CIVIL SOCIETY
FORUM

“Engaging Civil Society in Accelerating Africa’s Industrialization”

The Civil Society Forum is an exciting platform for dialogue between Civil Society and the Bank. The Forum will be held separately from the Bank’s Annual Meetings and will consist of a 3-day event devoted entirely to priorities of civil society in Africa. The 2018’s session is a renewed platform with a new format for collaboration and tracking the implementation of decisions from the consultations with civil society accross the continent.

Dedicating an event to members of the civil society is only coherent with the ongoing shifts in the importance of multi-stakeholder participation. Indeed, Civil Society has a key role in Africa’s social and economic transformation. Over the past decades, Civil Society in emerging economies has grown into a dynamic, innovative and influential ecosystem with increased power beyond their traditional advocacy role. Consistent with the global shift in areas of technology, globalization and emerging markets, the role of Civil Society in Africa has expanded. In the quest to address pressing issues efficiently, CSOs are increasingly seen not only as advocates but also as enablers for change, project incubator, experts and partners.

1. Key topics and highlighted issues for discussion during the forum

1.1 Engaging Civil Society to Accelerate Africa’s Industrialization

In accordance with the Annual Meetings, the 2018 Forum will be shaped under motto of Industrialization, with sessions on the role of civil society in ensuring the inclusivity and sustainability of Africa’s approach to industrialization. Civil Society has been at the forefront of every major societal shift, connecting citizens, development institutions and policy-makers. Africa’s leapfrog into an inclusive and sustainable industrialization requires a structured and refreshed dialogue with the Civil Society. Both online and offline, Civil Society Organizations have been shaping policies, building capacities, creating space for innovation and driving change.

In today’s global economy, to achieve the crucial structural and industrial transformation, Africa must evolve beyond the simple extraction of natural resources to higher rungs of the global value chain. In synergy with development agencies, governments, civil society, farmers organizations, labor/workers unions, social actors, social entrepreneurs and women cooperatives have always worked to better the conditions of society. By strengthening human and material capacities, including agricultural machineries and advocate for inclusive and fair-trade policies, pooling resources and procurement needs, CSOs have always strived to capture a greater part of the value chain. the civil society’s expertise coupled with the Bank’s human, financial and policy investment have the potential to spur Africa’s industrialization.

1.2 Strategic engagement at country level: Multistakeholder coordination

The growing number of the development community show that no one sector nor actor can resolve Africa’s development challenges alone in a context of fragility. Numerous cases have shown how a multistakeholder coordination can achieve impactful results at national level.

A session will be allocated to discussing existing multistakeholder engagement initiatives that are leveraged in countries to identify concerted actions. These coordinated actions between the stakeholders are important to ensure transparency and accountability at a country-level and maximize impact. This session aims at sharing experiences and best practices in Africa and drawing recommendations for better coordination among Partner Institutions, donors, CSOs and Governmental Institutions in order to ensure the effectiveness of aid.

The coordination mechanism of stakeholders is all the more crucial in linking the short-term imperatives and long-term objectives. Indeed, fragile situation calls for immediate response to urgent needs, but also requires long-term planning for sustainable development, particularly in fostering structural economic transformation and building resilient infrastructure that respond to real needs (basic needs, employment, training opportunities and economic activities).

1.3 The new Ecosystem: Social Impact Entrepreneurship

Social Entrepreneurs are breaking the binary opposition between non-profit organizations and profit businesses. By leveraging innovation and financial capital, they have successfully designed responses to specific African challenges in various sectors, namely health, environment, education, agriculture and energy. The economic traction made possible by rising Public-Private Partnerships and Africa's industrialization setting the stage for Civil Society to become the 3rd force in providing an inclusive and sustainable process.

In order to scale the much-needed social innovation and the necessary systematic change, the continent needs a strategy for successful innovations. By embracing the social innovation an entrepreneurship sector as a complementary strategy to the Bank's civil society engagement, the African Development Bank has an opportunity to improve the lives of the most poor and marginalized.

2. Objectives

The 2018 Forum will provide an opportunity to define the roles and responsibilities of Civil Society towards achieving Africa's sustainable and inclusive Industrialization. Specifically, it should promote the increased engagement of CSOs to boost the inclusiveness and sustainability of Africa's industrialization. To achieve the overall objective of the Forum, it will be necessary to go through the following objectives:

- Enable civil society to take ownership of AfDB's industrialization strategy and contribute to its implementation.
- Provide a platform for a structured dialogue between the AfDB and the African civil society which will support industrial policy formulation and implementation through practical advice
- Develop a set of recommendations to improve the inclusiveness and sustainability of industrial policies, strategies and regulations.
- Discuss multi-stakeholder coordination and peer to peer learning on existing mechanisms at country level.

3. Participants

The event will gather around 200 participants, with attention to representations from all sub-regions of Africa:

- CSOs and Social actors across Africa
- Officials and Government representatives
- Bank staff members and Senior Management
- Private sector
- People around the world who could follow the event online through various media and communication channels.

4. Format

Plenary sessions

Tapping into the CSOs' knowledge and experience, the Forum sessions are designed on thematic threads in order to foster constructive dialogue and best practices to support the Bank in implementing the Hi5 – Industrialize Africa. The sessions will facilitate open dialogue and participants interaction through active discussions, peer sharing of experiences and group solution finding.

Breakout sessions

Breakout sessions are scheduled as part of the Forum, where specific topics related to the Forum's agenda will be discussed by a smaller group. Recommendations from these sessions will be validated during the next plenary and presented at the Annual Meetings for incorporation into AfDB's policies and projects.

Thematic CSO-led sessions

Call for proposals will be shared on the Bank's website and on social media for effective reach to continental and global civil society organizations. Application forms will be reviewed by AHGC and the AfDB-CSO committee, prioritizing the CSO that best fit the general theme and to ensure balance in geographic representation and diversity in scope of mandate. The aim is to have specific sessions led and managed by CSOs which will provide a space for grassroots innovative ideas as well as enhanced partnership with CSOs through a greater ownership of the sessions.

Meet with AfDB Senior Management

Dedicated desks/offices will be available for Civil Society representatives to meet directly with AfDB senior management across the Hi5. Forum participants will receive practical answers to their questions on the Bank's projects and programs, as well as funding mechanisms. They will also be able to create synergies with current and future Bank's initiatives.

Virtual Forum and interactive sessions

The Forum will be available on live streaming. Highlights of the event will simultaneously be reported through social media, pictures will be posted on Flickr and Instagram, and a podcast of the event, divided by session, will be available online after the event. The virtual audience, external participants and global civil society community will be able to interact with panelists and participants at the Forum by submitting their questions/remarks through social media.