

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CREATING ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CSO IN RWANDA-TOWARDS DOMESTICATION OF BUSAN AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTION

The conference was held at **Hotel Hill Top & Country Club on Wednesday, 22nd April 2015**. The core objective of the meeting was to update the Rwanda Civil Society Organizations (CSO) on findings related to the assessment of progress on CSO enabling environment in Rwanda – towards domestication of Busan Agenda and discuss the way forward in a participatory manner.

2. OPENING REMARKS

2.1- Participants & Agenda

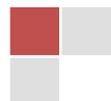
31 participants from CSO attended the meeting.

2.2- Welcome remarks by Eugene RWIBASIRA,

The meeting was opened by Mr. RWIBASIRA Eugene, Executive Secretary of Rwanda Development Organization (RDO) and Board Member of the Reality of Aid Africa Network. He welcomed the participants to the meeting and thanked them for attending in big numbers. He told them that the findings of the research is a concern for them since the contents reflect the existing operating environment and that the challenges highlighted there in should be addressed by the concerned authorities. However, he said, it is upon the CSO themselves to demand for the changes. Mr. Rwibasira took the participants through the journey to Busan and the current CPDE developments. The meeting is a good opportunity for CSOs to update their good understanding of their role as government's partner showing their commitment towards domestication of Busan initiative. He stressed that Busan initiative and its implementation requires collaboration from all partners. Hence, he urged CSO to be active partners and engage fully in the implementation of the Busan outcomes.

2.3- Opening remarks by Meja Vitalice

Mr. Vitalice Meja, Coordinator of Reality of Aid Africa Network explained in general the global context of various High Level Fora on Aid Effectiveness held respectively in Roma, Ghana, Busan/Korea and Mexico. Those high level Fora were held in the framework of international development cooperation. In Busan/Korea over 3,000 delegates including 300 CSO Representatives met to discuss how to maintain the relevance of the aid effectiveness agenda in the context of the evolving development landscape. He narrated that the forum culminated in the signing of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation by ministers of developed and developing nations, emerging economies, providers of South-South and triangular co-operation and civil society - marking a critical turning point in development co-



operation. In that framework, the Rights Based Approach to development and especially democratic ownership and the enabling environment for civil society organizations remain at the heart of the CSO Partnership's mission, Vitalice said. He continued to explain how his Organization (RoA Africa) contributes to the Global Partnership for effective development cooperation (GPEDC) assessment of progress on Indicator 2 and initiate dialogue at the national on opportunities and challenges for creating enabling environment for CSOs at the national level. As currently the global development is at a critical juncture, the network plans to work with country-level CSO networks to ensure that this indicator is part of multi-stakeholder dialogue at country level.

He went on to say how a conducive enabling environment contributes enormously to CSO involvement in Development Effectiveness. However, he said, in several African Countries, CSO space for engagement is continually shrinking and that it is a high time CSO come up boldly to challenge this. It is only when CSO come together, regionally, and globally to build their capacity and strive for their rights. It is against this background, he said, that the Research on enabling environment for the Rwandan CSO was conducted to assess the pertaining level of engagement of the Rwandan CSO. Therefore, the validation is to assess the contents of the findings and how they relate with the realities today.

He thanked everybody for the participation and wished the meeting fruitful proceedings.

3.0- PRESENTATIONS

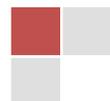
3.1- Presentation on “Domestication of the Busan agenda in Rwanda and participation of CSOs in the Development Effectiveness Agenda “

This was presented by Mr. Eugene RWIBASIRA. He stressed the Role of CSOs in Development Effectiveness as follows:

- ❖ Advocacy role for the citizens
- ❖ Service delivery
- ❖ Complementing government and donors efforts
- ❖ To make sure Development agenda encompass Rights - based approaches.
- ❖ To fight for the rights of the marginalized groups for inclusive development
- ❖ Inward looking for CSO to be and act transparently and accountable to its constituency
- ❖ Claim its space in development agenda

In his presentation, Mr. Eugene recalled the Busan Partnership document specifically highlighting a set of common principles for all development actors that are key to making development cooperation effective:

- **Ownership of development priorities by developing counties:** Countries should define the development model that they want to implement.
- **A focus on results:** Having a sustainable impact should be the driving force behind investments and efforts in development policy making



- **Partnerships for development:** Development depends on the participation of all actors, and recognizes the diversity and complementarity of their functions.
- **Transparency and shared responsibility:** Development co-operation must be transparent and accountable to all citizens.

He highlighted the Busan Agenda as;

- Maintain advocacy efforts in the spirit of the CSO Key Asks to Busan. The Rights Based Approach to development and especially democratic ownership and the enabling environment for civil society remain at the heart of the CSO Partnership's mission;
- Strengthen the focus on development effectiveness in development cooperation. This requires addressing the root causes, as well as the symptoms, of poverty, inequality (in particular, gender inequality and women's rights), marginalization, injustice, and disability;
- Hold new donors accountable to Paris, Accra and Busan in their development cooperation. Advocate that emerging donors and governments engaged in South-South cooperation implement the principles of Paris, Accra and Busan, and do not undermine, but contribute to the human rights of all people;
- Influence new areas of work as they arise through the Global Partnership, in keeping with our vision, values and goals.
- Challenge the mainstream notion of economic growth and the private sector as the drivers of development and articulate alternative approaches in keeping with the CSO Partnership's vision and goals.

