

SANKOFA



BATO MALAMU SANKOFA WATA-WATA

January-February 2019 #19

THEME

Procurement, Travel and Store Division as a lever for the success of the A.U.

INSIGHT

Fostering greater transparency and impact on the organization's operations

CASE STUDY

Enhancing Organizational Responsiveness

FOCUS

Ensuring sound resources management

AFRICAN CITIZENS

ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIVENESS

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Mrs. Rekia Mahamoudou
Ag. Director - Administration and Human Resources Management

In 2018, approximately 40% of the expenditures of the African Union Commission were handled by the Procurement, Travel and Store Division. From call for tenders for consultants in specific areas of expertise to the production of communication materials to promote the activities of various departments, through the purchase of medicines for the well-being of staff members and dependents, the Organization relies heavily on this Division for its operation.

Therefore, the performance of the Commission also depends on the efficiency of this team. The faster goods and services are procured, the larger the number of activities achieved in a year. The higher the quality of acquisitions, the better the chances to have a greater impact.

As a result, various activities have been carried out in recent years to improve the efficiency of this Division: the women and men of this team have not only made an extra effort, but have also been innovative and proactive while demonstrating transparency, critical thinking and professionalism at the same time. These qualities make the Division one of the critical cornerstones for transforming the African Union towards the Africa We Want.

This edition of SANKOFA aims at providing more information about the work of this Procurement, Travel and Store Division (PTSD). It also highlights the efforts made so far to improve this internal service while recognizing the women and men who, despite numerous difficulties, believe in the importance of their work and keep the African Union supply chain functioning and moving forward.

Enjoy your reading! ●

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"Bato Malamu Sankofa Wata-wata", is a combination of three African languages : Lingala (Bato Malamu - Good people), Asante Twi (Sankofa - return to the good history), and Hausa (Wata-wata - monthly).

AU Supply Chain figures



8,695

purchase orders were processed in 2018

The Average Procurement cycle-time has been reduced from 495 days in 2014 to

92

days in 2018



20⁺ **framework contracts**

were established in 2018

In 2018, the Store delivered

86,435

items to the Business Units



THEME

Procurement, Travel and Store Division: a lever for the success of the African Union

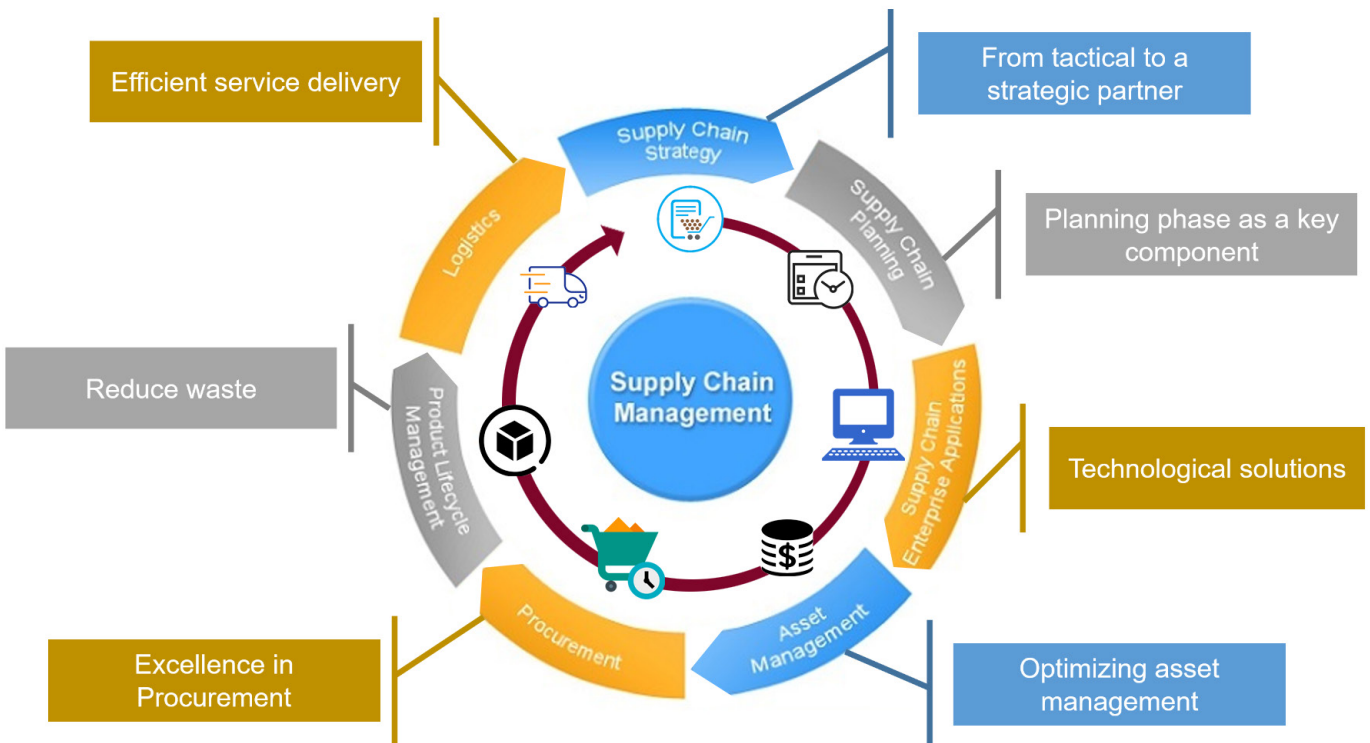
Providing the African Union (AU) with appropriate goods and services for staff to smoothly carry out their tasks and the AU to deliver on its mandate requires special know-how. This involves a process commonly referred to as 'supply chain management' (SCM). It usually relates to planning, sourcing and managing logistical issues so that the final recipient of the good or service receives it on time, where needed and with the quality expected.

However, managing the supply chain goes beyond the satisfaction of the customer. It also aims at taking effective actions by reducing costs and lead time while ensuring that AU quality standards are met. The purchasing strategy, technological solutions, and reduction of waste are thus part of the numerous aspects to be taken into account.

Aware of the impact of this area on the Organization's efficiency over the last few years, the AU has worked to constantly improve the management of its supply chain. Purchasing procedures, practices and tools have been reviewed. Similarly, logistical and operational efficiency has been reworked. Moreover, the quality of products and advantages proposed has been improved.

Today, the AU can be proud of the first results achieved by its different Units. The drastic increase in the total value of goods and services procured in recent years, the availability of different policies to clarify procedures, and the reduction of transaction time are among the indicators proving that the Organization is on the right track to improving its efficiency. ●

Supply Chain Management Role





Mrs. Carine Touré Yemitia

Head of Procurement, Travel and Store Division

Mrs. Carine Touré Yemitia joined the AU in September 2015 as Head of Procurement, Travel and Store Division (PTSD). As an alumni of the Logistics and Transport Engineers (INP-HB) and the Kedge Business School, with 19 years' experience in the field of operations, she has revitalized and reformed the working methods of the team she has been called to lead.

