Civil Society for Gender Equality: Civil Society Launches Global Gender Summit discussions on Affirmative Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA)

The 2019 Global Gender Summit was the occasion for civil society organizations (CSOs) from across Africa to meet in Rwanda. The meeting, that took place on November 24, was led by the African Development Bank’s (the Bank) Civil Society and Community Engagement Division and conducted under the topic “Identifying Innovative Solutions for Women’s Access to Finance for their Economic Empowerment: Entry Points for Civil Society Engagement in the Implementation of AFAWA”.

Civil society organizations agreed that it was important to start building on the already existing structures and initiatives in the countries in which AFAWA will be implemented. For this purpose, it is necessary to conduct a mapping exercise of relevant civil society organizations at the national level and to strengthen national dialogue to ensure that the right policies and laws that support women’s economic empowerment are in place and are being implemented.

About AFAWA: https://bit.ly/35frdW1

Women in Leadership

Her Royal Higness Mbuyu Imwiko: Ensuring Access to Land and Security of Tenure for Women in Western Zambia

Her Royal Highness Mbuyu Imwiko was enthroned Litunga Lya Mboela (meaning the King of the South of Barotseland) in 2010.

“The access to land for women in the traditional system of the Lozi people in Western Province is complicated, as the land tenure system only allows women to have access to land through patrilinial system through their fathers or through their husband. This leaves women in a difficult situation of not being able to invest in long term projects like cashew farming, which is permanent on the land it is planted. I therefore wanted to change this by offering land to women.

I want to see empowered women. It is my hope that the land given to women for cashew growing will benefit them and their families and will drive out poverty from my kingdom. I have seen many women economically and socially successful and I wish to see more”.

Sefora Kodjo leading the African Women of the Future Fellowship (AWF)

Sefora Kodjo founded the SEPHIS international organization that is dedicated to highlighting the perspectives of young people and women on issues related to their empowerment and participation.

“The first challenge to women’s leadership is their state of mind, which is often conditioned by the environment in which they have evolved.”
The second is strongly linked to the system: Africa must strengthen its commitment to issues related to gender equality in decision-making bodies. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to create optimal conditions for women leadership. This is why I started the African Women of the Future Fellowship (AWF), which is a leadership and mentoring program that aims at building the capacities of young women leaders for greater impact within their community. In partnership with UN Women, the program selects 24 young women from across the continent aged 18 to 35 each year for an intensive 6-week Leadership, Gender and Development course. In 2018, AWF was listed by the African Union in the top 50 education initiatives on the continent: a great achievement for us, and surely not the last one*.

ADF-15 Replenishment: We Made It!

The African Development Bank Group announced on December 6 that Donors of the African Development Fund (ADF) agreed to commit $7.6 billion to speed up growth in Africa’s poorest nations and help lift millions out of poverty. This 32% increase from the previous cycle was also achieved thanks to a significant contribution of African civil society together with Member States, the Board and various stakeholders.

A social mobilization and advocacy campaign was launched by civil society organizations active throughout Africa. Five selected civil society ambassadors of ADF-15- Yacouba Savadogo, 2018 Alternative Nobel Price; Salif Traoré, aka A’Salfo Founder of the Magic System Foundation; Patricia Yao, Founder of Quick Price; Fatma Ben Rejeb, Executive Director of the Pan-African Farmers’ Organization and member of the ADB-Civil Society Committee and Oulie Keita, Director for Francophone West Africa, ONE Campaign-recalled the concrete and transformational impacts of the previous African Development Funds and encouraged technical and financial partners to contribute to the massive and inclusive replenishment of ADF-15.

Civil Society Organizations role will yet again be critical in the implementation of ADF-15 when it comes to promoting gender, climate change, decent job creation, governance and accountability, thanks to their close proximity with the grassroots and marginalized populations in society. This is the Africa, We-Citizens- want !

Link to the speeches in video of the ADF-15 ambassadors: https://bit.ly/2tc5yzO (See Social Mobilization in Support to ADF-15)

Capacity Building on Civil Society Engagement to Strengthen Social Inclusion in Africa

Did you know that capacity building on civil society engagement is an essential element of the new partnership between the Bank and civil society? The Bank is currently developing a program that will strengthen internal capacities for engagement with civil society and those of civil society organizations so that they can better play its role as implementing partners. This dynamic is supported by the African Development Institute (ECAD) and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), who, along with the Bank, co-organized a design thinking workshop that marks the beginning of the process.

Civil Society Engagement: A Matter for Everyone in the Bank

At the end of the workshop, CSOs committed to sensitize communities in their countries about the existence of these Mechanisms and pleaded for the strengthening of the partnership between CSOs and IAMs.

Bank Policies on Integrity and Anti-Corruption – Meeting with Civil Society

Between March and July 2019, the Office of Integrity and Anti-Corruption conducted several trainings under the theme “Bank’s Policies on Integrity and Anti-Corruption – Meeting with Civil Society” in Regional Member Countries. These interactive sensitization sessions took place in Liberia, in Ghana
and in Benin, gathering Staff members, consultants, contractors, senior government officials and civil society organizations.

The objective was to promote integrity and anti-corruption, to present the actions of PIAC and to engage and cooperate with civil society organizations.

A major concern raised by the participants related to lack of information on Bank activities. Civil society actors also suggested the need for the Bank to move into supporting CSOs to do monitoring on projects, proposing that a percentage of project money should be allocated for such monitoring. A proposition the Bank plans to work on.

