



SARPN

COMMISSION FOR AFRICA COMMITMENTS

Synthesis report on southern Africa consultations monitoring progress of implementation of CFA commitments and recommendations¹

COMMISSION
FOR AFRICA

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Regional
Consultations

Zambia
Mozambique
Lesotho
Malawi

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FINAL REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

In response to the establishment of Commission for Africa (CFA) in February 2004 by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the Southern Africa Regional Poverty Network (SARPN) - a non-governmental organization based in South Africa - convened a number of national and regional consultations commencing with a focus on the CFA process and then on the CFA report once it was published. SARPN's main interest in this CFA initiative is to facilitate and support the work of civil society organisations (CSOs) around the CFA and its recommendations.

The SARPN consultations in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia included representatives from civil society, government and international cooperating and development partners. Presentations and conversations centered on the themes within the CFA report and specifically, contributions undertaken to advance the implementation of the CFA recommendations.

This report is a synthesis of these national and regional consultations and aims to reflect on the appropriateness and effectiveness of ongoing monitoring initiatives in respect of the CFA commitments and recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

The CFA process was initiated by the British government then head of the G8 with the objective of speeding up progress "towards a strong and prosperous Africa". The report (referred to herein as 'the CFA report'), entitled "Our Common Interest", was published in March 2005 with information and recommendations organized around the following themes: Governance; Peace and Security; Investing in People; Trade, aid and debt; and Growth and Poverty Reduction.

The report relies heavily on existing plans and programmes for Africa including but not limited to, the agendas of the African Union and Africa's development plan, the New Partnership for African's Development (NEPAD). In this way, the plan could be used to muster support for and generate interest in these institutions.

In brief, the CFA report attempts to make out a case for African States to improve their governance and institutional development; consolidate peace and security; develop inclusive policies by investing in people; and concentrating on rapid inclusive growth favourable to the vulnerable sectors of the population.

Further, it calls on the richer countries, particularly the G8, to create conditions for the establishment of just rules for trade, the cancellation of the External Debt and, above all, make available increased and more favourable (financial) support for development programmes in Africa. The greatest merit of the report is that, besides issuing a set of recommendations for African governments, it also appeals to the need for the international community to assume responsibility in the search for viable / favourable political options for the development of African countries.

¹ Report compiled by Mary Caesar

It should be noted that the CFA report does not officially bind any government or institution; however, it has been accepted by political leaders, most notably at the level of the African Union and by the British government.

Since its publication various efforts have been made at international and continental level to implement the commitments and recommendations contained in the CFA report

3. BACKGROUND TO AND OVERVIEW OF SARPN CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATIONS

The CFA report, as mentioned above, does not automatically bind governments in the West or in Africa and neither does the report have the status of an official international instrument that can be ratified by governments. The objectives of the entire CFA process and by implication, the content of the report makes it a rather powerful political tool and this political nature and status of both the CFA process and the report, however, is perhaps the most compelling reason for the involvement of civil society in the CFA initiative. Recognizing this potentially strategic role for civil society was part of the rationale for the SARPN initiative.

Prior to the publication of the CFA report, SARPN convened the first in a series of consultations in Lusaka in December 2004. The next regional consultation was convened in June 2005 in South Africa involving 65 representatives from civil society in South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius and Zambia. It was also the last consultation of this nature prior to the G8 Summit held in Scotland in July 2005. During February 2006, SARPN co-hosted the four national consultations thus bringing a national agenda to the reflections and conversations on the CFA report.

4. SUMMARY OF NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATIONS

The overall goal of the national consultations was to bring together key civil society actors, government and international partners around the commitments and recommendations contained in the CFA Report.