She began her professional career as a Sales Administration Officer in the early 2000s. She then expanded her field of activity in the areas of logistics, operations, quality control and became Director of Procurement and Logistics for UNIMAX, Côte d'Ivoire.

She has a very good knowledge of practices on the continent. As a Logistics Project Manager, she coordinated activities in seven African countries with Ericsson.

During this journey, it never occurred to her to work in the public sector, let alone at the AU, until the Organization contacted her. Despite uncertainties, the challenges presented by this opportunity, and particularly her sense of duty towards the continent urged her to apply and subsequently accept the position.

Joining the AU allowed her to place the skills she accumulated and built over the years at the service of the continent. *"These different experiences helped improve my management skills, evolve as a leader and develop effective strategies/ policies in an international environment"*, she says. Thus, in her current responsibility, Carine finds pleasure in influencing the strategy of the AU, developing the skills of her staff and various stakeholders, as well as making sure the work her team leads has an impact on the customer satisfaction.

Today, her eagerness for continuous improvement in the Procurement, Travel and Store Division keeps growing. She relies on the team spirit she has fostered to carry out the projects launched to make the African Union more effective. Indeed, she is convinced that her team and herself, although representing only a small part of the Organization, are an indispensable link to succeed in achieving the Africa We Want. ●



Ms. Thereza Louise Negokhe
Chief of Procurement Unit

Ms. Thereza Louise Negokhe is the Chief of Procurement Unit in addition to being a Gestalt organizational development practitioner. She believes that bringing about change in an organization requires not only setting clear goals and measurable indicators, but also helping team members develop on a personal level. Indeed, according to this Gestalt approach, *“change occurs when we become what we are, not when we try to become what we are not”*.

Therefore, Thereza’s appointment to this position two years ago was timely, given the reform work carried out within the AU since then. As the Unit she manages is crucial to AU’s operations, the Gestalt approach has its role to play in the transformation process that has begun.

However, Thereza is not only a development agent within the organization. As she puts it herself, *“I believe in a culture of excellence and try to outdo myself in everything I do”*. Thus, she makes sure the work of her team is done with integrity and professionalism even if she has to check the details herself.

These qualities and assets, coupled with the education she acquired have helped her to progress professionally over the years. Motivated by the desire to serve the most vulnerable such as girls in today’s society, Thereza began her career as a Legal Assistant in the early 2000s. She later joined the African Union in 2007 as an Expert in the field of purchasing, and has been occupying her current position since 2017. ●



Ms. Jessica Koko D. Lawson
Chief of Travel Unit

Ms. Jessica Koko D. Lawson's first work experience was in an advertising sales company which produced the flight display timetable at both the Benin and Togo Airports. There, she discovered the various fields of air transportation for which she had a personal interest from childhood.

For her career development and in her quest to know more about this area of expertise, she pursued her academic and professional studies in the field of Transport Economics, Tourism and Travel Management. She then worked for several regional airlines and airport management enterprises in Togo for 9 years before joining the African Union in 2009.

As Chief of Travel Unit, she is committed to apply the Lean Concept on African Union Travel Administration and Management. She seeks to create value for its customers and stakeholders by reducing costs, minimizing wastes, ensuring continuous process improvement while respecting diversity and team work. She fostered a collaborative environment with all African Union Departments/Directorates, Offices and Organs, to support them in their strategies to build the Africa We Want.

With her team, she brings strategic changes in the travel administration and process improvement initiatives of the

Commission and the African Union. Among others, she led the development, approval and implementation of the AU Travel Policy which came into force on 21 March 2014. The team had also implemented the travel booking systems and improved the processes for an efficient and effective management of all official travel and related logistical arrangements.

Currently, her team is in the process of finalizing the new automated Travel Approval System as part of SAP Enhancement. This initiative will facilitate the approval procedure, smoothen processes and consolidate policy compliance.

Moreover, the next version of the Travel Policy is being reviewed and will incorporate the decisions of the November 2018 Executive Council regarding the travel class for officials and staff, as well as the usage of the most economic travel routes and value for money.

Her openness to the dynamism of the travel industry and her adaptability to new technology helped her team to forge continuous process improvement and network with many travel service providers. They are committed to ensure that the African Union officials and staff receive exclusive discounts, privileges and supports. Her team is accessible and dedicated to fulfill the travel needs of its customers. ●



Mr. Kumneger Alemu
Chief of Store Unit

Mr. Kumneger Alemu has been working in the African Union Commission (AUC) for almost two decades now. He describes his journey within this continental organization over these years as “*extremely exciting and congenial*”. As a fresh graduate of Procurement and Supplies Management, the first half of this period was essentially about implementing the basics of materials management that he had acquired from school as a Warehouse Clerk. He then received a training on Materials Management module of the SAP system and was part of the project team during the implementation of this system within the AUC. This gave him an additional exposure in the application of technology for procure-to-pay processes.

As Kumneger progressed into other areas of responsibility such as Asset Management, he gained ample experience in the flow of goods and services between the buyer and user, and decided to pursue post-graduate studies in Marketing Management. As a result, he is well versed with the perspective of vendors and has an overall understanding of the different cycle in supply chain management.

In addition, he has attended several managerial programmes that constitute layers of soft skill coating which have greatly contributed to his current capacity, providing him with the necessary knowledge and skills to lead the operations of the Store Unit.

Kumneger believes in the ideology that, “*any task performed in a spirit of service is equal to an act of worship*”. To him, the few daily prostrations or weekly attendance to a sermon to meet our spiritual obligations are similar to the long working hours we spend in our respective offices or duty stations. These provide us with plenty occasions to exercise our values and develop virtues such as integrity, impartiality and discipline.

He adds that, one’s occupation should be considered beyond a mere professional task performed by an individual as a means of livelihood or for other motives, but ranked as a modest contribution or service rendered for the betterment of the society. “*If our spiritual side is brought to work every day, I am convinced that it will be constantly expressed in what we do for the progress of our organization, the Continent and humanity at large*”, he concludes. ●



INTERVIEW

IMPROVING AU SUPPLY CHAIN SERVICES

- Mrs. Carine Touré Yemitia, Head of PTSD

Mrs. Carine Touré Yemitia has worked within the AUC as Head of the PTSD Division for four years. In the interview below, she gives us an overview of the situation and progress made by her team.

Could you tell us about the situation of your Division when you joined the African Union?

I joined the AU in September 2015 and at that time, the division was not a key player of the system involved in moving a product or service from supplier to customer. This situation was articulated around four key areas: staffing, policies, compliance with audit recommendations and relationship with internal clients.

