



READOUT: REGIONAL IDA FORUM – Africa Western and Central
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IDA21 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND UPDATES ON BETTER BANK

The Africa Western and Central (AFW) IDA Forum on the IDA21 Strategic Directions and Updates on the Better Bank was hosted in Cotonou, Benin. It convened virtual participants from 20 countries: Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo. Just over 200 representatives of Civil Society and Faith-based organizations, traditional leaders, think tanks, academia, and foundations attended the forum.

The aim of the AFW forum was to inform civil societies about the proposed IDA21 strategic directions and obtain feedback and any input from them to feed into IDA's policy dialogue, as well as update them on the progress the Bank is making in its evolution towards a better bank. To this end, the Vice President for Development Finance who oversees IDA **Mr. Akihiko Nishio** made a presentation on the proposed [IDA21 Strategic Directions](#), while **Ms. Paloma Anos Casero**, Director, Operations Policy and Country Services presented on the [Better Bank](#). These presentations were the basis for the forum conversation.

The IDA Borrower Representative from Benin **Mr. Alphonse Kouagou** representing client countries in the AFW region in the IDA21 Replenishment, made remarks in the opening session, while the Nigerian IDA Deputy represented by **Mr. George Stanley**, Director, International Economic Relations of the Federal Ministry of Finance, gave closing remarks.

The event was moderated by **Mr. Gilles Yabi**, CEO, WATHI Think Tank. At the end of all interventions, **Mr. Armand Vignon**, **Directeur of Maison de la Société Civile**, who was the rapporteur of the event, provided a report highlighting key suggestions from the participants.

After the two presentations, participants shared their views on the proposed IDA21 focus areas of People, Planet, Prosperity, Infrastructure and Digitalization, and the proposed lenses of More and better jobs; Gender; Fragility; and Private investments, as well as the Better Bank updates.

There was broad agreement with the areas of focus and the lenses as they reflect areas of need in the region. Following are the inputs made:

FOCUS AREAS

PEOPLE:

- Interventions to benefit remote communities in reproductive health, economy, education, and “everything that allows us to live on this planet.”
- Quality education for young people, especially girls.
- Youth involvement in development - Empower youth to be a tool for development in Africa.
- Education should support youth employment; Need training platforms for the youth.
- Importance of children, youth, women, disability, people in vulnerable positions, aging population
- Targeting done by IDA – should be done geographically. It contributes to efficiency of IDA. We see interference. Can lose 50% of children
- Find ways of raising youth interest in agriculture and leverage on the opportunities available in the sector.

PLANET:

- Funding for indigenous people to reduce their vulnerability to climate change.
- Include climate change issues in all projects.

PROSPERITY:

- Improve governance of financial management. Support government to be more disciplined in its spending, so that the burden wouldn't be on the citizens by way of taxation to raise resources to service its debt.
- Country debt repayment plans are not clear to civil society and the public, Bank could provide more information on how this is done.
- Monitoring of project loans important to fight against corruption and misappropriation of funds.
- Development is through peace. Government must ensure peace, and reinforce good governance by governments.
- Institutionalize the issue of social accountability to help ensure that IDA resources have an impact on the people.
- Invest in local knowledge generation.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

- Monitor and address shortcomings in provision of water and electricity.

DIGITALIZATION:

- Endorse the 5 areas with emphasis on job creation, digitalization—e-governance.
- Strengthening financial capacities and digitize financial governance of microfinance institutions to enhance inclusion of all populations in the financial systems.

LENSES

More and Better Jobs:

- Job creation strategy must be connected to economic transformation.

Gender:

- Cannot talk of a better life without addressing gender-based violence.
- Need gender approaches in all projects.
- Work on laws to ensure women are better represented to play their role in inclusive development.

Fragility:

- Address poverty in the Sahel since it is one of the factors driving youth to extremism.
- Promoting peace should be a priority.
- People in conflict situations are very vulnerable and CSOs can assist in this regard. Plans to improve CSO access to funding for this?

Private investments:

- Promote more private sector, especially SMEs, which is also key for youth employment.

BETTER BANK

- Need a specific indicator to measure citizen engagement.
- Disaggregate using youth, especially countries with large percentage of youth population.
- Its more than 50 years WB working in poverty but up to now there are poor people everywhere – can the WB look at its strategies again because IDA was created to help poor countries.
- Bank monitor impact of projects because some projects do not have impact.
- Role of civil society is not clear in all World Bank engagement with the government and the private sector.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

- Accountability is not just about CSO providing input but also having meaningful discussions with government.
- Need accountability mechanisms led by civil society so impact of IDA investments will be felt.
- Strengthen the participation of CSOs in projects funded by IDA, including CSO bidding in projects.
- Bank should have a facility for CSOs to build their capacity, and enhanced partnership with the WBG could yield even better development outcomes. CSO interventions are equally useful on specific themes such as the consequences of COVID-19, the impacts of climate change and the environmental problems generated by the implementation of certain projects.
- Follow-up to IDA Forum should be meeting with World Bank to discuss access to funding.
- Change terminology to say countries that need the most international support.

- Tackle World Bank projects that are having a negative impact on rivers, including those in mining and agriculture.
- Where are we with the Loss and Damage Fund?
- IDA basics – how many IDA countries in AFR, provide loans with no interest.
- Localize IDA consultation at country level and engage broad stakeholders for more sustainable engagement and understanding of the bank
- Facilitate access to information for sustainable CSO engagement.
- We urge for civil society to be informed about the lending process so that we can track progress. We think lending focus should be on the people and not the government.
- Lending around climate change financing: which of the World Bank agencies is offering this facility? How are countries sourcing these funds?
- There is not much of IDA visibility, find ways to popularize IDA actions.

Bank management provided overall management response to various issues raised.