

Non-State Actors and Cotonou Agreement in Ethiopia

International cooperation which covers diverse areas between European community and Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, known collectively as the ACP Group have dated back since the signing of the Lomé I convention in 1975. In June 2000 under the previous Lomé and Yaoundé frameworks, a new 20 years cooperation agreement named the Cotonou agreement after the capital of Benin was signed between 77 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) and the European Union countries were. The agreement concludes with an objective of reducing and eventually eradicating poverty, contributing towards peace and security and promoting stable and democratic political governance.

A key feature of the Cotonou trade and aid agreement which is overtly expressed from Article 4 to 7 is its emphasis on the participation of Non State Actors (NSAs) including Civil Society organization (CSOs) in ACP countries in the realization of the cooperation agreement. What is more; the participation is not limited to project implementation but also (extends) to political dialogue, policy formulation and monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation progress.

Hence for the first time with the aim of elevating greater involvement of NSAs and making full use of this cooperation tool (the Cotonou) and transforming this tool in a way that foster the development process of (in) Ethiopia, a consultation meeting was held in 2003 with the facilitation of Inter Africa Group, Saferworld and Africa Peace Forum and in collaboration with the European Commission (EC) and Ministry of Finance and Economic development (MoFED) and out came with an idea of forming a task force team- which can make sure effective participation of the NSAs in the Cotonou agreement. Consequently on November 2003, a nine member interim Task Force team from different stakeholders was formed to summon a national meeting in August 2004 in order to notify the larger CSOs community about Cotonou, engage in dialogue between EU and National Authorizing Office (NAO), and facilitate the establishment of a NSAs permanent structure.

In August 2004 the General Assembly workshop held in successfully and proposed the first duty of the TF to be the preparation of Terms of Reference and Plan of Action in order to facilitate the NSAs engagement in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. Both documents were drafted by two of the members of the TF, and other members commented and made their inputs to enrich contents of the draft documents. From there on the TF started functioning with the following objective and specific objective, based at (housed within) the Inter Africa Group.

Objectives of the TF and activities it would undertake during its mandated time were clearly stated in the Terms of Reference (ToR). Hence, the general purpose of forming a TF, according to the ToR, is to facilitate and ensure effective participation of the NSAs in Cotonou agreement.

And the **specific objectives** include:

- Facilitate the creation of an all inclusive forum for Ethiopian NSAs;
- Organize various events for awareness creation on Cotonou; experience sharing programs and trainings on various skills Cotonou requires;
- Facilitate capacity building of NSAs;
- Engage other actors (Government and EU) in dialogue;
- Mobilize resources;
- Represent NSAs at all level and coordinate all efforts of NSAs and other agents, with regards to Cotonou:
- Facilitate and coordinate the role of NSAs in program implementation, appraisal and review, etc.

To realize these objectives, the TF planned to accomplish the following activities:

- Organizing various events such as seminars, trainings, workshops on Cotonou agreement and EPAs negotiations
- Undertake a study on current status of the NSAs and involve in capacity building work;
- Create an office/secretariat for the TF and manage affairs of NSAs formally;
- Create a documentation centre and retrieve relevant information for members;
- Organize experience sharing trips within and out of the country;
- Coordinate and lead all activities related to Cotonou in order to reduce fragmentation;
- Create various sub-committees for review of joint report appraisal, project evaluation, and program follow ups, etc.

Organizational set-up and leadership mandate

- The General Assembly (GA) that created the Taskforce shall be the higher body of authority for one year.
- The Taskforce shall report to the GA on its activities biannually
- The Taskforce shall have its own chair-person, deputy chair and a secretary
- The Chair Person, the Deputy Chair and the Secretary shall serve as the Executive Committee (EC), financial as a treasurer and technical Assistance of the Taskforce
- The Taskforce shall have the power of forming various sub-groups from among itself or other members of NSAs, to better facilitate its activities.
- The Taskforce shall meet at least ones in two weeks if not a month.
- The taskforce shall have employees, (technical expert, secretarial, etc.) to effectively undertake its business.