To talk about our staff, the previous Head of Procurement, Travel and Store Division was acting and, therefore, had limited power and role. Moreover, this Division was not involved with internal clients in decision-making related to PTSD.

In addition, the Maputo structure defined a very flat organization with only few regular positions; more than 70% of the staff were on short-term contracts. Consequently, there were no real levels of management between management and staff level employees.

Concerning policies, for five years, the Procurement manual was not updated with the latest best practices. Furthermore, the Organization had no Property, Plant and Equipment policy nor a legal document to support asset management.

On the other hand, these last years, the audit report emphasized that the Procurement Manual had to be reviewed and aligned with the AU Financial Rules and Regulations and that the Planning and Compliance be improved.

Finally, in terms of internal clients' relationship, there was no direct communication even though we had to consider the clients' comments when defining our new strategy and vision. The Division was not considered as a partner because we were not involved at an early stage in activities/projects planning.

Therefore, after I joined the AU, I defined a new strategy to address these four points and develop a comprehensive approach to improve the supply chain for the AU.

Could you give a more detailed picture of the main areas you and your team have improved in recent years?

The new 2016-2020 Strategy, a shift from a tactical approach to a strategic one, focuses on 7 value creation levers: People, Policies, Data, Innovation, Ethics, Stakeholder engagement and Customer satisfaction.

Regarding People, the first value, we redefined the structure of the Division and recruited more staff in order to provide a better service. For instance, the Quality Assurance Unit, a critical one, was created, to ensure that all our activities in Procurement, Travel and Store are in line with the Rules and Regulations in order to prevent the AU from paying ineligible amounts. The team also provides support to Organs, Regional Offices, Liaison Offices and Specialized Agencies. Dedicated teams have been set up to support various Departments and Offices. This approach has improved our internal communication and has an impact on our stakeholders' engagement.

In terms of Policies, the AUC has revised its Procurement Manual to provide all stakeholders with clearer procurement policies and procedures, for better governance, accountability and services delivery both to internal and external stakeholders. The manual has been popularized in 2017-2018 at the HQ and all offices. This is a continuous improvement process to integrate the latest best practices in procurement management, and increase accountability and transparency. In line with the review of the Procurement Manual, AU also developed an upgraded set of Standard Operating Procedures to guide procurement processes and activities while aligning them with international standards.

Moreover, the AU Emergency Procurement Guidelines was approved in 2018. It considers specific procurement processes for peace keeping operations, social emergency cases, and increases efficiency in terms of time.

In addition, the AU Property, Plant and Equipment Policy was launched in 2017 and circulated in 2017-2018 to help better

manage all AU assets. Logistics practitioners at HQ and all offices were trained several times on this.

Speaking about stakeholder engagement, an Annual Procurement Plan was set up and approved with a quarterly review. Various training activities have been organized to improve departments' execution rates. In 2018, the Procurement Plan reference number became mandatory in SAP, demonstrating that it is an integral part of the management process.

Similarly, since 2017, the Travel Unit has streamlined the approval travel process with the Quarterly plan. In 2018, a project has been launched and completed to fully automate this process. Its kick-off is planned for 2019. It will ensure a better and shorter travel plan approval process for a greater impact on internal client satisfaction. A fully-fledged review exercise of the Travel Policy was completed in 2018. Its completion and validation is planned for 2019. The system will increase outreach for speeding up execution of requests.

One last example is innovation. An ongoing automation of the Procurement System has been launched and the 1st and 2nd phases, which consist of Building the foundations and carrying out a Feasibility study of an e-procurement platform, were completed in 2018.

Our vision, combined with all those achievements, has increased our customers' satisfaction and has made our Division a true internal partner for the Organization. We have become strategic partners for AU departments, succeeded in replicating AU Supply Chain best practices in all offices outside HQ, and are flexible but also reliable in the continental as well as local context.

What are the biggest challenges you face?

It was not an easy journey to get to where we are now. We faced a lot of challenges while trying to change the current situation. One of them was to try to be involved as early as possible to assist Departments when they are planning their activities. They used to submit their requests late, right before they need to be served. We are now involved at the planning phase and Team leaders meet regularly with the Business Units they manage.

The Business Units often define their Terms of Reference/ Specifications in an incorrect way. We provide training sessions to address this issue.

As regards the financial part, the late release of funds is a major setback because it affects the whole supply chain.

On the other hand, the limitations of the Maputo Structure have a deep impact on staffing. Most of the staff are on short-term contracts. The revision of our structure which is supply chain-oriented will address this.

We also request the support of the Leadership to enforce alignment and compliance with the Travel Policy.

What are the major projects you are currently working on?

One of our key projects is the automation of the Procurement and Travel processes. The Launch of the e-procurement system is planned for 2019. Regarding the Travel project, its kick-off is intended for the second quarter of 2019. These projects will improve efficiency and provide a better service to the clients. It will also increase compliance.

Another project is the travel card, in collaboration with the Programming, Budget, Finance and Accounting (PBFA) Directorate, which will secure the trips of all participants to AU missions. We hope to finalize it in the near future.

Furthermore, the AU is aspiring to move its public procurement and supply chain practices from a traditional model, with silos or one-to-one approach, to an advanced business networked model. All stakeholders will therefore be actively involved to address current issues and challenges in the field, profit from business opportunities across

the continent and share experiences through the network that will be established. This is what led to the development and launching of an African Supply Chain Platform (AfSCP).

This network will enable users to have real-time information sharing and secure strong collaboration in order to provide solutions to the issue or request at hand. Hence, the AU and all key stakeholders will be encouraged to bring about excellence regarding Public Procurement and Supply Chain Management for a better and more responsive organization which can cope with rapidly demanding business needs.

The launch of the AfSCP in January 2019 is the starting point for an Annual meeting with ongoing learning and mutual development. We expect to broaden and grow the Platforms membership by inviting participants from regional and international organizations such as AU, UN, EU, WB, GIZ, EAC, ECOWAS, COMESA, ECCAS, SADC, national organizations, private sectors and global professional bodies. ●



**INSIGHT:
FOSTERING GREATER TRANSPARENCY
AND IMPACT ON AU OPERATIONS**

The AU Supply Chain Platform members visiting Hawassa industrial park

An efficient organization needs to ensure that resources deployed achieve the greatest return on investment. In dealing with monetary resources, it has to make a conscious effort to minimize cost and maximize returns in terms of quantity as well as quality and delivery time. In this regard, the Procurement Unit of the African Union has a significant role to play.

In addition to purchasing the best goods and services at the lowest price to meet internal needs, the Unit should be in a unique position to identify and exploit opportunities not apparent to others with respect to the needs on the one hand and the market on the other. The knowledge repository of the AU regarding goods and services acquisition should guide the Organization on the best strategy to adopt and the best practices to introduce in its processes.

