1. On Thursday, May 28th, 2015, the African Development Bank Group (AfDB) held the Civil Society Organizations Forum (CSOs) alongside its Annual Meetings. The Forum, which was held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, brought together over 160 people, AfBD’s senior management and Staff Members included, as well as a global virtual audience.

2. The overall objective of the Forum was to strengthen the partnership between the AfDB and CSOs on the continent, providing a platform for dialogue and information sharing on the theme "Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in the Bank’s policies and programs: the role of CSOs".

3. In addition, the Forum was an opportunity for the Bank to interact with CSOs of the continent on topics of critical importance such as:
   a. People-powered accountability;
   b. The effective partnership between the Bank and CSOs for the establishment of a transparency mechanism; and
   c. Sustainable development and the challenges related to climate change.

COURSE OF THE FORUM

4. Sixty representatives of African CSOs participated in the Forum which was comprised of four sessions. Each panel featured field practitioners, civil society representatives, as well as AfDB staff and stakeholders from relevant institutions.

5. Mrs. Valérie Traoré, Managing Director of Niyel Communication, was the general moderator. The concurrent online session benefited from live tweets from bloggers representing the five African regions and an online discussion moderated by Ms. Jemila Abdulai, Operations Assistant with the African Community of Practice (AfCoP) Secretariat. Remote participants were able to follow the Forum in its entirety via web streaming on the AfDB website.

A. The opening ceremony

6. Mr. Simon Mizrahi, Director of the Quality Assurance and Results Department (ORQR), started the forum by thanking the President of the Bank, Dr. Donald Kaberuka, for his presence at the opening ceremony and for his commitment to improving the framework for collaboration between the AfDB and CSOs.

7. In his introductory speech, Mr. Rakesh Nangia, General Evaluator and President of the AfDB-CSO Committee, elaborated on the various components of the civil society. He also emphasized the importance of empowering communities throughout the development process. He concluded his address by stating that CSOs could be considered important actors that contribute to improving the processes put in place for the development of African countries.

8. Mrs. Saran Daraba, Executive Secretary of the Mano River Union, argued that greater collaboration between the AfDB and CSOs is one of the key factors for the success of
development in Africa. She then explained, from her point of view, how the AfDB’s role has evolved over the past two decades. From a purely financial institution, the Bank became an active development partner in its regional member countries, including occupying a prominent place in the political dialogue. She then expressed her gratitude to the AfDB President for his role in the quest for transparency and accountability throughout his two terms.

9. Speaking on behalf of Mr. Emmanuel Mbi – the Bank’s First Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (FVP / COO) – and on his own behalf, FVP / COO’s Director Mr. Ebrima Fall demonstrated how accountability and transparency are part of the AfDB process. He made key statements on how to take advantage of the partnership with CSOs: “There is a huge amount of expertise from CSOs that we can leverage on for enhanced development”, he said. He also encouraged dialogue at the forum saying, “We hope to hear your ideas on the climate agenda, your experience in the field of transparency and accountability”. He ended by expressing his pleasure at the forum’s interactive format.

B. Plenary sessions

FIRST SESSION: PEOPLE POWERED ACCOUNTABILITY

10. The objective of this session was to provide an opportunity to learn to what extent citizens form a power for accountability. The session served as a platform for learning and exchanging on how the Bank could better collaborate with CSOs to increase transparency and accountability. The session reviewed some emerging lessons from CSOs’ experiences.

11. This session was moderated by Mr. Simon Mizrahi, Director of ORQR. The presentation made by Mr. Aloysius Ordu, Director of Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), focused on the impact of corruption on transparency and accountability.

12. Having stated in his introduction that Botswana was the only African country that makes a good impression as far as corruption is concerned, Mr. Ordu developed the “theory of change”, which helps in fighting against corruption. The theory is based on community awareness, training and accountability of groups of citizens to undertake collective action. Both steps lead to constructive engagement with the authorities to initiate change. The final part is the monitoring of changes and feedback loops.

13. Session’s panelists:

- Mr. Aloysius Ordu, Director, Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF)
- Mrs. Anna Bossman, Director, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Department, AfDB
- Mrs. Kinna Likimani, Blogging Ghana member and Lead for the “Ghana Decides” project
- Mr. Neil Cole, Executive Secretary, Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI)

14. Issues raised during the session:

a. Is corruption a myth or a reality?

b. How can we leverage the examples of local successes?

c. What is the level of transparency and access to information on the continent?
15. **Key elements:**

- Corruption is a reality and a major problem. It requires the establishment of a sufficiently robust system to reduce and eliminate it. This begins with the protection of persons who report inappropriate actions.
- The Bank has established an environment against corruption based on whistleblower protection. Internally, people have the assurance of protection against retaliation. Externally, the AfDB is committed to protecting whistleblowers using all means at its disposal;
- The Bank works closely with CSOs so that they can report bad practices that could occur during the implementation phase of its projects;
- CSOs recurrently face a lack of information as well as local data and analysis. The AfDB as a knowledge institution could be a role player and implement initiatives to bridge this gap;
- CSOs need to find ways to unite their voices and their capabilities. Forming a united front will give them the opportunity to have a bigger impact and multiply successes.

