

Fourth consultative discussion with CSOs and LAs on EU regional programming for Sub-Saharan Africa (2021-2027) – Focus AAP 2023

Online meeting

20 April 2023

Executive Summary

INTPA, under the framework of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD), hosted a fourth consultative discussion with more than 55 civil society organisations (CSOs) and associations of local authorities (LAs) in April 2023. The online meeting built on previous information and consultation sessions organised in March 2021, December 2021, and June 2022, relating to previous programming exercises and annual action plans (AAPs). The objectives of the April 2023 meeting were: to provide an update on the implementation of the regional multi-annual programming for SSA; to provide feedback on contributions from previous meetings; and to gather input from CSOs and LAs on the AAPs 2023. An overview of the AAP 2023 was presented and followed by parallel breakout groups.

From the overall discussion and breakouts, some commonly raised questions and points, with specific requests to the INTPA partners included:

- Questions requesting clarification of the **process of selecting actions**
- **Gender, climate and enabling environment are cross-cutting themes** and critical to programming success
- Actions must **build on synergies** with existing and on-going work
- Actions encompassing themes of **decent work** and **South-South cooperation** were noted of particular interest going forward
- **EUDs role in local level consultation** supports opportunities to engage in formulation, implementing and monitoring and evaluation
- Request to engage in midterm review and include it in the next consultation if timely
- Ensure TEI infographics are available online

In the parallel session on **Human development (including health, gender, culture, youth and skills)** participants stressed the need to explore how actions can reach the most marginalised, particularly noting women and girls in fragile contexts. They encouraged actions that foster trust between private and public sectors. This includes dialogue to ensure public goods that are accessible, available, affordable and of good quality.

In the session on **Democracy, governance, peace, migration and forced displacement (including CSOs, local government, illicit financial flows, and maritime security)**, participants from the local authorities requested increased engagement and recognition of their role as implementing partners. Progress on the inclusion of CSOs led by affected communities was noted and welcomed, notably from women, refugee, and youth communities.

In the discussion on **Green Transition (including climate change, agri-food, pastoralism and ocean protection)**, participants recognised the scope for continuing exchange on this topic. They discussed incentivizing agriculture and the importance of agroecology as well as emphasised that climate change is a cross-cutting issue across all actions, not only green transition.

The group on **Sustainable growth and decent jobs, digital, STI (including trade, circular economy and product safety)** made some more specific recommendations in their discussion. Participants stressed that programming should ensure decent working conditions and focus on how to directly involve workers. Programming should also reinforce sustainable agriculture. In the discussion on adaption, just transition and circular economy, there was great interest in the issue of climate financing. They requested that INTPA look at ways in which regional programming can support the accessibility of digital infrastructure and safeguard data protection while considering the reality of diverse national contexts. They also requested the prioritisation of women in programming relating to business-support ecosystems and entrepreneurial support. Finally, the importance of frequent and sustained South-South dialogue and peer-to-peer learning was raised.

The next discussion with stakeholders is planned for the end of 2023.

Full report

I. Plenary

Marlene Holzner, Head of Unit of LAs, CSOs and Foundations, DG INTPA welcomed participants and thanked them for their continuing engagement with the consultative processes inherent in DG INTPA programming. **Daniela Rofi**, Acting Head of Unit of Regional and Multi-Country Programmes for Africa, presented the state-of-play of the regional programming and some of DG INTPA's feedback on CSOs' contributions to date. Prefacing her [powerpoint presentation](#) overview, Ms Rofi noted that while the meeting was the fourth in a series of consultative discussions, that it was the first in which participants had received a [briefing document](#) detailing the proposed actions. Ms Rofi emphasised that while the focus of the meeting was regional, national and regional actions work hand-in-hand, with regional programming accounting for one third, and national programming two-thirds of the multi-annual indicative programme (MIP) funding. She noted the timeliness of the consultative discussions, given the formulation of actions to be adopted at year-end. Ms Rofi referred to recommendations from the previous consultations and provided examples to demonstrate how this feedback had been considered in the final formulation of the AAP 2023. In the subsequent plenary Q&A session a series of general clarifications and enquiries were answered.

Ms Rofi clarified the SSA Regional Programme covering 2021-27 was adopted and published, and that on a yearly basis that programme is translated into Annual Action Plans (AAPs) detailing projects which are subsequently implemented. The Annual Action Plan 2023 document circulated to participants is thus still in the formulation stage and will be adopted later in the year. Documents with titles such as Multi-annual action plan (MAAP) 2022-24 and MAAP 2022-26 reflect the Commission's internal requirements in administering projects drawing on multi-annual funding.