Various activities have been carried out these last few years to achieve this vision. One of them is the clarification of the Unit's functions.

PROCUREMENT FUNCTIONS

The Procurement Unit is tasked to plan the sourced product, coordinate the procurement aspect and deliver value for money within the AU. In terms of planning, it ensures that the sourced products are carefully planned to supply the right customer. This implies the clarification of the procedures and roles of each stakeholder amongst other elements.

More so, the Procurement Unit coordinates the professional aspects of procurement within the AU and to act as the executive arm of the Headquarters Institutional Procurement Committee (IPC) and Tender Board. This may include market research and vendor evaluation, and the negotiation of contracts.

Finally, the Unit delivers value for money to the Organisation while complying with AU Rules and Regulations. This aspect deals with the use of best practices, lessons learned and knowledge generated.

To date, the Unit launched several projects to upgrade its services such as the review of the Procurement manual, the adoption of an AU Emergency Procurement Guidelines as well as the launch of the e-procurement project.

FOSTERING A PROBITY RICH ENVIRONMENT AND MINIMIZING RISKS

In its transformation, the procurement unit aimed at providing all stakeholders with clearer standards, policies and procedures to be followed in the procurement of goods, works and services.

This framework provides detailed guidance and uniform procedures for the procurement of goods, works and services. Furthermore, it aims at ensuring transparency and accountability in all operations, and consistency with the guidelines of donors where necessary, while improving the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. Finally, it promotes the consistent application of procurement best practices and international standards.

Therefore, a revision of the AU procurement manual was conducted to provide direction and oversight to procurement processes and performances. In fact, clear directions, roles, responsibilities and skills in AU Procurement Functions foster a probity rich environment and minimize risks while delivering on AU's mandates.

In 2016 an upgraded version of AU Procurement Manual was launched and the document was popularized in 2017-2018. Many training sessions for Procurement practitioners were conducted at the AU Headquarters and all offices.

As part of a continuous improvement process to integrate the last best practices in procurement management, the manual is constantly reviewed yearly.

BETTER PREPAREDNESS FOR AU EMERGENCIES

The AU has to deal with numerous urgent situations owing to the nature of its work. To enable a more timely response to urgent needs, while ensuring compliance with the general procurement principles, an AU Emergency Procurement Guidelines was developed and approved in 2018.

These guidelines allow the AU to adopt special and well defined processes where clear evidence indicates an emergency situation. By integrating management of

challenging procurement activities, this document considers specific procurement processes for peace-keeping operations and social emergency cases. It also aims at increasing efficiency in terms of time.

PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY, INFORMATION FLOW, EFFICIENCY AND WIDER ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

In 2015, AU launched a project to implement an e-Procurement System. The purpose of the platform is to add efficiency to practice, ensuring transparency and fairness among all vendors.

The first step of the work the Organization conducted was the situational analysis and consensus building or feasibility study. Based on the results of that research, the e-Procurement foundation was built.

Currently the project is on its last stage which aims at ensuring the implementation of the whole platform.

BETTER PLANNING

Planning in procurement helps assess activities' feasibility and provide a strategy for better efficiency. Therefore, the policy organs of the AU adopted the development and approval of the Annual Procurement Plan (APP) which is reviewed quarterly. This document reflects the necessary information on the entire procurement activities for goods, services and infrastructure to be procured during the year.

Various training activities have been held in 2017-2018 and helped improve the stakeholders' engagement and the departments' execution rates. In 2018, the Procurement Plan reference number has become mandatory in SAP, proving that it is an integral part of the management process. ●



Some AU Supply Chain Platform members discussing during a working group session

HOW TO:

PURCHASE A CONFERENCE PACKAGE

THE PURCHASING DEPARTMENT



Writes and sends a request memo to the Head of PTSD(3rd floor, Building C, HQ) with the:

- ◆ Date of the conference
- ◆ Number of participants
- ◆ Duration of the conference
- ◆ Needs during the conference (conference room, accommodation, lunch, coffee break...)

2- Create the Purchase Requisition (PR) for the conference package



THE PROCUREMENT UNIT

1 – 5 days



- 1-Assigns** the task to one member of its team who will be the focal point of the purchasing department
- 2-Requests** for quotations
- 3-Evaluates** the quotations received and gets the approval for the contract award
- 4-Informs** and sends the Purchase Order (PO) to the service provider.

HIRE AN INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT

THE HIRING DEPARTMENT

1- Writes and sends a request memo as well as the **Terms of Reference** of the Consultant to the Head of PTSD with the:

- ◆ Background
- ◆ Job Purpose
- ◆ Major duties and responsibilities
- ◆ Required Skills and Competencies
- ◆ Education Qualification Required
- ◆ Work Experience Required
- ◆ Language Requirement



2- Creates the **Purchase Requisition** (PR) for hiring the consultant in SAP ERP



THE PROCUREMENT UNIT

4 – 8 weeks



1-Assigns the task

to one member of its team who will be the focal point of the hiring department



2-Sends Requests

for proposals (RFP)



3-Collects RFPs



4-Nominates

an Evaluation Committee



5-Evaluates

with the Evaluation Committee the proposals received



6-Drafts

contract and seeks for Legal Vetting of the contracts by OLC



7-Notifies award of

contract to the consultant that has been selected



8-Ensures that the

contract is signed, filed and shared with the selected candidate.



Photo by Getty Images

CASE STUDY: Enhancing Organizational Responsiveness

Travel Administration is a term used to describe the totality of the systems operation, tools, processes and supportive policies that are used to manage the travel and related logistical arrangements within an organization. It is also referred to as T&E Administration (Travel & Expenses Administration). Even though there are industry standards which are established for each aspect of travel administration, practices differ from one organization to another. This is mainly due to the differences in the internal factors of an organization in terms of travel policy, staff rules and regulations, financial rules, funding and budgetary issues as well as organizational structure and setup.

External factors on the other hand can also significantly influence how travel is administered. These factors include the travel market the organization is operating, the government and industry policies and regulations, information technology penetration as well as infrastructure and connectivity issues. Aside from these internal and external components which are determining factors in administering travel in an organization, benchmarking against other similar institutions is also an excellent assessment mechanism to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the operational processes, waste reduction, value addition and cost efficiency and effectiveness. Of the numerous organizations operating mainly within the African continent, the African Development Bank is one of the institutions operating in a similar perspective to the African Union Commission.

Founded in 1964, the African Development Bank Group has the mission to promote sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty in Africa. It is the parent organization for the African Development Bank, the African Development Fund, and the Nigeria Trust Fund. Its shareholders are composed of 54 African countries, referred to as regional members,

and 26 non-African countries, which are called non-regional members. The African Development Bank is headquartered in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire and has representational and regional offices across member countries in Africa (www.afdb.org/en).

