

THE AFRICA CSO WORKING GROUP SUMMARY REPORT

ON

**HLC/AUC/UNECA Consultative Meeting on
Building an Accountability Framework for CAP/Post-2015 Development
Agenda in Africa
21-23 August 2014, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

By

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1. ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING

The main objective of the meeting that took place from 21-23 August in Addis Ababa was to generate an accountability framework for Africa for Common Africa Position (CAP) as well as the post 2015. Against the background of the accountability meetings in New York, each region had to undertake consultations with key stakeholders regarding the accountability framework suitable to them

a) Main issues discussed

The meeting noted that Africa doesn't need to develop an accountability framework from scratch but can review existing frameworks such as APRM, CADP, UNDAF, etc for positive lessons. It was pointed out that while these frameworks provide important lessons they have to be appropriately modified and be made "fit for purpose". They often don't speak to each other and hence the need for rationalization. It was however pointed out (mostly by CSOs in the room) that the starting point of these frameworks also needs to be reviewed since they were not developed in a consultative and inclusive manner. Therefore, a solid people centred vision can provide the rallying point around which positive experiences from these frameworks can be harnessed. An integrated framework that brings everything together was noted as important.

A consultant had been engaged by the AU to work on the elements of accountability framework and he presented some of the key issues and pillars for discussion. The Africa CSO Working Group and the other CSO groups present were given the morning session of the 22nd to share the CSO perspectives on accountability. Specifically we shared on the role of the CSOs in accountability (details of our consolidated inputs will be circulated later). In this session, a number of Africa CSO Working Group members were scheduled to speak as panellists. However after some discussion amongst ourselves we agreed that we can't all present as we will be speaking to ourselves. So we limited the presentations to only the 2 of us and the rest intervened from the floor. A separate synthesized report on the CSO input on accountability is being worked on by Stefano and will be shared.

Suffice to say that the key issues that came out during presentations and floor discussions (from all stakeholders present) during the 2 days include;

- Emphasis on the importance of bottom-up people centred accountability framework that reports on issues that matter to peoples' lives and starts with what is already there at the country levels. This is an accountability framework that connects with citizens' realities and aspirations. It was pointed out that the country level is where it matters most, so an accountability framework should be anchored at national level.
- Accountability framework should create space for citizens to learn from each other (experiential learning) and this can be done at the regional levels and facilitated by CSOs.
- Importance of defining the key principles of accountability and key words and phrases such as people centred, inclusive, ownership, citizen participation, etc to ensure we have a common understanding.
- Data partnerships with key stakeholders including CSOs are an important aspect of the accountability framework. Data or lack of should not restrict our ambition on people centred accountability. So data availability or unavailability should not be an excuse for inaction.

There is need to distinguish between data, information and knowledge. While data may not be available on some indicators, there is a lot of information and knowledge that can be tapped into. There is also need to disaggregate data more at local levels, and CSOs can partner on this since they have been collecting a lot of administrative data in their work over the years. CSOs play a role in provided demand side data. At times donor priorities dominate national priorities resulting in skewed data priorities. This is worsened by fact that national statistical offices are underfunded and lack autonomy

- All stakeholders have a role to play in the accountability framework and they should be engaged on the basis of their strengths. As CSOs we are already involved on accountability issues at the various levels and we are looking forward to be engaged on the basis of our strengths.
- Accountability framework should strengthen role of parliament and other accountability institutions and we should not absolve parliament and other accountability institutions from playing this role.
- The accountability framework is for everybody (developing and developed countries). So it's important to understand that developed countries need to be held accountable as much as developing countries.
- Accountability framework should have national, regional and continental dimensions. It should be about rebalancing power at national, regional and international levels
- The accountability framework should espouse some of the key principles in the HLP Report such as "leave no-one behind" and should facilitate "data revolution"
- There were extensive discussions around voluntary versus penal accountability framework. The meeting largely noted that accountability is better achieved if appropriate incentives (that promote race to the top) are put in place as opposed to sanctions. Sanctions may be counter-productive and will result in non-implementation. We also need to bear in mind that the development agenda is not legally binding and this makes it difficult to have a strictly binding accountability framework with penal codes
- The accountability framework need to be based on people and not institutions per se.
- Solid leadership is important at all levels to ensure the accountability framework delivers on African citizens expectations
- The accountability framework should be based on a covenant, a value system that holds everyone accountable
- The CSOs have a role to play especially as a partner in the planning, implementation and review of the accountability framework.
- The accountability framework should not just rely on reports but should create and strengthen platforms for taking action at all levels. Space for complimentary reports from other stakeholders should also be created
- Business also needs to be actively involved and we should ask ourselves; what role should business play in this accountability architecture and what do we want to see from business?
- Building accountability frameworks should follow similar path as building development strategies
- We need to also look at data differently as normal statistical processes will not give us all the answers we need. We also need to look at how we can change the structure of how data flows and is harmonized. Once we embrace the concept of data revolution, then it becomes

easier to address issues of what our statistical department should do, as well as what they need to change or improve.