4.1 Objectives and outcomes

Each of the meetings aimed to achieve a number of objectives including:

- ✂ Reflect on the recommendations and commitments in the CFA report.
- ✂ Consider effective use at national and continental levels of the CFA report given its status.
- ✂ Share progress and challenges related to strategies by governments, international partners and civil society actors related to the CFA recommendations, including monitoring of the commitments and recommendations.
- ✂ Identify specific advocacy messages / strategies around the CFA commitments and recommendations.
- ✂ Design a way forward for civil society in respect of monitoring the implementation of the CFA recommendations.

In all of the countries, SARPN partnered with local civil society organizations and the meetings had specific outcomes, including:

- ✂ To share information on the progress related to the implementation of the CFA recommendations and commitments;
- ✂ To review and/or clarify the role of civil society in relation to the CFA recommendations and commitments, in particular its monitoring role; and
- ✂ To initiate advocacy around the CFA recommendations and commitments.

4.2 The national consultations in brief

Each national meeting included presentations and plenary discussions following the six CFA report thematic areas highlighting rate and nature of implementation of the commitments and recommendations; challenges for implementation; and specific roles for civil society.

4.2.1 Lesotho

The Lesotho Council of Non government organisations (LCN) co-hosted the one day meeting in Maseru and 25 civil society organisations attended the meeting. There were three presentations.

'Civil Society and Commission for Africa: Expectations and Commitments to the process and Content' by Shani Winterstein, SARPN

The presentation provided background information to the establishment of the CFA and an overview of the CFA themes key commitments and recommendations.

Some of the specific issues raised during the plenary discussion following this presentation include:

- The absence of children as a specific area of focus.
- Uncertainty on the extent to which the report has influenced debt cancellation.
- The report was holistic and not country specific. As a result issues pertaining to certain countries would not be easily addressed.
- The progress to date regarding implementation of the recommendations and commitments gives the impression of 'another white elephant'.

'Civil society expectations from Commission for Africa' by Seabata Motsamai Executive Director LCN

The presentation had two foci; (1) the linkages between the CFA report and the NEPAD objectives and principles; (2) the civil society expectations of and role within the CFA process. The CFA report is opportune and with its incorporation of the NEPAD objectives, this makes it an ideal advocacy tool for civil society, as an important democratic actor.

'Reflection of Key Recommendation and Commitments of CFA and its implications for Lesotho', by Sehoai Santho

The presenter commended the report and identified some specific issues from its recommendations and commitments that could be monitored including:

- Channelling debt relief gains to poverty reduction programmes.
- African Partnership Forums such as G8, AU and NEPAD and its role in enhancing good governance.
- Alignment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)

Other issues that were discussed focussing on both the second and last presentations include:

- There is already poor performance in respect of meeting the MDG targets and therefore, how far would the CFA recommendations and commitments go with regard to implementation?
- There has to be a renewed focus on trade if this is to be good for everyone.
- Engage DFID with specific reference to its policy review process.

4.2.2 Malawi

The Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) co-hosted the event in Lilongwe. Alfred Hamadziripi of SARPN and Dr. Chris Wright, British High Commissioner to Malawi, delivered the two presentations. The other two presenters, i.e. from the government and the Malawi parliament, did not attend the meeting.

SARPN presentation by Alfred Hamadziripi

Mr. Hamadziripi commented on the significance of the CFA report as a lobbying tool for civil society and noted that there have already been concerns about the requisite political will to implement the recommendations and commitments. Further issues raised by this presentation focused on the significance of the CFA process; using the CFA report to inform other strategies such as programmes around the MDGs; the importance of tracking the progress of the implementation of the recommendations and commitments and how these form part of national and regional anti-poverty initiatives. This presentation provided the context for much of the discussion during the meeting.