Even though the African Development Bank Group (AfDB) and the African Union Commission (AUC) are somewhat similar in terms of organizational topography, there are marked differences on their travel administration and operations. The following case study aims to compare and contrast elements of travel administration in the two institutions from the perspective of processes, technologies, and use of service providers with respect to travel management and delivering services to their customers and stakeholders.

APPROVAL MECHANISM

All mission travels begin with an approval. The activity or purpose for the trip itself should be approved individually or as part of a program or project of the requester. In the case of AUC, as the Principal Accounting Officer, the Chairperson of the Commission (or equivalent Head of Organ) has the authority to approve missions. Currently, missions are approved on a quarterly basis, except for emergency travel, and expenses are authorized against budget lines approved by Policy Organs before the start of the budget year. Once a mission approval is granted, the individuals tasked with the mission request approval from their respective directors or any responsible person makes through the SAP ERP system the request for ticket and Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA).

In the case of the AfDB, however, once budget lines are approved for the various programs and projects, they are passed on to a Cost Center Manager, who is entirely

accountable on how that budget is administered. The Manager is the person who approves the mission, and releases the individual for travel. This also includes approval of any travel policy exception (like in the selection of airlines, route and class of travel) allowing room for flexibility and accommodation of travellers' preferences, which in the case of AUC is not allowed outside of the boundaries stated in the Travel Policy.

TICKET PROCESSING

After individual travel is approved, booking and ticket processing is the next step carried out by the Travel Office. The AfDB currently has two different systems running in parallel:

- 1) An Online intranet booking system called Getthere; and
- 2) A process to request bookings via email. However, the utilization rate of this online booking system is very low and there are plans to deploy a new system which will be a SAP-based system called Concur by July 2019. For all booking and ticketing needs, the AfDB has a contracted agency in Abidjan, and regional travel agencies supporting its satellite offices in East, North, South and Central Africa. Once booking options are availed by the travel agencies, the passenger is advised along with the recommended choice for decision, or for processing of exception where there is a need.

The AUC, on the other hand, uses email from travellers sent to airlines offices located within its premises to initiate bookings. The AUC, due to a number of operational and logistical necessities, only deals with airlines in Addis Ababa, and also uses agencies to support regional offices and one proxy agency in Yaoundé to access African regional airlines. Currently, there is no requirement of communicating booking options to travellers as the Policy does not allow for preferences for the passengers. Online booking tools were considered in the past, and while the travel pattern is not conducive in using online tool, this option remains open for further discussion.

PROCESSING OF DSA

Another area of divergence in travel administration is the handling of DSA. Daily Subsistence Allowance is fund paid to cover the various expenses of travelers while on official mission. The AUC uses the UN DSA rate, reviewed monthly, and effect payment on the applicable city or special hotel

rate per night spent on the mission. With the exception of special hotel DSA, no receipts are required to account for the advance given out. The payment is done exclusively on cash basis.

The AfDB in partnership with HSBC, issues cards for travelling staff to pay for their DSA. Cash payments are rarely made in AfDB. Expenses are expected to be accounted for on the actuals against original receipts or vouchers. The entitlements are transferred directly to the card of the staff member/officials and any remaining balance which is owed to him is also transferred to the staff's personal account upon mission completion.

CONTRACTED HOTELS PROGRAM

A contracted hotel program is a process whereby organizations enter into hotel chains or hotels they frequently stay at for specific preferential rates based on an annual room night target. Having a contracted hotels program will allow organizations to leverage the money spent on accommodation and conference services, and also shorten the procurement cycle by having suppliers pre-approved for direct sourcing whenever services are approved and required.

The AfDB has a well matured hotels program using only internationally recognized hotel brands at 3 stars and above. Hotel accommodation is either directly booked and paid by the organization before staff members travel or staff members are required to book and pay for their stay in specified hotels only

as long as they are staying in any of the contracted hotels within the mission city. Staying at other locations are not allowed.

With the exception of meetings where conferencing and accommodation have been pre-booked and paid for staff and participants, which are very few, the AUC allows staff and delegates to directly book at a hotel of their choice. A project is currently at its final stage to contract global hotel chains with significant presence in Africa in view of providing conference and accommodation facilities to AUC staff and delegates. Even though a number of agreements have already been signed, a policy amendment is awaiting approval before pre-booked accommodation can made mandatory across all offices.

(...)



Photo by Getty Images

POST-TRIP EXPENSES SETTLEMENT

After a mission had been undertaken, the final stage is the settlement of the related expenses. At AUC, two forms are mainly used, along with the original boarding passes (or the Immigration Entry and Exit Stamps, in cases the original boarding passes are lost), and a scanned copy of the document is processed online in parallel with the hardcopy, until the expense is cleared from the staff's account on SAP system. Any additional claims or reimbursement are also processed at the same time.

The use of a cash card has allowed the AfDB to automate most of the claim settlement process. Once the mission is over, the expenses charged against the card are transferred online from the banking system to SAP through File Transfer Protocol (FTP), and reconciled against the approved entitlements, avoiding the need for manual processing of documents. Any additional amount owed to the staff is transferred directly to the respective personal account and any reimbursement is directly deducted from the staff next salary.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the above benchmarking exercise that the AfDB has extensively employed technologies to simplify its Travel Administration, and is more aligned to accepted standards within the corporate travel industry. In addition to its willingness and capacity to allocate the required financial resources for automation, the maturity of the travel industry in Abidjan has greatly aided AfDB in its efforts. A decentralized mission approval process whereby Cost center Managers also make the approval process lean, effective and short.

There are a lot of lessons AUC can adopt from AfDB, particularly in areas of technology utilization as well as putting in place an effective cash card and implementing contracted hotels program, and implementing and customized self-booking tools. A cash card will indeed avoid the need of manual processing of DSA and the need to carry huge amount of cash while travelling, which is a great concern in terms of security and safety risks. A contracted hotels program which is of critical importance in today's world for an organization to ensure the safety and security of its staff and delegates.

Finally, the ultimate purpose of Travel Administration is to support the organization's delivery on its mandate. An efficient, effective and modern process, with the right technological tools, policy and processes in place will not only reduce costs and wastes but will also decrease processing time, increase customer satisfaction with better outcomes and impact. Similar benchmarking and experience sharing exercises should be done regularly with other institutions in order to allow Commission, and the African Union at large benefiting from best practices of its peers. ●

PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCENE - Part 2



Mrs. Tizita Tekelyohannes

Administrative Assistant - AHRMD/PTSD, Procurement unit

“I believe in Africa and in its potential and future. Having worked in different African countries and on issues relating to the Continent’s political and economic development, I am convinced that only the African Union can play a central role in spearheading regional and international collaboration, and anchoring Africa’s self-determination.