Hearing that five Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) were launched in the course of 2022, participants asked for the 2023 outlook on further TEIs, and specifically queried whether one would be forthcoming on social protection. Ms Rofi recalled the recent launch of TEIs in migration, sexual health and reproductive rights (SHRH), referred to the upcoming launch of a TEI on the fight against illicit flows, and confirmed preparatory work on a social protection-related TEI. Rather than viewing the TEIs as a contract or project, she recommended participants view TEIs as a living, political process, based on agreement on shared objectives and available resources.

Ms Rofi confirmed the mid-term review is scheduled for 2024 and that further details would be forthcoming in a subsequent meeting.

Participants requested more insight into the process of preparing the AAP, the decision-making on specific actions, how CSOs are involved, and how EU Delegations (EUDs) engage with civil society during this process. Characterising the process as complex, long and involving multiple actors, Ms Rofi stressed DG INTPA sought to make it as participatory as possible. Today's online discussion of the proposed AAP 2023 was part of a bigger process that starts with field formulation missions where consultation with civil society, national and local authorities and regional economic communities was key, continues with a co-creation process and quality-screening in Brussels involving relevant delegations and taking into consideration both thematic and horizontal issues, and culminates in adoption following the official decision-making process. Participants were urged to make their submissions pertaining to the AAP 2023 no later than May to ensure that their contributions are considered.

Enrica Pellacani, Senior Expert and Team Leader on Green Transition at DG INTPA, urged participants to maintain regular contact with the EUD colleagues in charge of drafting and designing contracts in their field of interest as there may be other points of entry for CSOs as the actions move from formulation to implementation.

II. Thematic sessions

1. Human development (including health, gender, culture, youth and skills)

Facilitator **Deirdre Lennan**, Team Leader for the Human Development Team in from DG INTPA, opened the session by referring to the Human Development Team as a new team spanning the fields health, education, youth and culture, reflecting recommendation to forge better synergies in health and education. While education was the focus for the AAP 2022, in 2023 skills, youth and health are priorities.

Representatives from DG INTPA presented Actions 1-5 and Action 13 using the information circulated in the [briefing document](#) in advance of the meeting. The following points were raised during the subsequent discussion.

Following the concern as to how gender would remain a priority in the described actions where there was no explicit gender component, DG INTPA emphasised that gender is very present and by default mainstreamed as a horizontal issue across all actions. Taking the example of the OneHealth initiative (Action 2), gender is crucial to its success, noting the role of women in successful communication with their communities. Responding to a query on SRHR (Action 3), synergies are foreseen with the existing [UNFPA supplies partnership project](#) and further meetings are envisaged to determine CSOs' involvement in implementation of specific objectives 1 and 2 of Action 3. Also under Action 3, the question of how best to ensure health commodities reach women and girls in vulnerable situations will receive more attention at implementation phase, including with the participation of relevant CSOs.

Regarding the culture hub referenced in the presentation of Action 13, it was clarified that the concept was intended as a network using existing structures (linked perhaps to cultural institutions) rather than as one physical hub. While training is not a central pillar of Action 13, other points of entry for projects pertaining to training and job creation in the cultural sector exist.

Participants cited the EU Gender Action Plan as being very specific and robust but questioned how this translated into funding for implementation for grassroots women's organisations. DG INTPA suggested

that thematic programmes, such as the Global Challenges Programme, might be more suitable in addressing the issue surrounding funding interventions at grassroots level and noted the issue for follow-up with colleagues from INTPA's Unit G1.

Participants questioned how the EU plans to balance the increased emphasis on cooperation with the private sector against the need to support often nascent public service provision, and the responsibility of the public sector to step-up and provide quality services. INTPA, referring to the specifics of a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) project, characterised public-private partnership (PPP) as both the most important and most challenging aspect. In this and many other projects, there is a delicate balance of encouraging the trust of the private sector while supporting the public sector.

2. Democracy, governance, peace, migration and forced displacement (including CSO, local government, illicit financial flows, and maritime security)

Jorge Pereiro Piñón, Team Leader on Peace & Security, Governance, Migration & Mobility in DG INTPA, opened the session reminding participants of the goal to gather feedback on concepts approved by management that were under development into actionable projects. Representatives from DG INTPA presented Action 6, Actions 8-12 and Action 28-30. The following points were raised during the subsequent discussion.

Queried on the scope of potential involvement of LAs in Action 6, it was confirmed that while the main thrust is towards CSOs, local government actors would be considered where and when relevant. Participants involved with LAs were invited to submit their suggestions bilaterally to the delegation(s) working on Action 6. More generally, participants applauded the concerted effort to involve LAs as key stakeholders in the dialogue process but felt it important to recognise their potential as implementers. There was a suggestion to be as clear as possible in the delineation of stakeholders as it pertains to LAs so that it is clear when LAs can participate. DG INTPA reiterated LAs as valued partners in general and specifically in projects relating to cross-border governance and mitigation of conflict.