ACTIVITY REPORT

In order to make full use of this cooperation tool and exploit all its relevant provisions and instruments, the Non State Actors are entrusted to part in the consultation of Country Strategy Papers (CSP), the National Indicative Programme (NIP) and Sector Strategies, and involve in the implementation of programme and projects. The Cotonou taskforce, to date with 17 members, with a view to apply these likely roles, has conducted countless meetings and included its inputs in the joint annual reports by employing both the ToT and the Action Plan as a guiding principle.

The following are the three years activity reports of the Taskforce.

1. Cotonou TF members meetings

Series of meetings of the TF have been held at the Inter Africa Group (IAG) office, at least once a month, under the chairmanship of IAG, represented by W/t Timnit Abraha and have passed various decisions. The meetings were mainly focusing on agendas described on the Terms of Reference and project activities that are outlined to transform the objectives of the Task force into lives. Each of the meetings were minuted and documented properly by the Chair. What is enchanting is; though each of the TF members has other responsibilities and tight programs at their respective office, they have been committed themselves to get done the planned activities. Undeniably; there were also some members who were not fully contributing and unattended most of the meetings. This was an issue of great concern for the TF and in a number of occasions members raised and discussed on it.

2. Participation of the NSAs in the Joint Annual Reports (JARs)

JARs are operational reviews based on an annual report prepared by the European Commission and the Government. Its purpose is to inform and contribute and mainstream improvement in programming and dialogue process every year. Thus it is meant to assess i) the programming process, ii) on-going dialogue between the three stakeholders as well as iii) indicators to measure results in focal and non- focal sectors. This review mechanism is flexible and regular in a way that will continuously update the Country or Regional Strategy Paper and the volume of resources allocated in response to evolving needs and performance. This review process will be decentralized at a field level (meaning the delegation in country), so that it becomes an integral part of the programming and dialogue between the EC and the ACP country. What is more; the annual operational review also Précis the results of regular dialogue with the recipient country and extends the operational programming perspective for the coming period.

The TF asked involvement of CSOs in the preparation process of JAR and for the first time the taskforce has been given the draft report to provide inputs in 2003. Afterwards they (NSAs) were requested to submit written input to the JAR 2004. Accordingly the TF hired a consultant to compile all the inputs and recommendations to the JAR and submitted to the EC and MoFED on October 2005. Since the taskforce was not in

position to do research on each and every sector of JAR 2004, the inputs included only relate to the parts of the contents of the report itself. The inputs and comments made by the TF build on earlier concern expressed by the TF and other NSAs in other countries in the region through the various consultation and meetings made different times, including the input on JAR 2003, done and submitted to the EC in September 2004 and acknowledged by the EC.

The NSAs input to the JAR were acknowledged both by the EC and the GoE; has been annexed to the JAR and sent to Brussels. Read more... (**Memo**-the whole report of the three years JAR will be released)

3. Engaging dialogue between EC Delegation and NAO

The TF has been consulting with EU and NAO in various occasions by representing the NSAs in Ethiopia. With the spirit of Cotonou and in line with the CSP and NIP of Ethiopia, the TF has been influencing both actors to involve the NSAs proactively. It especially put its effort for the €10 million Civil Society Fund, allocated to NSAs, to be disbursed as planned.

Out of the series of consultation meetings with the EC Delegation and NAO, the following could be taken as good examples.

- **Joint Annual Review (JAR) 2004 Workshop organized by the EU:**

The TF played a proactive role in providing NSAs input and in influencing the EC and NAO to give due consideration to these inputs and include them in the official JAR. EC believed that the JAR should be reviewed by the TF and that the view be accepted and respected as it is without any modification. Hence, the input was annexed to the report and sent to Brussels. Before it was sent, a consultation meeting was held on October 6, 2005, between EU, the Government and the TF regarding the EU and Government of Ethiopia's (EoG) cooperation agreement and JAR. On the meeting, the JAR 2004 was presented and participants discussed on the report. The TF highlighted the necessity to engaging NSAs and to make them part of the EC/MOFED in preparing the next JAR 2005.