**SECOND SESSION: LAUNCH OF THE CSO DATABASE**

16. The objective of this session was to present the “CSOs mapping” tool that provides the Bank with a panoramic view of CSOs operating on the continent. This work was also the basis for establishing a CSO database that fosters an effective partnership between the Bank and CSOs.

17. **Ms. Victoria Chisala,** Division Manager of Results (ORQR.1), underlined the importance of CSOs in the process of setting up projects and to the success of development goals. It is therefore important for the AfDB to develop adequate tools to deepen its collaboration with CSOs;

18. **Ms. Zéneb Touré,** Principal Civil Society Engagement Officer at the AfDB, presented the CSO database. The database provides an overview of CSOs on the continent by sector and country. It also identifies CSOs working in the priority areas of the Bank as defined in the 2013-2022 strategy. The AfDB used the following criteria to identify CSOs for inclusion in the database: i) Work in an AfDB priority field of intervention ii) Have been operational, even if discontinuously, over the last three years; iii) Have honed sector-specific skills; iv) Have worked for international donors or the State services; v) Have intervention modalities that are specific to civil society organizations (and not to consultancy firms) and an explicitly non-profit objective; vi) Have a vision for the development of the host country and for addressing its problems vii) Are known and have a minimum level of visibility (where possible, on the Internet).

19. **Issues raised during the session:**

   a. What is the level of completeness of the database?
   b. What are the means of communication of the AfDB with CSOs?
   c. How do the CSOs get registered on the database?

20. **Key Elements**

- Basic enrolment was done with the work conducted to map CSOs. An updated mechanism has been put in place at a country office level to proceed to the next CSO enrollment phase;
- The database is not exhaustive; many grassroots CSOs were not taken into account. However, they are usually part of an umbrella organization that is listed;
- The database will be updated regularly to ensure quantitative and qualitative data accuracy;
The Bank has implemented a number of tools to interact with CSOs and share information. This is the case of the interactive platform "MapAfrica" that provides an opportunity for CSOs to locate the projects financed by the AfDB and comment on them; The Bank needs to optimize communication and awareness of CSOs. These would include strengthening of existing communication channels.

THIRD SESSION: EXPECTATIONS FOR COP 21 AND CSOs ROLE IN THE RESULTS ELABORATION

21. The objective of this session was to implement an open and transparent participatory approach, which highlights the important role of CSOs for the establishment of a platform for discussion about the expectations of Africa on the 2015 agenda for climate change.

22. The session was moderated by Mr. Anthony Nyong, Division Manager of Compliance and Safeguards of the AfDB. Mr. Seth Osafo, Legal Counsel of the African Group of Negotiators, delivered a presentation to trace the history of climate negotiations and put the challenges of COP 21 into perspective.

23. Session’s Panelists:
   - Mr. Seth Osafo, Legal Counsel of the African Group of Negotiators
   - Mr. Frédéric Kumah, WWF Director for Africa
   - Mr. Samuel Nnah Ndobe, CSO Coalition

24. Questions asked during the session:
   a. What are the continental concerns that Africa may contribute to the COP 21?
   b. How should the decisions be funded?
   c. How do you think that CSOs can be part of the negotiations?

25. Key elements:
   - African countries are extremely vulnerable to climate change. Each country should take certain forms of action, such as developing a national plan to deal with climate change, regardless of the low emissions of greenhouse gas on the continent;
   - Africa is in a unique position because countries have not yet reached a critical level of pollution while providing funds to finance their development. It is important to make the right choices;
   - While developed countries have to adapt and implement all the policies required to reduce their emissions, developing countries need to find alternatives to adjust their development models to climatic stress;
   - It is very important to include African countries in the decision making process because climate-sensitive cultural practices and considerations must be preserved. The measures that work in developed countries may not work in those developing due to the cultural context and many other components; and
   - Education and public awareness on global warming challenges require collaboration between CSOs and governments.
FOURTH SESSION: MAINTAINING A DYNAMIC APPROACH FOR A CLEAR COMMITMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

26. The session sought to highlight the unique "multi-stakeholder" approach of the Climate Financing Investment Fund (CIF) and allow participants to explore ways to effectively engage civil society once the CIF portfolio develops.

