CSP Consultative Workshop for CSOs in Namibia

The African Development Bank in collaboration with Namibia Institute for Democracy hosted a CSO workshop at the House of Democracy on May 29, 2019. A total of 30 CSO participants were in attendance. Key issues discussed included:

CSO Sustainability Index conducted by the Institute of Public Policy and Research (IPPR) in 2017 focusing on the following areas: Legal Environment; Organisational Capacity ;Financial Viability; Advocacy; Service Provision; Sectoral Infrastructure and Public Image. Key findings indicated that Namibia presented an enabling legal operating context for CSOs, with freedom of media, both of which create plenty of civic space that enables CSOs to go about their work without the fear of reprisals or negative repercussions from the State. CSOs rated highly in their advocacy work and have done well in providing services to communities. However, CSO funding remains a big challenge, partly because the country is categorized as a Middle Income Country, and in the face of the on-going global trends, donors are not very keen on funding CSOs particularly in their capacity-building areas. This situation has driven some CSOs into dormancy or closures. Due to the lack of a strong CSO coordinating umbrella body, CSO activities are often carried out in silos and in an ad hoc manner. Additionally, most CSOs lack large grassroots network and tend to be Windhoek-based . The Namibian economy has been in recession since 2016, leading to a deepening financial crisis, poverty and vulnerability, and with unemployment reaching 34% out of which 46% constitutes unemployed youth. The Land Conference held in 2018 came out with several recommendations that the Government should undertake in ensuring that land issues are handled in a consistent, fair and just manner. The recent drought has been exacerbated by climate change factors and has rendered communities more vulnerable. The country has a total of just over 130 active listed CSOs who focus mainly on Education and Health.

Recommendations

- There is need develop a CSO data-base for easy identification and coordination of their interventions, to avoid working in silos and duplicating efforts and to allow development partners easily identify partners we can work with when designing projects
- CSOs need to work on improving their image through more information sharing and forming synergies and shared responsibilities
- There is need to put a case to donors for increased funding support to CSO while exploring other existing opportunities for resource mobilization e.g. from Corporate Social Responsibility funds available within the private sector
- There is need to pool resources and identify shared mandates which allows for provision of more efficient services to the public and donor partners
- There is need to reach out to rural community based organisations who are often left out of policy and decision-making dialogues and spaces. CSOs need to move out beyond the Capital and support CBOs that have a stronger network in the grassroot populations to ensure that the rural communities are part of the national development agenda
- Create a CSO hub (NID is doing this), that will help identify, coordinate and share CSO information and updates on relevant development issues taking place in the country
- Plan and hold an annual CSO Indaba which could create an opportunity for collaborating with the African Development Bank which plans to hold CSO Open Days in the countries where the Bank has operations
- CSOs should endeavor to learn more about the Bank and its operations by visiting the Bank's website and liasing with the Ministry of Finance on the Country Policy Paper preparation and project design.
- CSOs should participate in the Bank's activities in the country, at policy dialogue up to the project design and implementation levels
- There is need to become more aware and work with Private sector to support Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the country, for inclusive growth and development and for supporting social innovation and entrepreneurships
- Their priorities for the Bank's new CSP should focus on addressing climate change (both adapatation and mitigation), provision of energy for creation of jobs for youth, Youth unemployment, Women's economic empowerment, boosting agricultural productivity and food security, enhancing the capacity of the private sector and promoting PPPs