Presentation by the British High Commissioner to Malawi Dr. Chris Wright

In the second presentation, Dr. Wright highlighted some of the critical elements in the CFA report in particular the objectives of the report and the responsibilities from both the Western and African governments. Key issues raised in the CFA report that were perhaps particularly relevant to Malawi included the question of (foreign) aid, improvement in good governance, fighting corruption and political will. In the responses to Dr. Wright's presentation, a number of issues emerged focusing mainly on a report on activities of the British government in respect of Malawi:-

- Recognising the growth is a central theme in the CFA report, the debates and strategies should not omit the point that advocating for growth should be tied to where that growth takes place and where it accumulates. Current economic conditions allow for accumulation of wealth outside of Malawi and this is an urgent issue the CFA process should incorporate and address.
- There was much discussion about the institutionalization of corruption including 'petty corruption', i.e. corrupt practices not necessarily practiced by high profile individuals.
- Britain continues to support the education sector and will lobby institutions interested in doing the same, to act on that commitment. However, Britain has no influence over the determination of the education budget at a national level, which was reported by delegates as decreasing. However, participants considered there to be a contradiction in the British position given the recruitment of local professionals by the UK effectively leading to 'brain drain'. It was however, noted that this was a complex issue involving individual rights (e.g. to work) as well.
- Malawi's supposed compliance with aspects of the CFA report via its Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) is perhaps more by coincidence rather than design.
- As with some of other national consultations, there were concerns about the authentic African voice within the CFA process and report and information was provided with regard to the broad consultation process within Africa as well as the prominence of African members leading the CFA process.
- It was recognised that 'donor behaviour' required detailed assessment and evaluation as some of the donor-led policies have been responsible for bad policy and governance practices on the continent

During further plenary discussions, the overarching concern was the extent to which the CFA report would impact on policy making within Malawi. Some of the specific issues included:

- Lack of emphasis on gender dimensions within the report, i.e. in addition to it being considered a cross-cutting issue.
- A number of discussion points involved disagreement about government policy, practice or political will.
 - Criteria for and commitment to effective partnerships seemed to be central to the CFA report however, participants experienced token partnerships within Malawi particularly the absence of clear strategies by the national government to enter, encourage and acknowledge partnerships with civil society.
 - There was a difference of opinion in the meeting between government and civil society representatives regarding the perfect balance within Malawi between growth and the provision of social services with civil society representatives citing a decrease in budgetary allocations for social services as part of their evidence for an imbalance.
 - The critique of the PRSPs as largely a 'talk shop' at national level and therefore, the concern about effective implementation of the MGDS. This was highlighted particularly because the MGDS is considered as incorporating the CFA recommendations and commitments and therefore, the expectation of greater commitment and emphasis on implementation.
 - There was clearly a gap in the position of the Malawi government regarding the CFA report and its recommendations, particularly in light of the absence of the speakers from the Malawian government and parliament.

The meeting considered the effectiveness of the CFA process at national and sub national level given that the issues discussed, such as poverty, are manifested in largely at these levels. In this regard, the meeting discussed the need for and mechanisms to promote the CFA recommendations and commitments at sub national level.

4.2.3 Mozambique

Consultations in Mozambique regarding the CFA process commenced in April 2005 when FDC and CIVICUS co-hosted an international civil society meeting. The 2006 meeting in the City of Maputo was co-hosted by SARPN and FDC sought to continue this process. There were six presentations.

'The CFA recommendations and the PARPA II' by Dr. C Matusse, Ministry of Planning & Development

The presentation aimed to demonstrate the relationship between the CFA recommendations and the PARPA II, i.e. the Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty. The main message was that most of the international commitments, such as MDGs and the CFA report, were already incorporated in the national plans even if not formally and in a direct manner. For this reason, the government can report

that its progress on certain economic and development aspects were in line with the CFA recommendations. In spite of this, it recognised the main challenge of the CFA process being its lack of a concrete implementation plan.

'More trade and Fair Trade' by Dr. C Banú, Ministry of Trade & Industry

This presentation addressed the internal challenges facing Mozambican agricultural sector even if trade barriers were more favourable. However, it recognised the need for increased favourable conditions for international trade.

'Assessment of past activities and future contributions in respect of the CFA recommendations' by Dr. L. de Sousa from the British High Commission in Mozambique

The presentation confirmed and cited numerous examples of the considerable progress made by Britain to support development in Africa within the parameters of the CFA initiative. The only exception to this is the activities in the areas of trade and of HIV and AIDS.