27. In his speech, Mr. Solomon Asamoah, Vice President of Infrastructure, Private Sector and Regional Integration at the AfDB, stressed that the Bank’s commitment to transparency is strong. He noted that transparency was taking place at all levels and for all stakeholders (government, CSO, etc.). With specific regard to the relationship between the Bank and the CSOs, the pillars of this relationship are awareness, dialogue and partnership.

28. Session’s Panelists:
   - Mr. Alex Rugamba, Director, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change (ONEC), AfDB
   - Mr. Joseph Kitilit, Deputy Director for Planning and Strategy, Geothermal Development Corporation (GDC), Kenya
   - Mr. Zhang Zhihong, SREP Programme Coordinator, CIF Administrative Unit (CIF AU)
   - Ms. Judy Ndichu, UNDP and former representative of Transparency International, Kenya
   - Mr. Fisseha Tessema Abissa, Focal Point Engagement Actors, CIF AU

29. Question asked during the session:
   How can the Bank collaborate with CSOs in the implementation of the Climate Financing Investment Fund (CIF)?

30. Key elements
   - With over 33% of the funding of the Climate Financing Investment Fund (CIF) allocated to Africa, Kenya’s Menengai geothermal project is the perfect illustration of what needs to be done in Africa. CSOs are involved in the life cycle of the entire project;
   - There is a desire to improve the contribution of CSOs to other programs such as the Solar Renewable Energy Program (SREP). These programs are becoming increasingly important and will help fill the energy gap in Africa, where 600 million people live without electricity;
   - In the Menengai project, there has been transparency at all levels. This provides an extra layer of protection and optimized expected results;
   - Given the results obtained, it would be a great idea to duplicate the process of the Menengai project to other viable projects in order to increase the success rate;
   - Climate issues benefit from a favourable audience in Africa that is willing to explore its dimensions. This momentum must be maintained using different approaches of engagement and transparency on the part of CSOs.

C. Closing Remarks

31. In his thanks, Mr. Mamadou Goita, President of the Coalition of CSOs expressed his gratitude to the AfDB for providing a platform for exchange that is beneficial to relations between the Bank and CSOs. He encouraged CSOs to all that had been discussed throughout the day into account and to build their capacities. Thus, CSOs will continue to take a leading role which will contribute to a more transparent environment.
32. The Forum was officially closed by Mr. Simon Mizrahi. First, he thanked the participants for their attendance and the quality of the dialogue. His speech was also an opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the Bank towards Africa’s civil society. CSOs are important players that allow the Bank to improve on its commitment and mandate for economic and social development in Africa.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

33. The CSO Forum at the Annual Meetings of the AfDB Group has allowed to: (i) encourage frank exchanges between the Bank and CSOs about their experiences on fairness, transparency and accountability; (ii) improve the understanding on the role of different groups of stakeholders in the development of the climate agenda to guide the results of the agreements; (iii) explore the entry points and the communication between the bank and CSOs.

34. A total of 111 Twitter accounts participated actively in the concurrent online discussion using the hashtag (keyword) #CSOForumAbidjan. The tweets from these accounts reached more than 430,000 people worldwide. In comparison with last year’s Forum, these figures represent an increase of 36% in terms of active Twitter accounts and an increase of 65% in terms of people reached across the world.

35. Subsequent to the Forum, the following recommendations can be taken into consideration in order to consolidate the Bank’s collaboration with CSOs:

- **CSO’s connectivity:** As a knowledge institution the Bank could facilitate connectivity between CSOs. Doing so would contribute to increasing the amount of relevant information that CSOs have at their disposal, support experience sharing and promote platforms which foster exchange.

- **CSO capacity building:** CSOs often face challenges due to their weak action capacities and their misconception of the Bank’s rules and procedures. Thanks to its expertise, the Bank has the ability to conduct capacity building activities for CSOs in its priority fields of intervention.

- **CSO funding:** The funding of activities has been identified as one of the major challenge for CSOs. Thus, the Bank could think about establishing a fund to supporting its engagement with CSOs. It would be a significant milestone in the operationalization of the CSO engagement framework.
Annex 2
Online Coverage

Pre-event blogs

1. Cheikh Fall: http://gloomedias.blogspot.com/2015/05/assemblees-annuelles-de-la-bad-la.html

Post-event blogs


Article published by the Bank some on the CSO Forum. See here.

Article published by Citizen for Justice on the CSO Forum. See CFJMalawi
# List of Participants

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