With a dream of becoming a ‘professional problem solver’ across departments and lead business improvement as a champion, I joined the AUC’s Procurement Unit in 2013 and have been involved with the procurement of international and local purchases. I also manage the Tender email to advertise and receive the Commission’s bids throughout the world, enabling both buyers and vendors to use a standard rating system to rate each other’s performance. I am very excited about the final implementation of the e-Procurement System for clean procurement transactions so that our working environment can become paper-free.

Thanks to my experience within organizations with different mandates like the AU and the United Nations System, I clearly understand the importance of paying attention to details and being open-minded when developing new strategies and tools for specific targets. Thus, I always strive to provide timely and compressive support to help my organization meet its objectives.

I hold a BSc in Information Science, a Master’s in Business Administration (MBA), as well as other diplomas and certifications in line with my profession. My exposure to international multicultural environments has cultured me to be a celebrant of diversity as I believe in the need to combat negativism and promote hope, self-determination, investment and political partnership in a bid to further the development of Africa.” ●

Mr. Aleck Munhamo

Senior Procurement Officer - AHRMD/PTSD, Procurement unit

Mr. Aleck Munhamo joined the African Union Commission in June 2012. Prior to that he worked for the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) for 6 years. He is currently working as Senior Procurement Officer within the AHRM Directorate. His role is acquisition of goods and services in a sustainable manner as well as oversight to ensure compliance with institutional governance policies. He participates in management of grants through procurement capacity assessment and monitoring of project implementation.

A professional with extensive experience spanning over 17 years, Aleck has knowledge of international best practices in governance, project management and procurement standards. He holds a Masters’ in Business Administration (MBA) and Bachelor of Business Studies from the University of Zimbabwe, A Diploma in Purchasing and Supply (CIPS), and is a Project Management Professional (PMP®).

A fitness fanatic, Aleck enjoys jogging and plays golf during his spare time. Moreover, he enjoys learning languages as tool for communicating in a multicultural environment such as the AU. He aspires to deliver value faster effectively responding to change. He believes implementing an e- procurement system will help PTSD to serve its clients better, enhance transparency and accountability for the development of the Africa We Want. The procurement function is evolving and procurement is viewed by AU’s development partners as a key pillar for good governance. Aleck therefore urges all AU staff to familiarize with the AU Procurement Manual, which is available on the au website, for better collaboration. ●





Ms. Julia Mwanajuma Mwavunga Salim

Travel Clerk - AHRMD/PTSD, Travel unit

Ms. Julia Mwanajuma Mwavunga Salim is a Travel Clerk. She is Kenyan and is currently pursuing a joint online Leadership Course by Harvard Publishing and International Air Transport Association (IATA). She holds an MBA in Strategic Management from Kabarak University, a Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management from the United States International University (USIU-A) in Nairobi, Kenya, an IATA Consultant diploma, and a Galileo and an Amadeus airline reservation certificates. She has a keen interest in Strategic Tourism Management.

Julia has more than 13 years working experience in both private and public travel consultancy sector, where she rose through different ranks from travel consultant, junior travel consultant to senior travel consultant. She is part of the travel unit team that works on projects and processes to improve travel services efficiency to the entire AUC and has provided exemplary travel services to the Commission for the past five years now.

Working at the travel unit has been challenging and rewarding to her; challenging because of different work dynamics and rewarding after successful task execution. In January 2017, she was awarded a certificate for being one of the top 20 staff who had superior performance in the Implementation of the Administration and Human Resources Management Directorate's 2016 activities.

"The travel profession being a service industry is extremely delicate, we are selling dreams and experiences, nothing tangible, ensure that you always work extra hard to give your client a positive experience", a lecturer once told her, and she lives by it. ●

Mr. Wondimu Molla Mengistu

Travel Assistant- AHRMD/PTSD, Travel unit

Mr. Wondimu Molla Mengistu is an Ethiopian, born and raised in Addis Abba, Ethiopia. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Marketing Management, a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Accounting, a Professional Diploma in Human Resources Management, and a Diploma in Marketing Management from Addis Ababa University College of Commerce and has various certificates from IATA and the Ethiopian Airlines. He will graduate from Lead Star College of Management and Leadership with an MBA this year, 2019. He is a member of CIPS (Certified Institute of Procurement and Supplies), in the UK.

He started his carrier at SACA PLC as a sales agent. Then worked at Ethiopian Airlines for about eight years in different positions from junior customer service agent to a supervisory level, during which he was responsible for making reservation, issuing tickets and miscellaneous vouchers, preparing sales report, coaching junior agents and supervised different branch ticket offices.

Wondimu joined the African Union Commission as a Travel Assistant in October, 2008. His current responsibilities include but are not limited to processing tickets for staff members and meeting participants, clearing travel claims and verifying self-sponsored tickets of meeting participants. He is also responsible for all travel related issues including supporting user departments and regional offices. Being a hardworking and dedicated professional, he was awarded a certificate in 2017 by the Head of AHRMD for superior performance in the implementation of the Directorate's 2016 activities.

He is married and a father of one boy and two girls. ●





Ms. Meaza G/egziabher

Warehouse Clerk - AHRMD/PTSD, Store unit

“ I am Meaza G/egziabher from Ethiopia. I joined the African Union on June 8th, 2008 as a warehouse clerk. I consider myself as fortunate to have the opportunity to work in an organization such as this one and within my sphere of interest.

Indeed, serving the continent helps me not only to feel useful for the well-being of my African sisters and brothers, but it also drives me to upgrade my skills and knowledge since working in the area of supply chain management requires a continuous learning process.

My greatest satisfaction stems from meeting the expectations of both our internal and external customers. Therefore, in collaboration with the team, I strive for continual good service delivery. Fostering good teamwork and ensuring smooth communication with my colleagues are thus essential.

Moreover, I am driven by the desire to fully achieve the objectives of the Store Unit as well as building the image and reputation of the Organization in my day to day activities.” ●

Mrs. Tsion Bogale

Store Clerk- AHRMD/PTSD, Store unit

Mrs. Tsion Bogale joined the Africa union eight years ago with the aim of contributing to the achievement of the Organization’s strategic goals and mission. She is working in the Store Unit and is responsible for managing stationery and office supplies of the commission. She aims to contribute to the best of her ability and knowledge by ensuring uninterrupted supply of consumables to all the departments of the Commission.

She aspires to achieve excellence in her services to the Organization by properly considering the feedbacks from her colleagues and clients. Her main objective is to provide services without delay, error free and in full as much as possible to various departments of the organization. Reducing costs where necessary is also what excites her most in her daily routines. Tsion is proud of her work and achievements throughout the years. She is always grateful for the support and encouragement she receives from colleagues and her supervisors. She intends to work closely with various departments in order to better understand their needs and work towards addressing their demands.