- **The Civil Society Fund:** The Ethiopian NOA and the EC delegation have proposed that the allocation of funds to civil society be managed by two committees (a steering committee and an evaluation committee) comprising representatives from EC, the government and civil society. The steering committee is chaired by the government while the evaluation committee is chaired by the EC. The Evaluation committee has the capacity to approve or reject funding proposals submitted by Ethiopian NSAs.

The TF assigned two permanent and two replacement representatives for the Steering Committee and one permanent and one replacement member for the Evaluation Committee. During its first meeting, the Steering Committee agreed to raise the number of representative from the CSOs to four and the number of representative from NAO and MCB reduced to one each. It is believed that the CSOs representatives will continue to have active participation both in the Steering and Evaluation Committees.

4. Representation of the TF members in national & international meetings

Members of the TF have been attending various conferences, workshops and other types of national and international meetings by representing NSAs of Ethiopia. These meetings gave the representatives good opportunities to share other countries experiences, mainly on NSAs engagement in Cotonou. They have also gained a great deal of knowledge in development related issues. Among various meetings, the following examples can be taken:

Workshop to map the way forward on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) negotiations, 14 and 15 January 2005, Nairobi - Kenya.

The workshop participants were drawn from CSOs in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia and Mauritius. Two of the TF members, Ato Yabowork Haile and Dr. Alemayehu Arede were on the workshop representing the Ethiopian CSOs. From the two days panel sessions with plenary discussions at the end of each session, the participants shared their knowledge, expertise, experience and goals with regard to the EPAs negotiations.

The objectives of the Workshops were

- To build capacity of ESA civil society on the technical issues in the EPAs negotiations as well as the political dynamics and the negotiating process;
- To develop common strategies and a plan of action for civil society engagement in the EPAs negotiations within the ESA region;
- To develop and establish an ESA wide consultative process for civil society engagement nationally and regionally – in the EPAs negotiations process

The Ethiopian representatives presented a report to the TF members. They shared their experience and gave brief on what EPAs negotiations are and what it means for Ethiopia. They suggested the need for awareness raising workshop and training kit for civil society to build their capacity for knowledge base and negotiation skill to enable them to participate in EPAs arrangement.

Civil Society Fund Steering Committee Meeting Held at MoFED Office/ Multilateral Cooperation Department, on June 16, 2005

Two of the TF members represent the CSOs in the Steering Committee, which was established based on the CSP and chaired by NAO. During this first meeting of the Steering Committee, organizational and implementation procedures for the civil society funds were discussed. During the meeting it was pointed out that:

- The appointment of the TA to get the technical assistance required. The selection would be done by the EU delegation;
- The Fund management be done by the CSO;
- Publicity be done as to the launching of the program as soon as possible;
- More number of the CSO representatives should be in the Steering Committee

- The NAO or MCB representatives should focus on facilitation the program for its success, but the implementation and the management of the fund be decided by the CSO.

At the end of the meeting it was agreed that; (1) the number of CSOs representative would raised to four permanent members in the Steering Committee but the NAO and MCB be one each (total six); (2) the Evaluation Committee would be three, one from each stakeholder but be appointed when proposal is called for consideration.

Regional Cotonou Meetings (Implementing the Cotonou Agreement in the Horn of Africa), 14 and 15 November 2005, Nairobi Kenya.

