

ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES
Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness
Africa Regional Consultation Report

- **Venue:** Archbishop Desmond Tutu Ecumenical Centre, Nairobi –Kenya.
- **Number of Participants:** 68. (see *Attached List of participants with the following information*):
 - Name of participant
 - Name of organisation represented
 - Type of CSO (umbrella organisation, community-based organisation, NGO, INGO, professional association, farmers' association, social movement, faith-based organisation, trade union, non-profit media etc.)
 - Gender
 - Position within organisation
- **Agenda for the consultation and a list of presentations made** (see *attached copies*) NB: Presentations on an enabling environment and organization of national and thematic consultations followed the toolkit.

2. Highlights

Q. Any positive or negative aspect of the consultation, possibly making use of participants' evaluations and comments

Positive: Though participants came from diverse working backgrounds, they were able to reach consensus in regards to the various issues that were raised in terms of principles and an enabling environment. This came out as shared concerns and the direction to take was largely agreed upon.

Participants agreed about the need to engage with governments for an enabling environment. We need to develop our operating principles; we need to minimum operating standards.

It was felt that maybe country consultations should have preceded the regional consultation thus bringing the true country positions to the continental consultation.

The Open Forum should act as an encouragement for CSO national platforms to fundraise to deepen the consultation process.

Let us hear the voice of Africa's CSOs.

Negative: The need to widen CSO participation. A number of different types of CSOs were not present or were not adequately represented including the media, the trade unions, farmers associations, professional organizations and gender focused organizations.

3. Key issues discussed

Q. List of essential and discretionary agenda items discussed in the consultation

- i. Background of the Open Forum: From Aid Effectiveness to Development Effectiveness.
- ii. Reflections on the Social, Economic and Political Dynamics in Africa.
- iii. Rationale for AACC's engagement.
- iv. Presentation on Legitimacy, Transparency, Accountability.
- v. Presentation of the Open Forum.
- vi. Presentation of enabling environment.
- vii. Presentation of the Tool Kit.
- viii. Presentation on organization of national Consultation.

Q. Summary of particularly important issues that emerged from the discussion (e.g. different views among different types of CSOs, any differing views relating to a gender dimension of CSO development effectiveness, tone of multi-stakeholder dialogue – if applicable - etc.)

Participants wondered how they could have the leadership in Africa and the ability of the citizenry to hold this leadership to account. Participants revisited the 1990 The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation which challenged the role of Donors and elites in Africa's development and noted that this is what Open Forum has revisited and wishes to build upon.

Participants wondered whether we should not be talking about an exit plan on aid for development effectiveness to be a rights issue. My own understanding there is a CSOs, it is about social justice outfits.

Participants felt that CSOs in Africa have not been recognised by governments and inter-governmental institutions as agents of development which is also the position of the PD. This is seen when for instance the Africa Union allows the representation of DFID in its summits/meetings while not allowing African CSOs.

Participants agreed that CSOs need to put their houses in order and that for them to be effective they must address issues concerned with their own legitimacy, transparency and accountability.

Q. Summary of key challenges to realising CSO development effectiveness possibly identified during the consultation workshop.

The consultation called this the key inhibiting factors for CSO development Effectiveness. There were listed as the following:-

- Donor driven agendas
- Conflicting donor standards
- Lack of sustainability (Resources)
- NGO Legislation (Ambiguous, Restrictive)
- Political interference
- Self promotion by CSOs
- Lack of clear focus By CSOs

4. Analysis and recommendations

Q. Key principles of CSO development effectiveness (not) ranked by importance

- R. High integrity.
- S. Legitimacy.
- T. Accountability.
- U. Social justice
- V. Gender equality.
- W. Participation.
- X. Self-regulation
- Y. Inclusivity.

Q. Suggested guidelines for implementing agreed principles of CSO development effectiveness, with a short narrative describing the rationale for the guideline and how it relates to a given principle in the given context and Suggested indicators for agreed principles

The consultation did not deliberate on how these principles could be implemented and did not also suggest indicators for agreed principles. Participants felt that the methodology on how these principles should be implemented should be left to national forums to discuss during the country consultations so that these can be made context specific. This in a way adds more credence to the suggestion that the regional consultation should have been preceded by country consultations.

Q. Suggested minimum standards and guidelines for an enabling environment for CSOs, with a short explanation of the issue in the enabling environment addressed by the standard (this should also clearly indicate the stakeholder group to which indicators apply: donors, governments, local authorities etc.)

The following minimum standards for were agreed upon as critical for CSO Development Effectiveness.

i. CSO INDEPENDENCE/SELF REGULATION

Responding to CSOs recognition and operations. This relates to all the three aspects of recognition -political, legal and judicial - and related mechanisms and taxation as well as the administrative aspects by governments.

Participants were in agreement that some form of legislation and administration needs to be in place however, they felt that CSOs could Peer Review themselves in many of the issues that governments have taken over in the form of laws and administration. They felt that self-regulation would even add value to the work of CSOs because it would serve as a moment for them to reflect on what is good for their countries and thus give concerted efforts for its achievement.

