
Final report

SIANI African Biochar Expert Group

Introduction

The SIANI African Biochar Expert Group was formed to identify, compile and disseminate knowledge on biochar in Africa. Considering that biochar is a relatively new field there is an immense hunger to learn more in the African countries. Challenging climate and difficult agricultural conditions make African researchers in agriculture quickly see the benefits and potentials of using biochar. This was made clear when the SIANI African Biochar Expert Group rapidly got the attention from organizations around Africa enabling us to fulfil the purpose of the group.

Completed activities

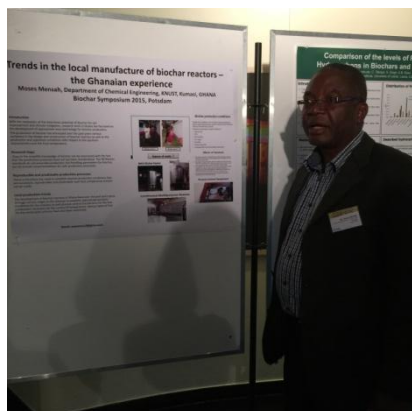
For Objective 1 - Network consolidation, promotion and extension

1. A steering committee with Cecilia Sundberg, Edward Yeboah, Kristina Røing de Nowina and Mattias Gustafsson was formed. During the project the committee has had 14 telephone meetings and continuous contact via e-mail. Notes are available for each of the 14 meetings.

2. An inception meeting to prepare a detailed activity plan and start the work was held adjacent to an International Biochar Conference in Potsdam, Germany, in May 2015. 6 members of the expert group, of which 4 were African, participated at the meeting. Several posters were presented and two oral presentations were given. The Potsdam meeting resulted in an activity plan for the continuation of the project, the basis for the communication plan and a stakeholder analysis for biochar activities in Africa.



3. An international biochar meeting was held in Milan, Italy, in June 2015. 5 members of the SIANI African Biochar Expert Group took part in the meeting. The meeting was a part of the international biochar conference Biochar Expo, which was a part of the world exhibit.



4. An international biochar meeting was arranged in Nairobi in March 2016 where 5 of the members of the expert group participated. Cecilia Sundberg and Nancy Karanja held oral presentations. The meeting included discussions on future deepened collaborations and further expanded the network with new contacts.

5. The expert group has established a collaboration with an Italian group who organized the Milan and Nairobi meetings. We have discussed opportunities of merging our network with theirs, but after the Nairobi meeting we decided to keep our network as an academic African biochar network in parallel to the now formalised African Biochar Partnership, which we will keep collaborating with and to which some of us are members.

6. We now have a contact list of 60 persons of which 39 are from 11 African countries. Thanks to the distribution of the group members contact information, new collaborations and contacts have been established. For example Edward Yeboah was invited as key note speaker to the annual meeting of the Nigerian Biochar Initiative.

7. We have information about the project on the SIANI website, <http://www.siani.se/expert-groups/african-biochar>. News items have been prepared for SIANI and the website has resulted in more members to the network. A part from the planned group meetings, members of the steering group have had separate meetings with researchers and NGOs in Stockholm and Uppsala, Sweden.

6. During the project we have written and distributed 2 newsletters sharing biochar projects and research in Africa between the group members leading to interactions. Thanks to the newsletters, the group members have gotten the knowledge about other biochar activities and participated at them.

7. We have monitored and evaluated our progress through monthly/regular telephone/skype meetings.

Activities for Objective 2: Identification and dissemination of expert knowledge on biochar

1. We have identified stakeholder groups for communication on biochar. This constitutes an important and useful support document for future biochar activities in Africa.
2. A text has been prepared on biochar and its potential impacts on poverty reduction in Africa intended for experts on agriculture. It is about to be submitted for publication. Lead authors: Yahia Mahmoud and Erik Karlton.
3. A position paper on biochar systems in Ghana is under preparation. A workshop for stakeholder involvement has been prepared. Lead authors: Edward Yeboah and Moses Mensah.

Other activities

- An application has been submitted in April 2014 to Swedish Research Links at the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet). It would finance the network for 3 years. Main applicant: Cecilia Sundberg. Co-applicants from Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria.

Use of funds

- Funds (250 000 SEK) have been used according to budget. The main budget posts are travelling, workshops/conference fees, administration and expert salaries.

Planned activities July-December 2016

- In addition to the two newsletters already distributed, we will write a third one. This aims to keep the network active and moving forward, thus preparing for the event of an extension.
- We will finalize the publication of prepared texts written during the project (see activities for Objective 2).
- Group members from Nigeria plan to prepare and disseminate a text on establishing a national biochar association, thus being an important result of the SIANI African Biochar Expert Group. (Writers: John Fabengro and Adenike Adejumo, Nigerian Biochar Initiative)
- The group will continue to explore opportunities for further financing of the network with the goal to continue what has been started and already resulted in an increase of networking between biochar activities in Africa.
- The steering group will hold a minimum of one meeting to sum up the work that has been done during the last years.

Best regards,

Steering group of the SIANI African Biochar Expert Group