She considers herself lucky to be given this opportunity to serve the main continental body of Africa. Tsion dreams of an Africa with knowledge guided by the love for peace as well as the love and unity of its people, as she pledges to actively participate in the realization of this dream. ●





A staff member storing parcels that have just arrived

FOCUS: Ensuring sound resources management

The Stores Unit operations can be best illustrated by the following story. Perhaps you have heard the story of Christopher Wren, one of the greatest English architects, who walked one day unrecognized among the men who were at work upon the building of St. Paul's cathedral in London which he had designed. "What are you doing?" he inquired from one of the workmen, and the man replied, "I am cutting a piece of stone." As he went on he asked the same question to another man, and the man replied, "I am earning five shillings two pence a day." And to a third man he addressed the same inquiry and the man answered, "I am helping Sir Christopher Wren build a beautiful cathedral." That man had vision. He could see beyond the cutting of the stone, beyond the earning of his daily wage, to the creation of a work of art—the building of a great cathedral. And in your life it is important for you to strive to attain a vision of the larger whole. – (Louise Bush-Brown, <http://www.bartleby.com/73/458.html>)

Though many people may think the Africa We Want can only be accomplished through political integration, Agenda 2063, however, has made it clear that it is mostly about socio-economic transformation, which, in turn, is achieved through sound resource management initiatives.

The importance of the functions of the Store Unit is directly associated with these scenarios.

Even though a very small fraction of the total resources of the continent, just like the man who said, "I am helping Sir Christopher Wren build a beautiful cathedral", the Store Unit is mandated to manage the same resources, specifically material resources, essential for the successful achievement of the contents of socio-economic integration, thereby realizing the Africa We Want.

As such, the Store Unit is basically a service-giving Unit, as through its daily activities, the Unit enables other Departments of the Commission to meet their objectives in their respective areas.

Accordingly, the Unit plans for the daily material requirements of all user departments, provides consumable based on their request and depending on the nature of work - from office supplies to medicines and health treatment materials etc.-periodically replenishes it to ensure availability and continuity of work.

The Unit also manages the assets of the Commission – from IT equipment to vehicle, furniture and security equipment etc., from their acquisition throughout the life cycle of the assets.

It also prepares budget for the purchase of the above, initiates and follows through the procurement process, inspects and receives when orders are delivered, distributes to user departments, controls and tracks their movements and finally disposes of them when they are no longer usable or obsolete for various reasons.

The Unit considers the Departments and staff of the Commission as its esteemed customers who are doing their best to go out and bring about the changes in an effort to build the Africa We Want.

Over the past years the Unit has been trying to improve and shape its operations in the following areas:

- Structure & People (Organizational, people development and team strength, facility and tools);
- Policies & Procedures (Standardizing procedures, discipline, excellence);
- System (Technology, process and interactions improvement);

However we believe there is still a lot of room for improvement.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge is always not being able to meet the expectation of user departments for various reasons, mostly due to functional issues.

There are departments who require assistance on a strategic level during the planning phase (planning of budget - how much you want, for what, where is the source of funding, is it member states or partners... etc.), followed by the procurement planning. Numerous players are involved:

- Internal: Units/Division/Departments for raising the request, ordering, expediting, custom clearance, payment...etc.; and
- external: suppliers, transporters, government office regulations and policies.

Several aspects also need to be taken into account: political, environmental, etc.

However after all these processes, the goods may or may not arrive in time for the intended purpose, with the quality and quantity ordered. Or, at any point within the chain somewhere, somehow, something could go wrong.

When the goods arrive in an orderly manner, fulfilling all requirements as expected, user departments that come to the warehouse facility for collection of their request are satisfied and happy because they can perform their duties without interruptions. This is a source of satisfaction for the team.

However, in the event of any setbacks, the goods fail to arrive or come short, not fulfilling the requirements of the order, users are dissatisfied. As frontlines facing those user departments, and witnessing their frustrations, the team seeks to redress this situation.

WAY FORWARD

The Unit operates within the boundaries of AU policies and procedures, which are laid out by Member States, such as the Financial Rules and Regulations (FRR) - for the management of financial related matters -, the Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) - for the management of assets -, and the Staff Rules and Regulations (SRR) - for the responsibilities and rights of staff.

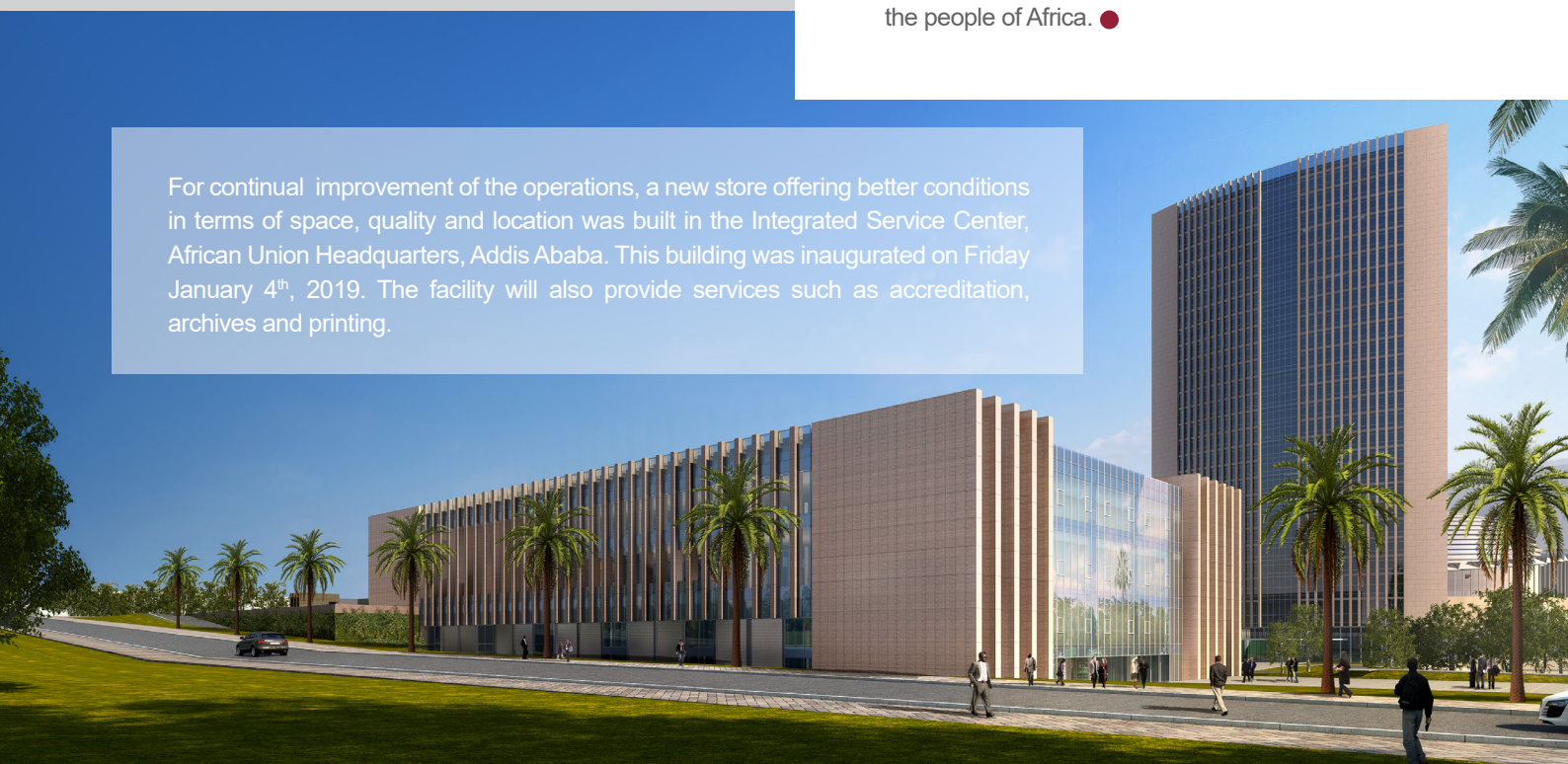
These are all part of the mechanisms in place for greater accountability and better governance in the daily engagements. Therefore, more emphasis is placed on these two aspects, especially in relation to Asset management functions.