There were participants coming from all the regions, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Eritrea, Tanzania and Djibouti representing both the NSAs and their respective governments. There were also participants from Saferworld and Africa Peace Forum. The two TF members, Ato Yibrah Hagos (REST) and Ato Sahleselassie Abebe (LOCABS) were presented on the meeting. There was also a representative from the National Authorization Office (NAO) of Ethiopia. The main objectives of this meeting were:

- To hear status reports of countries in the Eastern and Southern Africa on Cotonou implementation and to see challenges, drawbacks, successes, opportunities and threats in NSAs engagement in Cotonou implementation process.
- To share experience and learn lessons form each sub-regional countries NSAs;
- Draw lessons and forward recommendations that would help to enhance greater involvement of NSAs in the Cotonou implementation.

Various papers were presented on the over all situations of NSAs in each countries in the East Africa regarding their engagement in the Cotonou: civil society participation and conflict prevention in the Horn of Africa; EU's regional political framework for the Horn of Africa; Southern African countries experience in the Cotonou engagement, etc.

The Ethiopian participants shared their experience to other TF members and presented a full report on the meeting. In the conclusion part of their report, they stated that they had very much benefited from the workshop paper presentations and discussions which captured, quite well, different aspects of the Cotonou Agreement.

Another thing to note is that so far ,much of the consultations, trainings and regional and international exposure to Cotonou issues for civil society organizations notably representatives of the task force, has been possible to do with funds obtained from the Saferworld, InterAfrica Group,APFO project in the horn of Africa; where as the EC

Prop up to the permanent establishment of Cotonou Secretariat Office!!!

The shift to Cotonou Secretariat Office

In the three years behind, to make full use of the Cotonou agreement, the Cotonou task force group has performed a go ahead work that amplified from time to time. In consequence, to keep continuity of such act beyond the horizon and achieve the general and specific objectives of the task force and also resolve to the need to coordinate the task force activities and facilitate the engagement of the wider community of NSAs within the framework of the Cotonou agreement and to prepare a basic manual and guidelines on Cotonou for Ethiopian NSAs together with trainings and workshops and others, launching a functional secretariat office turns out to be an anticipated act. Accordingly, actions are being undertaken to establish a secretariat office which will be based within Inter Africa Group.

To realize the objectives of the Task force and the needs to its (sec.office) establishment, it (the Cotonou secretariat office) will be engaged in the following project activities;

- Facilitation of regular committee meetings
- Compilation and dissemination of relevant information
- Ensuring logistics and distribution of materials
- Organization of events such as seminars, training, workshops and panel discussions
- Mobilization of NSAs, media, etc. Research on strengths and weaknesses of NSAs and how these might be addressed
- Update on recent issues between all partners
- Preparation of write-up on procedures for accessing and management of funds
- Approaching donors
- Identification and compilation of available expertise on Cotonou issues
- Delegation of NSA experts on Cotonou issues to assist the Task Force
- engaged in fundraising to ensure the sustainability of the project

Expected out comes of the secretariat office

The **results** of the project activities will be:

- Enabled the CSO/NSA task force function effectively and according to its TOR.
- Ensured the effective participation of NSAs in the Cotonou agreement.
- Increased capacity of Ethiopian NSAs to engage beyond the Cotonou agreement, in the development and democratization process of Ethiopia;
- Strengthened independence and self-sufficiency of NSAs;
- Improved coordination and net working amongst NSAs;
- Made possible greater capacity to dialogue with government and commission on the implementation of country strategy paper as part of a more extensive



The European commission has financed Inter Africa Group- the Chair of Taskforce an amount of 9,500 Euro for the implementation of this action for six months. One staff that would coordinate the desk has been hired on 6th of November 2006 and started functioning in a well furnished office. Consequently; the Cotonou Secretariat Desk has commenced to realize the main objectives for its establishment. For example, the office has arranged committee meetings, disseminated relevant information to update the Taskforce members on recent issues. It has also started to research on strengths and weaknesses of NSAs and how these might be addressed by employing expertise. The Taskforce Secretariat will engage in further fundraising to ensure the sustainability of the project.

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