-members of AfSAE), through an online survey and live interviews during the Associations Workshop at Meetings Africa. Majority of the respondents were from non-profits in Africa, with more than 75% of the respondents having been part of their association for 5 or more years.

WHAT DID THE RESPONDENTS SAY?

Belonging to an association is very important and beneficial to individuals. Association executives from Africa shared their personal reasons for joining associations as:

- Education, training and development
- To support, promote and develop their industry in their country and the region
- through supporting national policy advocacy.
- Knowledge sharing where many association members get ideas and gain knowledge of industry best practices from their peers.
- Networking with other industry professionals
- Access to e-resources
- Professional growth and networking

Respondents were also asked their opinion on what they like/value most about their association. Association executives were of the opinion that association culture, impact, knowledge sharing and membership development is of great value to them.



Association Culture

Jamie Notter defines culture as: “the collection of words, actions, thoughts, and ‘stuff’ that clarifies and reinforces what a company (or in our case association) truly values.” The culture that exists within an association is particularly important in encouraging more people to be members of the association.

“We are like one big family, learning from one another, sharing in one another’s joys and griefs, being there for one another and growing together in our profession.”

__Survey Respondent

Association Impact

The survey revealed that association execs in Africa highly value the impact their association has on individual members as well as on their communities, especially in addressing socio-economic issues and challenges, and the resulting national and regional footprints.

“We assist small and medium sized enterprises to grow their businesses.”

__Survey Respondent



Knowledge Sharing

Association members value updates on relevant industry information, innovations, trends, benchmarked best practices as well as contemporary issues facing their sector.

“Exchanging ideas of how to improve small stock, how to commercialize the small stock so that it benefits the small farmers.”

__Survey Respondent

Association Programs

Respondents highlighted the value of association meetings, events and international conferences which are instrumental in networking, knowledge sharing and capacity development of association members. The respondents also pointed out the importance of youth participation and involvement in association programs and activities.

“The fact that we have young people in grassroots finding solution to issues they did not create.”

__Survey Respondent

AFRICAN ASSOCIATIONS' CHALLENGES

01 FINANCE

According to respondents, most African associations have challenges in obtaining funds to finance their projects and planned programs, expand their operations, to plan and host conferences/congresses for their members: the greatest challenge being obtaining external sources of funds and sponsorships.

02 INABILITY TO HOST AND HOLD MEMBER MEETINGS, AS WELL AS ATTENDANCE OF INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

Especially for Pan-African associations, it is often difficult for the associations to plan events (meetings, webinars, congresses, conferences, seminars, workshops). This challenge is particularly visible in mobilizing association members and other audiences to attend conferences and limits the frequency in which association members meet.

03 TRAINING

In relation to the inability to host and hold regular associations events for their members, African associations are as a result, unable to effectively train their members. Events hosted by associations are critical in training/educating members on new practices, products and technology in the industry. Respondents also highlighted that they struggle to get quality speakers for their events and often lack skilled professionals to train their members during conferences, workshops and seminars.

04 ASSOCIATION GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Poor performance by board members and the association management is one of the greatest challenges facing African associations. Some respondents also highlighted the presence of conflicts in their associations, especially for regional associations. African associations also encounter challenges resulting from language barriers due to Anglophone and Francophone countries. Respondents also highlighted that they face challenges in recruiting and maintaining volunteers.

05 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Respondents shared their difficulties in collaborating with government which has proved hard since many African governments do not understand the critical role that associations play in contribution toward the development agenda, and the inter-relation between what the associations do and what government does. Association execs feels that there should be policies favorable to the growth and strengthening of associations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ASSOCIATION EXECES ON OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

01 TRAINING

Association executives highlighted the need for training through meetings, webinars, congresses, conferences, seminars, workshops; as a way of improving their technical and professional skills. Respondents also cited the need to earn Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points which will help them record their growth as industry professionals. This affirms ASAE's Power of A campaign, which highlights that associations are "the primary source of post-college education". The respondents pointed out the following key training priorities that will help AfSAE members address challenges and develop stronger capacities for themselves and their association members:

TRAINING PRIORITIES



02 IMPROVED ASSOCIATION GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Respondents shared on the need to have proper structures and strategies put in place for the associations. Some association executives also suggested that incentives can be given to the board. To solve a lot of association governance issues, association executives recommend engaging the services of a consultant, who have the skill and expertise to help associations run their activities. Furthermore, association executives shared that it is important to restructure their secretariats and to increase the staffing of the secretariat for good and effective communication/liaison with association members.

03 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Association executives across Africa identified the need to develop linkages and partnerships with national government as well as local authorities. Mutual collaboration would help both the associations and government to have a wider reach and attain their objectives. Strategic partnerships will also help associations to amplify their voices in advocacy and contribution towards policy and the development agenda, as well as help the associations to be more competitive in giving Return-On-Investment (ROI) to their members.