Responding to the Promotion of CSO voice: It was felt that for CSOs to be able to articulate the interests of their constituency effectively, they would need a

generally agreed instrument of adherence that would also help them create conducive environment for Promoting the Voice of CSOs.

ii. CSO CODE OF CONDUCT

This is also meant to respond to the two environments that have been mentioned in (i) that is **CSOs recognition and operations** and **the Promotion of CSO voice**.

This was seen to be the case because while the Code of conduct enables CSOs to develop mutual processes, structures and mechanisms that create access, space, and capacity for CSOs to formulate, articulate and convey their voice, Code of Conduct also aids in self-regulation and therefore recognition of CSOs by governments.

iii. TRANSPARENCY BY CSOS

Responding to the Promotion of CSO voice and the role of external partners and donors in promoting CSO development effectiveness: participants felt that transparency was a critical component in their promotion of CSO voice. They argued that it would be impossible to articulate the interests of others when operating from an obscured position. They called it "sincerity of purpose".

At the same time it was felt that a transparent CSO would not only get donors and multilateral agencies attention, but it would also get listened to by its government. Indeed this was seen as very critical even in responding to **CSO external relationships** within the national and international contexts.

This also helps in the **Promotion of CSO capacity** to promote CSO transparency and accountability of CSOs to their constituencies.

iv. FOCUS ON RESULTS

There was a general feeling among participants that this minimum standard was responding to all the environments that had been identified. For instance:

- **Promotion of CSO capacity** – participants felt that focusing on results should determine how funding is done for it to promote CSOs capacity. It was also agreed that Focus on Results should dictate the Regulations and other norms for these to promote CSO transparency and accountability of CSOs to their constituencies. This was also critical in the way the Government and other support programmes for developing CSO capacity and effectiveness.
- **Responding to CSOs recognition and operations** - Participants felt that Focus on Results would easily address the suspicions between the CSOs and governments and therefore lead to recognition -political, legal and administrative.
- **The Promotion of CSO voice** – participants felt that Focus on Results would usher in the establishment of processes, structures and mechanisms that would lead to the creation of access, space, and capacity for CSOs to

formulate, articulate and convey their voice in consultations and decision-making processes nationally and internationally.

Q. Proposed good practices for mechanisms that assure CSO accountability and effectiveness

- i. Integrity and self-regulation through A CSO PEER REVIEW MECHANISM.
- ii. Adherence to a CSO Code of Conduct.
- iii. Transparency CSOs to their constituency, governments and donors.
- iv. Legitimacy through engagement of a clear constituency and observance of established legal requirements within the enabling environment framework.
- v. Managing CSOs work for Results and Impact.

Q. Additional information: for instance, areas where common understanding emerged and areas where there were widely divergent views

Generally, common understanding was greatly witnessed in the proceedings of the consultation. Participants agreed that aid was not the end but just a means to and end, that end they said was development. This development must be that which transforms the living conditions of the poor and the marginalised for the better.

It was communicated to participants that all national consultations should take place before Mid July 2010 since the Open Forum Assembly is in August 2010. Thus from March to June 2010 most of the consultations must take place.

Concerning the national platforms to coordinate the consultations, it was mentioned that the criteria for their selection will be:

- ❖ Have expertise in conducting national consultations
- ❖ Participated in the Aid Effectiveness agenda
- ❖ Participated in the regional consultation

On the relationship between the CSOs and the AACC, it was mentioned that AACC is one of the platforms mandated to lead and manage the funds for the National Consultations in Africa. The CSOs will be accountable to the AACC and AACC is accountable to GFG. The AACC is in contract with the CSOs office in Brussels which channels money through AACC. The AACC will channel the money through the National Christian Councils which in turn will channel the money to the CSOs organizing the National Consultations in that country. In countries where there is no National Christian Council, the AACC will look for a credible CSO where an MOU will be entered. Where the CSOs want the money to be sent directly to them, they will need to enter an MOU directly with the Brussels office. The AACC will handle the follow up and work together with the GFG members who will also participate in the National Consultations.

Participants were informed that the available budget per country is \$12,000. The allocation did not consider the size of the African Countries. Concord offered to

provide additional funds for translation services. An appropriate methodology to be used in the National Consultations to ensure that the participation is all inclusive.

Dates of the National Consultations

There were tentative dates proposed for the National Consultations. However, participants could not agree. They proposed that the participants go back home and consult their constituent and submit the dates to the AACC not later than close of business on 10th February 2010.

Way Forward

The following was agreed as the way forward: -

- National Consultations to be participatory and inclusive
- Organize a preparatory meeting to at least brainstorm on how best to organize the National consultations
- The National Consultations to be organized as per the directions in the tool kit.
- To establish a strong secretariat that will report after the National Consultations
- Give a deadline on when to give the report and account to the AACC after the National Consultations
- Think about fundraising and the sustainability of the CSOs.