'Future prospects for the CFA Agenda' by a representative from the Russian Embassy in Mozambique

The representative allayed fears by confirming that as the new head of the G8, Russian is certainly committed to the CFA initiative and that it will continue existing G8 commitments, including adhering to the CFA report.

'The CFA Recommendations and the implications for planning development in Mozambique' by Dr. Castelo Branco

This presentation confirmed the new approach brought to the discussions and action on Africa. For example, it refers to the quality of aid as well as the quantity; it emphasises nationally determined priorities; and the serious considerations given to reducing dependency on foreign aid.

'Experiences of other countries' by Barbara Kalima-Phiri.

This presentation illustrated how other African countries were engaging with the CFA initiative. While, for example in Zambia, certain activities were undertaken to monitor government's poverty reduction programmes, these activities were not directly linked to the CFA process. However, none of these should be considered as indicative of non-commitment or disinterest in the CFA initiative.

4.2.4 Zambia

The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) was the co-host for the meeting in Lusaka and 15 civil society partners were in attendance. There were four presentations.

DFID presentation by Mrs. Grace Chibowa

This presentation was an overview, including examples, of the British government's progress in terms of action in respect of the six themes of the CFA report particularly in Zambia.

The six main areas within which the British government via DFID has begun working are governance (e.g. supports anti corruption institutions and capacity building programmes); capacity building (e.g. increased its allocation of the Commonwealth Scholarship Fund); investing in people (e.g. in areas of education and health); growth and poverty reduction (e.g. DFID supports the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme under the AU/NEPAD); trade (e.g. DFID will treble its trade related aid by 2010); and resources (e.g. DFID seeks to promote more coordination among donors involved in aid allocation).

Government presentation by Mr Chungu Kapembwa, Senior Economist, Foreign Trade Department of the Ministry of Commerce Trade and Industry

This presentation provided delegates with information about government's action in respect of the CFA recommendations. The Department has formed strategic partnerships to form the Private Sector Development Reform Action Plan and Implementation framework as a road map intended to create the

right environment for investment, infrastructure development and private sector led economic development. There is an emphasis of trade facilitation from the department both at national, regional (COMESA and SADC) and international levels.

'Zambian Stakeholders actions to date around the CFA recommendations' Civil Society presentation by Jack Jones Zulu from the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflections (JCTR)

The presentation made reference to some of the activities being undertaken by the Zambian civil society organizations that can be linked with the recommendations and commitments of the CFA. These activities are part of the following focus areas: debt, trade, aid and governance.

'Regional perspective, civil society expectations from the CFA its key commitments to both the process and the content' SARPN presentation by Barbara Kalima-Phiri

The presentation gave a background to the CFA process including the SARPN regional consultations. These discussions, contained in a March 2005 report, covers themes such as governance, peace and security, investment in people, trade, aid and debt, growth and poverty reduction.

5. KEY ISSUES AND EMERGING THEMES FROM NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS

5.1 General conclusions

5.1.1 CFA process and initiative

- ✘ The CFA initiative is one amongst many.
- ✘ The UK may be a lone voice in the CFA initiative given the status of the CFA report and that it still requires buy in from the EU countries. This may act as barrier to the achievement of the goals of the CFA report.
- ✘ The implementation of some of the commitments and recommendations are fairly easy in that they coincide with existing initiatives. The cancellation of the debt of some of the poorest African countries is one of these. Since the publication of the report, a number of Western countries decided to increase aid to Africa and to cancel debt of certain countries as part of the HIPC initiative.
- ✘ Other CFA areas are more difficult to implement such as trade and responses including funding for HIV and AIDS responses.
- ✘ Civil society can play an important role in putting pressure on institutions to fulfil the CFA recommendations.
- ✘ The CFA Report should be seen as a resource for planning and advocacy as it outlines and provides informed recommendations for future action from all stakeholders.