04 FUNDRAISING AND FINANCE MODELS

It is a struggle for many African associations to acquire sustainable financial support for their programs and activities, therefore, they require a diverse range of funding mechanisms. Respondents highlighted the need to encourage regular financial contributions from members as well as secure medium and long-term sponsorships.

05 YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Respondents articulated the need to engage more youth in association activities which involves sharing of power, valuing the ideas, strengths, skills, perspectives and contributions of young people.

06 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In order to have quality performance, it is imperative for African associations to have the right leaders for their associations. This starts with selecting the right board for the association, based on relevant qualifications, skills and experience. Association executives also recommend that the board, which forms the executive, should elect competent committees for the various association programs.

07 MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Respondents proposed that new members need orientation which goes a long way in helping new members learn more about the association, and as a result, contribute positively to the association. Association executives stressed the need for regular meeting rotation across different countries for regional/continental associations to help the local associations to get exposure through interaction with a diverse range of people. Respondents also expressed the need for the expanded use, quality and diversity of events to help achieve association goals.

SUCCESS STORIES



Despite the challenges facing them, some African associations still manage to rise above the odds. Our respondents shared the following successes, which showcase the potential that can be harnessed among African Associations:

Conducting training courses across the region

"We managed to do regional anesthesia courses this year and to have a very successful Conference."

_Survey Respondent

Hosting a successful conference with limited funding as well as an international conference with 1000 delegates.

"We have a number of success stories but the most recent is being able to organize our congress in Cape Town, South Africa with just a little funding coming in. At a point, we almost gave up but persevered until we were able to see it through. Members had to fund a lot of things by themselves and that accounted for a fewer number of people making it to Cape Town. Nevertheless, the ambiance was great, the learning good and a great congress at the end of it all."

_Survey Respondent

"Hosting an international IAIA conference with 1000 delegates."

_Survey Respondent

Contribution to industry knowledge in the continent and providing an engagement platform for association members and industry stakeholders.

"Providing a platform for beekeepers and honey industry stakeholders to share experiences and new information / technology in beekeeping and honey industry."

_Survey Respondent

METHODOLOGY

PHASE 1 Building the current AfSAE database

First, research was conducted to build the AfSAE database. This involved the identification of new potential members and updating and expanding information on existing members where we identified 1252 new associations and their respective association executives, and added this new data onto the already existing AfSAE database.



PHASE 2 The Capacity Study

Informal interviews at Meetings Africa

Live interviews were conducted with random African association executives present during the Associations Workshop at Meetings Africa 2018. The various ideas and issues arising from the conversations with the association executives informed the questions on the survey.

Online surveys using self-completion questionnaires

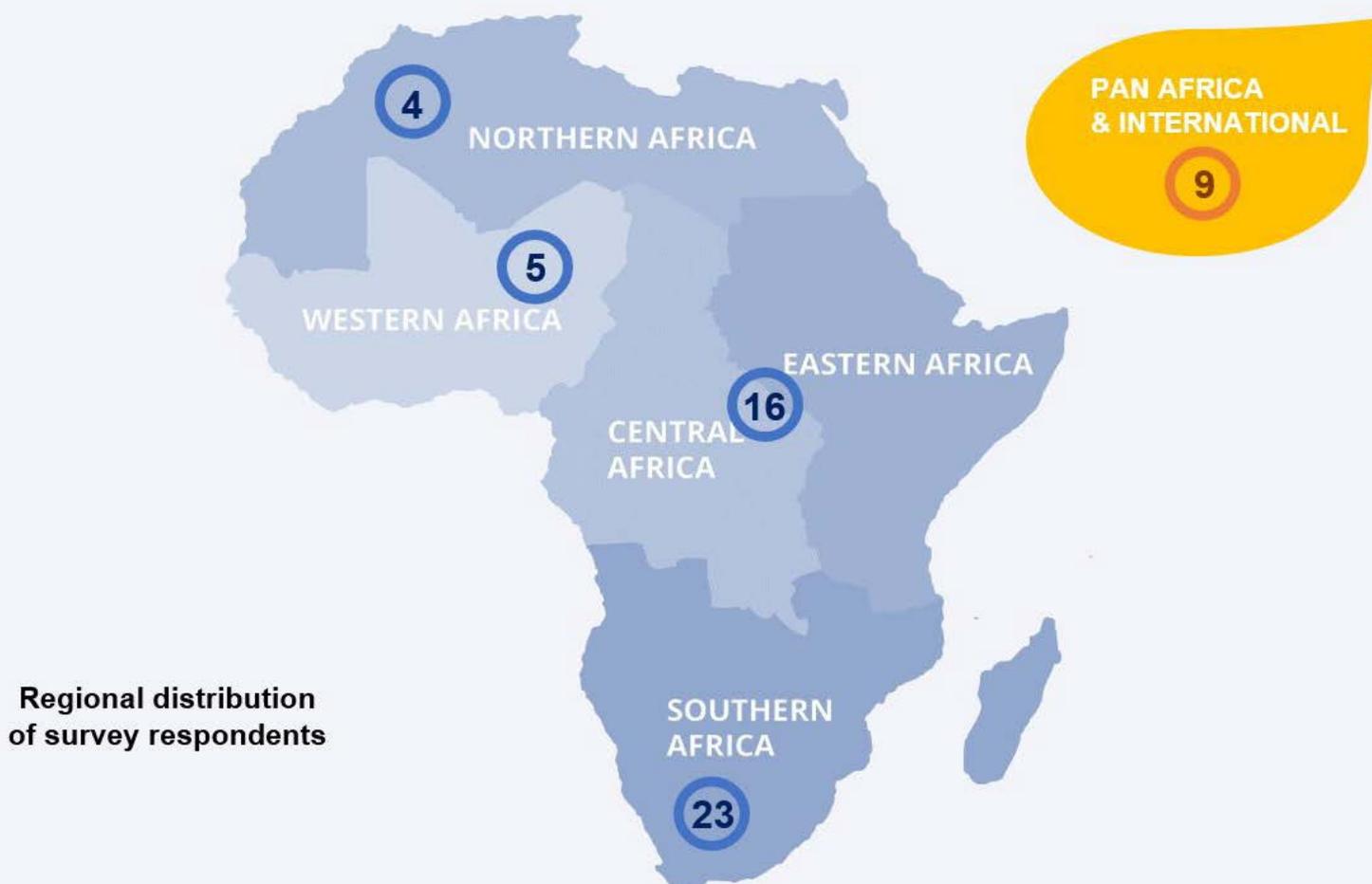
A 25-question survey was sent out to all the African association executives in the updated AfSAE database. The data was collected between May and October 2018. The questions were designed to capture respondents' opinions on key African association issues and were thus organized into three main thematic sections:

- **Association Effectiveness** – where we asked African association executives about what their association excels in most and what is their greatest challenge to accomplish, and if their associations' activities were aligned to their vision, mission, goals, policies, procedures, and guidelines. We also enquired from the respondents about their current capacity and training needs (how often they hold meetings, workshops, seminars, trainings, attendance, finance and who facilitates).
- **Association Leadership/Management** – where we asked association executives if newly elected board members in their association receive adequate orientation to their role and what is expected of them. We also asked the association executives to highlight their most significant contribution to the association. This was a crucial section since strong association leadership/management is a key driver of association success.
- **Association Improvement** – where we asked African association executives if their associations provided a good platform for raising problems and to suggest changes that would help their association reach its optimum growth potential. We asked them to rate, on a scale of 1-10, their association's performance in relation to the mission statement, core values and vision statement to actual operational achievements.

As a follow up to the first survey, a 6-question survey was conducted at the ICCA Meetings Africa Association day 2019, to identify specific training needs for African Associations. 47 African association executives gave recommendations on the training areas most relevant to their associations and to AfSAE.

The results shared in the survey are based on responses from a total of 58 African Association Executives from across Africa. Here is the regional breakdown:

REGION	NO. OF ASSOCIATIONS
Northern Africa	4
Eastern and Central Africa	16
Western Africa	5
Southern Africa	23
Pan African and International Associations	9



We hope that this report will provide meaningful insight to the associations industry, particularly to African Associations and that the recommendations given will help AfSAE members address challenges and develop stronger capacities for themselves and their association members.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



MERCY CHERONOO TOO

Mercy is one of the first beneficiaries of the GainingEdge Scholar Program. She recently completed her BSc. Events and Convention Management at the Technical University of Kenya, where she was an elected member of the student council as congress lady, School of Hospitality and Tourism Studies. She participated in this year's IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leaders Forum held at Meetings Africa. Mercy has been nominated for the Africa MICE Awards as the MICE Future Leader of the Year.

About the GainingEdge Scholar Program

Launched in 2018, the GainingEdge Scholar program is an extension of GainingEdge's CSR programs and part of the organization's commitment to the industry. The program recognizes the importance of providing meaningful work experiences to students who wish to pursue careers in the business events industry and who demonstrate outstanding potential for future industry leadership.

Every year GainingEdge selects one student to serve as the GainingEdge Scholar for that year and works with them to develop a project which will accomplish the following:

- Make a significant contribution to the industry
- Deliver a meaningful work/learning opportunity to the student
- Help the student to gain practical industry experience
- Provide a strong addition to the achievements section of the student's CV
- Connect the student to an industry network that will help them pursue a successful career

- Destination marketing strategy
- Association consulting
- CVB establishment & support
- Convention centre developmet advisory
- In market sales representation

CONTACT US

Head Office MELBOURNE, Australia

T: +61 3 9502 0655
@: info@gainingedge.com

30A Eliza Street
Black Rock, VIC 3193
AUSTRALIA
visit www.gainingedge.com