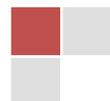
He said that domestication of the Busan Agenda needs;

- Consultations on development effectiveness agenda-The best way for Rwanda
- Development of the work plan
- Implementation of the Rwanda work plan on Development Effectiveness.

3.2- Presentation of the Research Findings

Mrs. MUJAWAYEZU Prisca, a Consultant who conducted a deep assessment on CSO enabling environment in Rwanda made her presentation.

This research was commissioned by ROA Africa. The research objectives were to;



- Assess the structural, legal, policy space and institutional framework for the implementation of the Post Busan agenda, indicating who the main players are.
- Propose ROA Africa specific actions that the multistakeholders can take to ensure that they fully utilize the opportunities that Busan outcome presents to promote enabling environment for CSOs in Rwanda.

The research findings were divided into 3 parts: Universally accepted human rights, policy influencing and Donors-CSO relationship. During the research, a participatory methodology was used involving different stakeholders.

The research findings are detailed in the report document under above dimensions and key elements. Final report has been submitted.

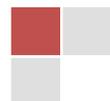
4.0 BREAKOUT GROUPS SESSION

There were 3 breakout groups formed. Each was to look at challenges in enabling environment for CSO and roles played by different stakeholders- The role of the government, the donors and CSOs- and make recommendations for each stakeholder.

4.1- The following is the summary of the inputs from the groups;

4.1.1. Concerning the Government

- ✚ Limited clarity around Joint Action Development Forum-JADF role and responsibilities of actors within it.
- ✚ Planning processes that are top down (i.e. District Development Plan)
- ✚ Coordination of local authorities and CSOs still weak
- ✚ Tendency (especially at local level) to see CSOs not as independent that should have own plans that complement government plans, but rather as agencies to implement plans set by government.
- ✚ There is a tendency to see CSOs as implementers of government policies, and not as active actors in the formulation and review of policies.
- ✚ The registration requirements in RGB needs improvement (i.e. external audit)
- ✚ Publication fees in official gazette are too expensive



- ✚ Tax exemption allowed by law but challenging in practice
- ✚ Bureaucracy in some public institutions and lack of flexibility by some District authorities

4.1.2. Concerning CSOs

- ✚ Limited technical capacities within CSOs to engage in policy processes. So far, initiatives of CSOs tend to be ad hoc activities that are not part of a clear strategy that is followed to reach intended results.
- ✚ Stakeholders do not have the same level of information on the commitments related to enabling environment.
- ✚ Limited clarity around JADF role and responsibilities of actors within it
- ✚ Inadequate sharing of information among local NGOs
- ✚ Internal weaknesses within CSO
- ✚ Limited collaboration between local NGOs and INGOs
- ✚ Donors dependency

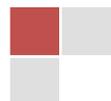
4.1.3. Concerning Donors

- ✚ Funding projects rather than programs
- ✚ Reporting requirements and different reporting templates not harmonized
- ✚ Lack of CSOs basket fund support
- ✚ Donors funds strictly allocated towards donors interests not to beneficiaries needs

4.2- Recommendations

4.2.1.. Recommendations towards the Government

- Implementation of JADF should be harmonized at District level
- Districts should recognize, appreciate and clarify tangible and non-tangible interventions from CSO in term of % of CSOs contribution in District achievements)
- District Development Plan (DDP) process should be bottom up and involve all stakeholders



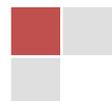
- Continue maintaining and reviewing a CSOs enabling environment by improving and rendering more flexible legal and regulatory framework especially for international NGOs.

4.2.2. Recommendations towards Donors

- In order to help CSOs becoming more sustainable, strategic and proactive, donors should focus funding on programs rather than project approach (at least three years programmes) and set up a basket fund for CSOs ;
- Most of donors have to be transparent and improve communication with their recipients about the partnership modalities with CSOs.
- Reporting requirements and different reporting template from Donors towards CSOs should be harmonized
- Donors should build confidence and institutional capacities of CSOs to effectively exploit spaces and opportunities to engage with the government on the pro-poor policies.
- Donors should avoid tendency to fund INGOs because of the presumed capacity constraints of CSOs
- Donors should support the establishment of a permanent capacity building center for regular training in core modules, developing mentoring and coaching approach. This is important because there is high turnover of skilled staff in CSOs;

4.2.3. Recommendations towards CSOs

- CSOs should promote dynamic and proactive partnership among themselves towards ensuring an enabling environment. Capacities owned by NINGO members could help overcoming challenges faced by CSOs
- CSOs should examine opportunities offered and develop their income generating activities to reduce donor dependency
- Both NINGO and RCSP put in place a structured process to review and report on the progress against the commitments with regards to enabling environment and dissemination those commitments in simple format



- CSOs should improve their image towards Donors and Government through developing an effective communication strategy, capitalization and marketing of their achievements so they become really credible among key national development partners.

5.0. CONCLUSION

A Conducive enabling environment is very paramount if CSO is to effectively participate in Development effectiveness as this is very necessary for CSO to operate. For this to happen, CSOs should strive to claim their space through engaging effectively with both Governments and Donors alike.

The meeting was closed around 5:30 pm. Mr. Rwibasira Eugene thanked all the participants for their contributions and rich discussions during the workshop and requested for their continued participation in subsequent fora on Development effectiveness.

