

## Reflections on the International Development Association's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Forum

**April 30, 2024**

The recent convening of the Eastern and Southern Africa IDA Regional Forum marked a refreshing departure from the past as the World Bank took the unprecedented step of involving a wide array of stakeholders in the early stages of the IDA replenishment process. This inclusive initiative aimed to enhance understanding and rally support for the vital development financing provided by IDA. The sense of importance also given to the meeting by the participants underscored the significance they attached to engaging with the World Bank regarding the utilization of IDA resources. Throughout the Forum, the World Bank team meticulously presented proposed priority areas, objectives, reforms, policy frameworks, scorecards, and delivery models for the forthcoming IDA21 replenishment.

Several key themes emerged from the discussions:

1. **Sustained Engagement throughout the IDA Cycle:** Participants unanimously emphasized the need for civil society to remain actively engaged across the entire IDA lifecycle, spanning replenishment, project ideation and design, disbursement, and implementation, as well as reporting and auditing. Ensuring citizen approval of the allocation of IDA resources by their respective governments was deemed paramount as the Bank was urged to put in place a robust citizen engagement framework.
2. **Prioritization at the Country Office Level:** It was underscored that the thematic focus areas of IDA21 should incorporate specific considerations such as gender inclusion, minority rights, and decentralized solutions for critical issues like energy and food systems. These sectoral concerns should actively shape World Bank decision-making and prioritization at the country office level.
3. **Enhanced Transparency and Accountability Framework:** The longstanding call for the bank to bolster support for civil society in monitoring and tracking the use of IDA funds was repeated throughout the discussions. Stakeholders urged the incorporation of robust language on this across the entire IDA loan and grant agreement spectrum. Given that these funds are acquired on behalf of citizens, transparent utilization to deliver tangible benefits to beneficiaries was deemed imperative.

The culmination of the consultation saw a pledge from Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli, CEO of ONE Campaign and IDA Champion, to collaborate with the World Bank in hosting regular consultations with CSOs across Africa. These ongoing consultations aim to furnish continuous feedback on the utilization of IDA21 resources, further enhancing transparency and accountability within the IDA framework.

*“The first thing is that a lot has been discussed here today, and thinking about some of these issues to influence some of the World Bank language more broadly and the prioritization, like I've seen so much*

*forward thinking here that I think needs to be infused into some of the prioritization at the country level and at the national and global level.*

*The second thing is I'd love to make a commitment from the ONE Campaign to say that we want to have regular conversations with CSOs to hold our partners accountable, so this is not a one-time discussion. We would love to continue this dialogue leading up to the replenishment and after the replenishment so that this engagement doesn't happen just periodically. And I think people around the table would welcome that opportunity. We can speak with one voice about the issues that we have, and we're telling the world what Africa wants, not what the world thinks we need, we want to continue to have these dialogues to say, "what are we seeing on the ground? How is IDA 21 showing up? How are leaders using it?" And let's find a mechanism whether World Bank pulls us together or not, we will pull ourselves together. And ONE Campaign is happy to partner with many of you to continue this conversation. And we have a great relationship with the World Bank where we will share the insights that we receive. So, thanks again for this opportunity." - Ndid Okonkwo Nwuneli, President and CEO of ONE Campaign*