5.1.2 Democracy actors

- ✘ Civil society is central to the maintenance of an effective democracy. The CFA report comes at a time when many African countries are re-establishing more effective democracies while facing good governance challenges. In this context, civil society can play a partnership role - contributing to the building of democracy - and a monitoring role.
- ✘ Both governments and civil society must acquire a deeper appreciation of the CFA recommendations.
- ✘ There is need to create a mechanism of mutual accountability between donors and African governments.

5.1.3 Status and content of report

- ✘ The report does not raise new problems and the solutions therefore, have been included in a number of plans of most governments.
- ✘ Generally, the CFA report speaks to issues from a continental perspective and no / very little emphasis on national specificities. This may affect optimum use of the report at national level.
- ✘ The CFA report is not officially part of government programme but, incorporated in an indirect manner in that the issues raised already form part of the government's plans.
- ✘ There is a need for concerted efforts to align and harmonize national programmes of governments and the CFA commitments and recommendations. This will avoid harmonization by coincidence, as is currently the case in a number of countries.

5.2 Challenges facing implementation of CFA commitments and recommendations

- ⌘ There is no concrete plan of action to guide the implementation of the measures set out in the CFA.
- ⌘ There is a need to define a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the fulfilment of the CFA commitments and recommendations specifically pertaining to foreign trade.
- ⌘ Establishing a monitoring and evaluation system for the CFA commitments and recommendations that is in line with programming tools at national level.
- ⌘ Lack of access to information within countries for anyone wanting to monitor governments' implementation of the CFA commitments and recommendations.
- ⌘ Inadequate capacity and expertise particularly within many civil society organisations in respect of issues covered in the CFA report.
- ⌘ The lack of harmonization of development initiatives given that the CFA initiative is one of many.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Networking and monitoring

- ⌘ Share experiences within the Region so that countries learn from each other's response to the CFA report.
- ⌘ Increase networking between African and UK based media and civil society organisations including international ones such as Oxfam.
- ⌘ Civil society to convene frequent sessions on CFA related issues
- ⌘ Civil society monitors the implementation of the CFA commitments and recommendations. Specific monitoring themes and strategies include:
 - Encourage bi-lateral relationships between governments
 - Lobby governments to form partnerships with civil society
 - Form global civil society monitoring mechanisms
 - CFA related themes worth monitoring:
 - Governance: Democracy and good governance; human rights violation and service delivery
 - Peace and security: Human security and conflict Resolution
 - Investment in People: Free basic and compulsory education; free health services and facilities
 - Trade, Aid and Debt: Debt cancellation and free trade; Quality of grants
 - Growth and Poverty Reduction: Development of policies that adhere to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); link MDGs with Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
 - Civil society to exercise strong pressure for greater domestic and international accountability as concerns the CFA commitments and recommendations
 - CSOs should advocate for inclusion of all actors in monitoring the implementation of CFA commitments and recommendations.
 - CSOs should advocate for harmonization of international development initiatives.
 - Take full responsibility to place pressure on all relevant stakeholders to commit to the initiatives (be it donors, government and to themselves). The CFA does not have a clear cut implementation framework, but makes strong recommendations on key development issues.
 - CSOs can begin to explore sets of indicators and criteria for monitoring progress and development in line with already existing instruments such as the budget, MTEF and others. Monitor the implementation of and adherence to the recommendations of the CFA.
 - Create alliances with other groups of civil society including those in the North so that they can hold accountable their governments in fulfilling the CFA recommendations.