When a staff member is issued with an Asset of the Commission, he is expected to be responsible in its usage and act as a custodian entrusted with the valuables of the continent. By signing the issue forms upon receiving that item, the staff member agrees to be responsible of the Asset of the Commission.

According to the Staff Rules and Regulations (SRR), it is the duty of staff members to safeguard the assets issued to them throughout the duration of their use. Correspondingly, one of the articles of the Property, Plant and Equipment Policy (PPE) instruct a periodic Asset verification exercise to be conducted to ensure accuracy, completeness and existence of PPEs. Thus, the Unit conducts this verification of Assets already issued and in use by each staff member, then, includes all findings of the exercise in the annual financial reports of the Commission submitted each year to Member States.

Hence, when Asset management is done and materials/supplies management functions properly and in accordance with the policies put in place by the leadership, it is believed that the intended outcome is accountability towards the real owners of the resources: the people of Africa. ●

For continual improvement of the operations, a new store offering better conditions in terms of space, quality and location was built in the Integrated Service Center, African Union Headquarters, Addis Ababa. This building was inaugurated on Friday January 4th, 2019. The facility will also provide services such as accreditation, archives and printing.





Carine Touré Yemitia
Head of Procurement, Travel and Store Division

- Develop the optimal African Supply Chain Model for bringing products/Services to the customers OTIF (On Time In Full) and quality mix (Price/Service)
- Become strategic partners for AU departments
- Replicate AU Supply Chain best practices in all offices outside HQ
- Be flexible and fast but also reliable in the African and local context



Thereza Louise Negokhe
Chief of Procurement Unit

- Ensuring that sourced products are planned correctly to supply them to the right customer
- Coordinate the professional aspects of procurement within the AU and act as the executive arm of the HQ IPC and Tender Board
- Deliver value for money to the Organization while complying with rules and regulations of the AU



Jessica Koko D. Lawson
Chief of Travel Unit

- Travel policy administration
- Management of travel fully financed by AUC
- Management of travel handled on behalf of AU Organs
- Supporting travel administration in regional offices according to AU Travel Policy



Kumneger Alemu
Chief of Store Unit

- Inbound logistics
- Physical Stock management of all items (Medical materials, General items, Military items) and Distribution to end-user
- Asset management

CONGRATULATION TO OUR NEW LEADERS AND MANAGERS



Col. Mohammed Benaired
Head of Training & Capacity
Building Division – AFRIPOL/PSD



Dr. Tapiwa Uchizi Nyasulu Rweyemamu
Head of Gender Analysis and
Monitoring Division
WGDD - AUC



Ms. Eiman Kheir
Head of Diaspora Division
CIDO - AUC



Mr Shumba Tichawona
Head of Monitoring, Evaluation
and Research Division
SPPMERM - AUC



Mr Mgaywa Gilbert Mjungu Dam Magafu
Head of Disease Intelligence and
Surveillance Division
Africa CDC/SAD

THE FAMILY OF THE AFRICAN UNION IS GROWING

Welcome to 21 new staff members:

Casimir Compaoré

SAP Technical Coordinator – AHRMD

Chipango Nyala

Senior Auditor – OIA

Consy Christine Atim

Compliance and Quality Assurance Officer – AHRMD

Fabrice Bella Messina

Youth Volunteer – HRST

Fredreick W.K. Tamakole

Administrative Assistant – ACHPR/Banjul

Helen Otang Tambe

Youth Volunteer – SAD

Husam Mohamedelmamoun Hanafi Obeid

Youth Volunteer – CIDO

Inas Mubarak Yahia

Health Officer – SAD

Joseph Mwangi

Policy Officer-Renewable Energy – IED

Judith Akot Brenda Oder

Human Rights Expert – PSD/Banjul

Okechukwu Emmanuel Ibe

Advisor on Security Matters – DCP

Pelagie Koffi

Secretary – DREA-IAPSC/Yaounde

Lt. Col. Dr. Hubert Nyakana

Medical Planner – PSD

Nessma Razia Senhadri

Desk Officer-Crisis Management – PSD

Roseline Yvette Ble

Secretary – PSD-ACSRT

Samson Tilahun

Driver – AHRMD

Sena Afua Dei-Tutu

Senior Rule of Law Expert – PSD/Banjul

Siaka Togola

Youth Volunteer – CIDO/Washington DC

Tetuh Kyeng Mercy

Youth Volunteer – SAD/Nairobi

Yewande Habibat Alimi

Youth Volunteer – SAD

In memoriam of:



Dr. René N'Guettia Kouassi
Director of Economic Affairs
of the African Union Commission

passed away on January 13th, 2019.

The late Dr. René N'Guettia Kouassi served the African Union for 20 years.



Mr. Joachim Abidji Ehui
Driver
within AULO in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

passed away on January 25th, 2019.

The late Mr. Joachim Abidji Ehui served the African Union for 13 years.

May their souls rest in peace.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **52nd Session of the Economic Commission for Africa**
Morocco, March 20 – 26, 2019
- **Fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**
Morocco, April 16 – 18, 2019
- **3rd Africa Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance Forum**
Dakar, Senegal, March 27 – 28, 2019

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY TO THE CITIZENS OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES:

Sudan	January 1st
Libya	February 17
The Gambia	February 18
SADR	February 27



Photo by Getty Images

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