Civil Society Consultations for the Pre-Identification Mission for COMESA Regional Land Reform Program to enhance Agriculture Transformation-Zambia

30 September 2021

The Bank together with COMESA held a Civil Society Consultations in Zambia as part of the Pre Identification Mission for COMESA Regional Land Reform Program to enhance Agriculture Transformation.

The meeting was offset with a speech by the Director of Special Programmes who stressed the African Development Bank's President's ambition to build back Africa better and smarter from the pandemic, while paying greater attention to social development and quality growth, especially in the areas of health and health infrastructure, agriculture and food security, gender, women and youth development and to put even greater emphasis on matters of energy, climate adaptation and mitigation. She further added that it is important that the Bank's agenda is owned by local communities in order for its projects and programmes to have significant impact on their lives.

Civil Society Organization present were asked to identify and discuss key areas that would promote regional integration and agricultural transformation in Zambia. SACAU, the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions, said that there was convergence in the work they are doing to assist agricultural transformation and the objectives of the Land Reform Project. Some of the key areas of their focus includes;

- Sustainable land based investments
- Women
- Security of tenure
- Equitable access to land
- Sustainable land uses and management
- Strengthening of Institutions/capacity building

The Zambia Land Alliance (ZLA) highlighted the following as key areas of concern;

- There is lack of financing for land purchase by local citizens as Banks have been pro large scale investments.
- In some instances, Ordinary people's land rights have been violated e.g. through displacement of people.
- The Alliance's interest is to strengthen land governance.

- Women's land rights is also a priority for the Alliance.
- The alliance would like to see how women's land rights will be enhanced through this programme.
- The Alliance has been lobbying for an amendment of the Land Policy as currently, a chief, alone can consent to giving out customary land and people will be displaced.

The African Land Policy Center has been supporting the land policy development in Zambia in collaboration with the Zambia Land Alliance. The ZLA organised civil society's input and co-organised engagement with traditional leaders, which supported the participatory approach in developing the policy. They have also developed a comprehensive communication and advocacy strategy that can help Zambia produces and roll out its land strategy.

The Social Safe Guards Specialist of the Bank mentioned that the bank wants to ensure that land acquisition, displacement and compensation are taken into consideration in this project.

Participants gave more context on land issues in Zambia. Highlights from this discussion were as follows;

- There are several challenges that affect women's land rights. Zambia has customary land, administered by chiefs and traditional leaders who are largely patriarchal in nature so women are raised to believe they can only acquire land through their husbands, brothers etc.
- There is a need to sensitize women and traditional leaders so they can give women land in their names. Even women themselves have not changed with times.
- There is a problem as currently customary land is being given to men only.
- It is possible to acquire state land as a woman, however, you need to have the money to buy the application forms, which is further complicated by issues of illiteracy. All these factors work against women who are not economically empowered.
- The ZLA engages government, women and local communities to address some of these issues. They have also lobbied for a reduction in age for young people to be able to own land (from 18-16years).

The Director further encouraged CSOs to introspect and see what they can do to alleviate some of the challenges discussed in this consultation. She added that it is important for CSOs to complement the Bank's efforts in their individual mandates.

In the wrap up meeting on October 5, it was agreed that the next steps would be as follows:

- The mission team will incorporate these interventions into the Zambia component of the project.
- After identifying all these issues, there will be a wrap up meeting with all the stakeholders to discuss how these areas will be implemented.
- The areas which will be implemented have to prioritise regional integration and ensure the achievement of the objectives of transforming agriculture in the region.

- There will be some activities for the region and for individual countries.
- There will be a consolidation of the issues emanating from the countries that can be dealt with at a regional level.