5.3.2 Collaboration at national level

- ⌘ The government, donors and civil society must arrange regular meetings to promote better cooperation in the implementation and monitoring of activities within the framework of the CFA commitments and recommendations.
- ⌘ The government should promote multi-sectoral meetings for internal discussions on the follow-up to the CFA commitments and recommendations.
- ⌘ Some suggestions that could enhance work on the CFA initiative at national level:

- Find effective and innovative information dissemination mechanics, which should include simplified information resource centers.
 - Increase capacity of government and non state actors to engage on the issues through increased training.
 - Coordinate activities effectively and to broader development agendas.
 - Develop networks among CSOs.
 - Deliberate and institutionalized forums for CSOs participation.
- ✂ Strategies should be formulated to push the government to take the report seriously.
- ✂ Lobby for the inclusion of members of parliament (MPs) in the CFA initiative at country level as this will provide greater impetus for lobbying government to attend to issue raised in the CFA report.

5.3.3 General recommendations

- ✂ Civil society to reflect upon its own capacity within the context of the recommendations and define its role in the process. This is usually not clear including the stages at which CSOs should be involved.
- ✂ Simplify the report and take it to the communities, government officials at different levels (especially the district offices). This will give the report a wider audience.
- ✂ A rights-based approach should be used in understanding the CFA report.
- ✂ On the policy front, there was need for mainstreaming of CFA recommendations into main government policy documents.

6. CONCLUSION: AN ASSESSMENT OF APPROPRIATENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ONGOING MONITORING INITIATIVES

By its very nature, the implementation of the CFA commitments and recommendations poses a huge challenge. The UK government confirmed that, via representatives within the Department for International Development (DFID) who attended the various national consultations, that there are key recommendations and commitments that it is already implementing and this in a context where there is no specific framework for action within the CFA report.

This scenario increases the burden on civil society if it wishes to seriously take on a monitoring role in respect of this initiative and reports from the various national consultations indicate that civil society is far from ready to take up this challenge. In fact, there is an indication that levels of awareness and knowledge about the CFA initiative within countries are low. Very few, if any, CSOs who participated in the consultations directly relate to the CFA initiative. It is however, encouraging that the national consultations were considered as a step in the right direction with conclusions from the consultations including that firstly, it is important for civil society to participate in the CFA initiative and some consultations clearly outlining the roles for civil society and secondly, that there is a need for future meetings of this nature at country level and inclusive of all major stakeholders.

In light of the critical role for civil society in monitoring the progress of the CFA recommendations and commitments, a limited number of initial activities should be undertaken in order to assist civil society to take up this role. These activities include:

1. Ensure an ongoing process for civil society to define and refine (1) the nature and extent of its intervention in the CFA initiative; and (2) the various strategies to follow at sub national, national, regional and continental levels so as to ensure effective interventions by civil society.
2. Design mechanisms that will assist and encourage civil society organisations to continue those activities that already monitor work related to the CFA initiative and these include:
 - regular meetings with relevant stakeholders by government;
 - participatory poverty Assessments;
 - budget tracking;
 - poverty monitoring;
 - news paper articles; feedbacks from the communities and reports;
 - CSOs participation in donor coordination groups, government Sectoral Advisory Groups (SAGs) and Aid Technical Committees.
 - Where necessary, organisations should be given assistance to adapt their activities to allow for the monitoring of CFA related activities to be incorporated in these monitoring activities.

3. A process of education and sharing information about the CFA initiative including the content of the report. The national consultations confirmed that limited information exists within countries about the CFA process and content of the report and that this severely affects the level of participation at national level and therefore, impacts on implementation of recommendations from national level consultations.
4. Technical and financial support to countries for a sustained intervention on the CFA initiative including but not limited to national consultative forums on the CFA related issues.
5. Transforming the CFA report into a tool for monitoring and advocacy at national and continental levels. This will include a number of steps with the following recommendations aimed at achieving this:
 - Assist national role players contextualize the CFA report including the identification of monitoring indicators.
 - Facilitate a continental process to form a dedicated focal point at this continental level to *inter alia*, co-ordinate and influence national monitoring efforts related to the CFA initiative; network with international role players on this initiative such as Oxfam and/or ActionAid to create awareness and garner support in the West for the African civil society initiatives; and strengthen and link national efforts to continental institutions such as the AU.