



المنتدى العربي للبيئة والتنمية
ARAB FORUM FOR
ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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AFED Secretariat Annual Work Report 2014

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2014 was another challenging year for AFED, operating in a region facing a future shrouded with uncertainty. Amid escalating turmoil in more than half of its territory, AFED had to adhere to its mission to advance prudent environmental policies and action in the Arab countries, based on science and awareness. After all sorts of conflicts and wars, people will still need to preserve and develop the natural capital to drink, eat and breathe.

Due to the regional turmoil, not all 2014 targets could be fully implemented, especially those relating to fundraising. However, targets could be surpassed in other areas. Some milestones which stood out are:

- the unprecedented impact of AFED 2013 report on Sustainable Energy, which triggered positive debate, including at the UN General Assembly, leading in some cases to policy measures;
- the strong endorsement of AFED's Green Economy Initiative at GCC level;
- the support to AFED program from regional and international partners, including 3 organizations joining for the first time;
- the key AFED contribution to green economy transition at the national, regional and global levels;
- the breakthrough in environmental social media, whereby followers of AFEDmag facebook page increased from 100,000 to over 600,000 in one year, and visitors to AFEDmag portal reached 2 million per month.

Here is a summary of AFED's work in 2014:

Membership

- Six new institutional members joined in 2014, belonging to the Academic, Civil Society and Government/Observer sectors. Number of corporate members was maintained at the same level.

Seventh Annual Report and Conference

- AFED produced its seventh annual report on the State of Arab Environment, on the topic of Food Security. Over 70 authors, experts and reviewers contributed to the report. The consultation process was more comprehensive than previous years, involving all AFED community, especially the academic sector, and including external guest experts and policy makers. A regional consultation meeting on the report drafts was hosted by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, with the participation of 40 experts and officials from 14 countries and 21 organizations, along with the report's authors, and co-editors Dr. Abdulkarim Sadik, Senior Economic Advisor at Kuwait Fund, and Dr. Mahmoud El-Solh, Director General of ICARDA.
- The University of Petra is the Organizing Partner of the Seventh Annual conference in Amman this year, under the leadership of H.E. Dr. Adnan Badran who, with his team, have contributed immensely towards the preparations for the event, under the patronage of H.M. King Abdullah II. Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi has generously supported the conference as Official Partner.
- In addition to traditional partners, the 2014 report and conference attracted some new sponsors. The list in October included: Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences-KFAS and Islamic Development Bank-IDB, Alcazar Capital, Aramex, Averda, Crescent Petroleum, FP7, GE, and Petrofac. BankMed is sponsoring the Future Environment Leaders Forum (FELF).

Four major organizations have joined as partners: Arab Fund, Kuwait Fund, ESCWA, ICARDA and FAO. Researchers from many academic institutions contributed to the report, including Arabian Gulf University, American University of Beirut, Petra University and King Khaled University.

- The Food Security report is AFED's latest comprehensive independent study, using science to help inform and advance sound policies. Previous AFED reports were used during 2014 as key references in over 32 studies, reports and re-prints published by regional and international organizations, including UNEP, ESCWA, World Bank, the League of Arab States, Kuwait Development Fund, FAO, and in major journals.

Sustainable Energy

- AFED 2013 report on Sustainable Energy was presented at 12 major regional and international meetings, including: Global Energy Forum in Doha (October 2013), Energy Management Conference in Manama (Opening session, November 2013), Green Energy Council, Dubai (November 2014), Sustainable Building Conference, Cairo (November 2013), ESCWA Renewable Energy Conference, Rabat (December 2013), Arab Innovation Network, Amman (December 2013), Future Energy Summit, Abu Dhabi (January 2014), UN General Assembly, New York (February 2014), Gulf Energy Forum, Kuwait (April

2014), Chatham House Roundtable on Global Energy Policy Objectives, London (April 2014). The report and the debate which followed at the public and ministerial levels triggered major policy shifts in some countries, especially on the issue of phasing out subsidies. This reflected mainly in statements by Ministers of Energy in Oman, UAE and Kuwait, and by Minister of Water and Electricity and senior Aramco officials in Saudi Arabia.

Green Economy

- As part of AFED's Arab Green Economy Initiative, AFED's report on Green Economy was presented and discussed in 2014 at 12 regional and international meetings, and was used to develop green growth strategies across the Arab countries.
- AFED presented its perspective at a panel during the First Global Conference for Partnership on Green Economy, Dubai, March 2014.
- AFED was admitted as partner to the Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP), a coalition founded by OECD, UNEP and the World Bank, and stated contributing to GGKP work. Hussein Abaza and Ibrahim Abdelgelil are representing AFED on various GGKP working committees.
- The AFED Green Economy report lead-author Hussein Abaza led a team which prepared a strategy for transition to green economy in Egypt, presented in September for adoption by the government.
- The strongest official endorsement yet to AFED in GCC countries came at a regional meeting on Sustainable Development in October 2014 in Doha, hosted by Qatari Ministry of Planning in cooperation with GCC and Arab League Secretariats. Recommendations announced by the Qatari Minister of Planning called upon GCC countries to "implement AFED's Arab Green Economy Initiative, which facilitates the transition of the public and private sectors to more environmentally-friendly practices" and urged the "enforcement of mandatory regulations to ensure energy efficiency..."
- AFED's **Water Efficiency** Manual, part of the Green Economy Initiative, was printed in Arabic and English, in cooperation with AFED corporate member ACWA Power.
- AFED's handbook on **Energy Efficiency in Office Buildings** was presented and used in more than 18 events by AFED partners, mainly the EU-program MED-ENEC.