**Access to Bank information: Good Governance and Transparency at the Heart of the Bank’s Disclosure and Access to Information (DAI) policy**

The Bank Group was one of the forerunners amongst its multilateral counterparts when it adopted its disclosure policy in 1995. In 2012, the institution introduced a new disclosure policy; radically opting for openness by moving from a limited list of disclosable documents to the transformative concept that all information in the Bank’s possession must be accessible to the public, unless a document type was placed under a defined list of exceptions.

The Bank’s continued efforts to make its operational information accessible on its website earned it an improved ranking - 4th place - on the International Aid Transparency Index, an independent measure of aid transparency among the world’s major development agencies.

Having access to Bank platforms such as “DATAPORTAL,” which presents information on the Bank’s High 5s strategy-related interventions; ‘MAPAFRICA’ which provides information on ongoing projects on the continent (projects portfolios or country strategies), empowers civil society, as the latter can access and use such publicly available information in its work with local communities. The African Development Bank Group is thus consolidating its position as the premier provider of knowledge and information on African economic and social progress, and it intends to maintain this position.

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**From the Field**

**Words on Civil Society Engagement**

“It has become even more critical for the Bank to engage with civil society in a more interactive, open, systematic and comprehensive manner as an equal development partner and stakeholder. We will use our Open Days as a platform for exchanging information and knowledge on the Bank’s operations and take advantage of civil society’s enhanced role and unique knowledge of grassroot and fragile communities to create programmes for a greater public good that carry significant impact. Our goal therefore is to enhance our engagement with rural communities working through CSO to ensure inclusive socio-economic development”.

Maria Mulindi, Bank’s Director Special Programmes – Engagement with Civil Society and Community Based Organizations for East and Southern Africa

“I drove my motorbike from Fish Town to Harper, and it was like coming into Manhattan. Upon completion of the Fish Town – Kelippo and Sanniquelle – Loquatuo road sections, we can have breakfast in Liberia, easily drive and do business, then eat our attieke for lunch in Côte d’Ivoire and come back home in the evening”.

Kingsley Nixon, Civil Society Representative, during the Liberia Civil Society Open Day on 30 August 2019. Mr. Nixon is a beneficiary of the Harper Road project, a Bank-financed road that has opened up an area usually cut off from the rest of the country during the rainy season.

**Enhancing Civil Society Engagement in Regional Member Countries**

The Bank is committed to promote an inclusive dialogue in Regional Member Countries (RMCs). During the last semester of 2019, the Bank strongly engaged with civil society through the organization of Civil Society Open Days in Liberia on 30 August, Mozambique on 17 July, and Mauritius on 31 October 2019. Open Days are an opportunity for Country Offices to share information on the progress of the Bank’s work, updates on current portfolio achievements and upcoming projects and programs.

The Bank also focused on involving civil society in the elaboration of Country Strategy Papers (CSP) and Regional Integration Strategy Papers (RISP), as it was the case during Civil Society consultations in Mali, on 17 October 2019 and in Nigeria on 26 September 2019. CSPs/RISPs are the conceptual framework for programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of country and regional development assistance. The idea is to encourage a local ownership of Bank projects by ensuring the voices of civil society are reflected in CSPs/RISPs.
Partnering for Civil Society Engagement

Empowering Civil Society for Poverty Reduction: Islamic Development Bank-African Development Bank Partnership Continues

The African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) have committed to strengthen their ongoing partnership on engaging with civil society. Under the “IsDB NGOs Empowerment for Poverty Reduction” program, the two will develop joint initiatives on civil society engagement mainstreaming and capacity building and explore collaborative partnership, policy dialogue initiatives and joint funding opportunities. This ambitious program aims at empowering civil society organizations to improve the socio-economic well-being of hard-to-reach communities through better identification of impactful mechanisms and provision of assistance in their ongoing work to increase education of refugees and remote communities, job creation, building resilience and stronger community livelihoods.

Both institutions agreed that the pursuit of sustainable growth and the reduction of poverty and inequality across Africa would be better addressed with the Bank and IsDB gathering their respective resources and capabilities.

From Us to You

Vanessa Moungar, Director, Gender, Women and Civil Society Department

This year truly reflected the willingness of civil society to strongly engage in the Bank’s projects and operations to lead to a socio-economic transformation of Africa. Seeing how eager Civil Society is to take part in the AFAWA implementation gave me confidence: confidence in the fact that together, we will achieve great things. I am confident that the expertise of civil society and its proximity with grassroots populations will lead to great results in implementing AFAWA but also any other projects or initiatives in which it is involved. What more could one wish for the new year to come if not to continue this momentum? I wish you all a happy holiday season, and see you next year!

Zéneb Touré, Manager, Civil Society and Community Engagement Division

The social mobilization and advocacy campaign for the ADF-15 replenishment, the Civil Society Forum, our Civil Society Open Days in Regional Member Countries, our Country Strategy Papers consultations with civil society, and so on... so many achievements we-the Bank and civil society-can be proud of. Hand in hand, we marked this year with successes conducting us towards our main goal: mainstreaming civil society engagement in Bank projects and operations. We have already started doing it, yet more work needs to be done, both internally and externally. But I have no doubt in our capacity to do so, and 2020 will be the proof. I wish you all a cheerful holiday season!