- The HLC need to be reconfigured to enable it to carry the post 2015 agenda forward. While it has done a decent job to date, as of now its mandate seem to have expired. It was further noted that there is an overlap between the HLC and APRM—they both seem to be doing the same thing and report to the same AU
- The accountability framework should be simple and not burdensome to implement
- CSOs also need to be accountable to other stakeholders and the constituencies they serve

On the basis of these key issues and the preceding discussions, the consultant updated the elements and presented them to the plenary on the final day (see attached power-point presentation with the “elements”). After presentation of the draft framework (purportedly taking into account discussions of the last 2 days), the following comments and concerns were raised by mostly CSOs

- There is need to build in the aspect of implementation and review on all the commitments
- How the accountability framework will be funded is an important issue and need to be made explicitly clear. So we need to also look at the means of implementation
- It was reiterated that the accountability framework should be based on a social contract among all stakeholders and not what the government should do anyway such as parliamentarians, etc
- Concerns about the current composition of HLC need to be addressed, if it is to continue playing an active role in the post 2015 MDG process.
- The role of CSOs as a partner in data analysis and gathering was re-emphasized
- The revised presentation of the accountability framework by the consultant should include a section on data and incorporate all the issues raised by stakeholders (as in above)
- The presentation also need a “means of implementation” section—that is what does it take for the accountability framework to be functional. This should deal with issues relating to capacities, financing as well as role of development partners
- There is need for broader consultations on this framework beyond this meeting to include citizens

After a lot of discussion on whether we are developing an accountability framework for Common Africa position or for Africa agenda 2063 or for post 2015, it was clarified that the Common Africa Position came from Agenda 2063 and its Africa’s own position and its contribution to the post 2015 agenda. In addition CAP has serious commonalities and overlaps with the SDGs. So the meeting is developing an accountability framework for post 2015 and agenda 2063

b) General Comments/Assessment

It was great that UNECA and AU opened up space for Civil Society involvement (as they always do) on this important work. The role of the Africa CSO Working Group in inputting into the post 2015 MDGs in general and accountability framework in particular was recognized and appreciated.

In terms of timelines for the accountability framework; the meeting was informed that it will go to the Sherpas for adoption, then the High Level Committee on post 2015 MDGs and then will be submitted to the Secretary General for synthesis with other submissions from other regions. After

that there will be more consultations. However it looks as if this framework will be fast tracked as much as possible and am not sure whether the second round consultations will happen and how linked it will be to the outcome of the current consultations. So it's important that as CSOs we remain vigilant and ensure that we "follow-up" on this process and ensure our inputs are carried through. The Africa CSO Working Group members in attendance agreed that one way of being vigilant is to ensure that we submit a consolidated input of our views to UNECA-AU. This report is being finalized by Stefano and will be shared with UNECA as well as everyone. In addition, we need to embed ourselves and follow these processes as closely as we can.

It is important to point out that the role we (as CSOs) can play in these processes is not a given and still as open to contestation (especially from policy makers) as it has always been. This is against the reality of the ever shrinking CSO space in these processes. This therefore means that we need to be more strategic and speak with one collective voice if ever we are to be heard and taken seriously. This also calls for us to strengthen our connections with our constituencies, fight for our space more than before and be prepared to generate and engage in "positive tensions" with other stakeholders including policy makers.

2. OUTCOME OF MEETING WITH UNECA

We had very useful side meetings with the UNECA and AU team (the whole AWG team), AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs as well as Amina Mohammed (a few of us). In addition, we also had a bit of time to reflect on our work as the Africa CSO Working Group.

The Africa CSO Working Group had a useful meetings with UNECA (though we had very limited time than we would have had wanted due to the continuous shift in the program). The main objective of the meeting was to explore ways for Africa CSO Working Group and UNEC-AU can structurally collaborate on the post 2015 as well as the broader Africa Agenda.

The key collaboration areas and outcomes from the meeting with UNECA-AU included;

- The Africa CSO Working Group to compare notes with UNECA-AU regarding their reflections to the OWG latest document (which is currently underway) and implications for implementation as well as accountability
- Africa CSO Working Group to work closely with UNECA regarding the financing for development Conference and any conversations and processes prior to that. It will also involve a collaboration on where the various countries are at regarding the financing for development conversations
- Collaboration on narrowing the gap between capitals and New York. The Africa CSO Working Group has been doing a lot of this. However, currently there is no feedback from the capitals to New York because there is no dialogue happening. So the Africa CSO Working Group need to strengthen these dialogues.
- Need to collaborate on creating and sustaining structured space to build information and knowledge among the citizens. Currently there is disconnect in terms of the process, information provision, etc
- Need space to jointly reflect on the Implementation framework of the post 2015 MDG agenda
- Need space to jointly reflect on the negotiation process.

- Setting up of accountability mechanisms is an important collaboration area
- Facilitate sub-regional consultations and processes to consolidate citizen's voices on accountability framework, CAP and the broader post 2015 MDG agenda.

All this was based on the understanding that the Africa CSO Working Group need to structurally collaborate with UNECA-AU and embed in the key processes. The Africa CSO Working Group was invited onto the technical team between AU and UNECA. In addition, I will follow up with the commissioner of Economic Affairs regarding the AWG providing formal technical support to the Africa Group in New York. We are already doing this, but formalizing this with the AU and HLC will help.

It was further noted that the Africa CSO Working Group will also be helpful in facilitating the following quick actions in the very short-term.

- Feed-backing the outcome of the accountability meeting to our constituencies—this is the starting point of ensuring this takes root at local and national level. It also helps as a validation mechanisms and CSOs can assist.
- Mapping of stakeholders at national levels. It was pointed out that at the moment there is no clear picture of who are the key stakeholders to this accountability framework and what are they doing, etc
- Evaluation of current structures and mechanisms at the national levels and how well they are working—to give a holistic picture

Due to the time limitations, the Africa CSO Working Group agreed to send a detailed proposal (based on the key priority issues above) on how to collaborate more closely with UNECA and AU. I will keep you updated on this.

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