Regional and International Partners

- AFED made major contributions to 38 regional and international meetings and reports, in 10 cases as an organizing partner.
- AFED continues to execute its advisory role to the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), as part of its observer status with the League of Arab States (LAS). The improved situation in Cairo during 2014 enhanced the activity at LAS, with more participation by AFED in its events, represented by the Secretariat and assigned advisors.

- The Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP), a coalition among OECD, UNEP and the World Bank, admitted AFED as Knowledge Partner. GGKP said in a letter that “this was a due recognition of AFED’s extensive experience and leadership in promoting environmental policies and green economy throughout the Arab countries.”
- Strong relations were forged in 2014 with Arab Fund, Kuwait Fund, FAO, ESCWA, ICARDA, Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD).

Participation in Global and Regional Meetings

AFED was represented as speaker/panelist in several global and regional activities. Most important was the UN General Assembly, where the Secretary General was invited in February by the President to deliver an address on Energy and Water, based on the findings of AFED reports. Other major events included:

- Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, incorporating the 4th Annual Assembly of IRENA, the World Future Energy Summit, and the International Water Summit, Abu Dhabi, January.
- First Global Partnership for Action on Green Economy Conference, Dubai, March.
- Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development, Amman, April.
- Gulf Petroleum Forum, Kuwait, April.
- Senior-level Global Energy Roundtable, Chatham House, London, April.
- Regional UNEP workshop, Amman, May.
- Water and Armed Conflict high level roundtable, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Amman, September.
- Sustainable Development Options in the GCC, Ministry of Planning in Qatar and Arab League, Doha, October.
- Global Green Growth Forum (3GF), upon the invitation of the Danish Prime Minister, Copenhagen, October.

Environmental Education Program

- AFED’s environmental education program for schools, supported by a comprehensive handbook and website, expanded its reach to more schools in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan and Algeria.
- Awards for AFED school competition on Facebook were distributed to winners in various countries. In Beirut the event was combined with training teachers from winning schools. In the UAE, the award ceremony was organized with Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) and included a training seminar for teachers on using AFED environmental education manual.
- A new school competition has been launched, which involves the production of video clips on environmental themes, assigned every 4 months. Entries are being displayed on AFED-ecoschool portal.

Environmental Awareness

- The second year of **Al-Bia Wal-Tanmia (Environment & Development) magazine** as an official organ of AFED, after the publisher turned it over to the organization, witnessed major changes. A new modern look was developed for

the print version. The magazine started publishing bi-monthly starting as of January 2014. Sales of the magazine continued to drop, reflecting general trend in the paper publishing industry and the increasingly deteriorating situation in most Arab markets which comprise most readership. On average, sales to the public diminished by half. The level of institutional subscription has been maintained, including governments and schools. Advertising slipped by 80 percent. **The print version of the magazine is no more viable in commercial terms. The main role of the magazine now is serving as the voice of AFED, mainly for awareness and promotion**

- The **online portal**, which was created last year, continues to attract increasing visitors. It contains the complete archive of the magazine covering 19 years of operation, with daily news, updates and commentaries by top-notch writers. www.afedmag.com is the first comprehensive environmental online portal in Arabic. This compensated for the decline in hard copy circulation, mainly due to emerging reading trends and physical blockages in many Arab markets. Al-Bia Wal-Tanmia portal continues to attract millions of visits and hundreds of thousands of users. Promotion/advertising is until now mainly limited to AFED events.
- The magazine became available for 2 Ipad applications, through CedariKiosk and Nil wa Furat.
- The **Green Bulletin** is being published quarterly, in hard copy and online, and widely used at schools. In 2014 it received sponsorship from AVERDA and ROPME.
- Periodic environment pages are published monthly in cooperation with 14 leading newspapers in the Arab region. This bridges the loss of one month of the paper magazine. 2 newspapers from Morocco have joined in 2014.
- AFED documentaries were aired more than 300 times on national and regional networks in 2014.
- New documentary on Food Security, entitled “400 Million Mouths to Feed” has been produced, jointly with Future TV.
- AFED documentary on energy options, “Powering Arab Future”, which was launched in Sharjah on 28 October 2013, was aired more than 120 times on national and regional TV networks since its release. It is also available on Youtube.

Social Media

- AFED now hosts the largest Arab social environment community. The AFED-operated portals and social media pages have been developed, in addition to the AFED Youtube channel.
- Al-Bia Wal-Tanmia magazine’s portal (www.AFEDmag.com) and the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/afedmag) witnessed large popularity: 600,000 followers on Facebook (up from 100,000 in October 2013, and more than double the level anticipated).
- Visitors to the portal www.AFEDmag.com were between 1.1 million and 2.2 million per month, estimated to surpass 20 million throughout 2014.

Internship/Fellowship Program

- Future Environment Leaders Forum (FELF), AFED's short internship program in cooperation with member universities, hosted 40 senior students and fresh graduates in AFED 2013 annual conference in Sharjah. 40 students were invited as interns to AFED 2014 annual conference, from Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Egypt and UAE. Half come from Jordanian universities and half are supported by AFED.
- AFED provided internship posts at its offices to 2 students in 2014.
- 16 journalists were supported by AFED for its media fellowship program.
- AFED hosted a regional media training workshop in Sharjah on 27 October 2013. 16 media executives participated, from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia, Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt and France. Another media workshop coincides with AFED 2014 conference in Amman.