Further discussion on Action 6, in response to a query on the selection of the three Regional Economic Communities (RECs), DG INTPA confirmed it was based on mapping with EUDs to identify where interventions would prove most effective and did not preclude its expansion. Participants queried if any thematic priorities were envisaged under the policy dialogue component of Action 6. In case of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) the emphasis was on general capacity-building of CSOs in policy dialogue, while in the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) the focus would be on youth and women, with the added dimension of the non-state actor engagement mechanism and the joint action plan for SADC. A thematic focus is present in three components: in the Western Africa component where CSOs networks will be supported to contribute to more effective and better informed drug demand reduction policies; in Southern Africa partnerships between local OPDs and regional disability focused CSOs will be strengthened to promote the ratification of the African Disability Protocol (ADP) and in the Great Lakes region CSOs networking and strengthening will aim to favour "living together" and trust between the communities on both sides of the Congolese-Rwandan border.

Participants highlighted the over-regulation of CSOs in certain contexts and the resultant shrinking space for civil society and suggested that Actions 6 and 8 explicitly advocate activities by EUDs and the EU to build trust and dialogue between CSOs and government actors.

While participants noted the previous year's recommendations on inclusion of gender and refugee-led organisations had been taken on board for inclusion in Action 6 and Action 30 respectively, the question

arose whether these two factors had been included across all actions where they would be relevant. DG INTPA assured that cross-cutting issues were considered by default even if not explicitly referred to.

The criteria governing the selection of the three borderlands (Action 9) was based on extensive consultation with the EUDs. Given the importance of the security situation, the selected borderlands were subject to periodic review, and with the potential to include other borderlands (e.g. DRC-Rwanda) in future years.

3. Green transition (including climate change, agri-food, pastoralism and ocean protection)

Facilitator **Enrica Pellacani** of DG INTPA chaired the discussion which considered Actions 15-20.

In response to a query on the scope for civil society involvement in clean-cooking initiatives in West Africa, DG INTPA confirmed that CSOs have a clear role in the aspect of mobilisation, training and access to information contained within the programming. Capacity-building is aimed at CSOs as well as the private sector, and interested actors were invited to liaise bi-laterally with EUD Nigeria who were managing this initiative and the roll-out of clean-cooking projects.

On biodiversity, DG INTPA confirmed that while there is no dedicated action in the AAP 2023, biodiversity emerges as an aspect under other 2023 Actions (e.g. Action 27 on circular economy) and €20 million has been allocated to cover the SSA component of the wider Global Challenges programming tackling wildlife and timber trafficking. Consultation mechanisms exist in this and similar initiatives to maximise civil society involvement, and interested participants were invited to express their interest to DG INTPA's F2.

Participants working with associations of waste-collection workers spoke of the often-hidden gender dimension in waste-collection stakeholders and of the work already ongoing at grassroots level and recommended that these grassroots organisations could benefit from Actions on transboundary water management.

In relation to Action 15, DG INTPA emphasised the sustained consultation with research institutes and regional organisations. Participants expressed interest in the procedural details of Development Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture (DeSIRA+) and DG INTPA explained that while the details were under discussion, the €100 million will be distributed evenly across the three regions and underlined the need to be strategic in order to leverage multi-actor input on agroecology.

Participants emphasised the need for Action 16 on pastoralism in the Horn of Africa to be one strand of a nexus approach given the complex challenges in the region. DG INTPA highlighted their involvement via, for example, EU participation in a World Bank Programme of €300 million programme working on access to finance for pastoralists as well as drought payments in the Horn of Africa under the African Risk Capacity.

INTPA underscored that capacity-building at local level is primarily addressed by national-level programming, while the regional-programming contributes to initiatives on a continental or global scale. The Green transition does not operate in isolation, and targets in gender, climate-change, and biodiversity are horizontally integrated across Actions. Given the interconnectivity of green transition, participants (using the example of public-private partnership) pointed to the importance of a more systematic approach to creating synergies between priority areas, particularly in the communication of lessons learned and recommendations supporting capacity-building.

4. Sustainable growth and decent jobs, digital, STI (including trade, circular economy and product safety)

DG INTPA (**Fabio Di Stefano, George Dura, Eduin Matta Castillo**) presented Action 21 and Actions 23-27. The following points were raised during the subsequent discussion.

On engagement with trade unions around decent work, it was stressed that workers' organisation are considered as stakeholders and involved in the design and when appropriate the implementation of projects. Furthermore, preliminary work is ongoing in the domain of responsible business conduct and labour standards, so while not an explicit focus of AAP 2023, it will likely be explicitly included in future cycles.

Participants were keen to emphasise the overarching importance of sustainable agriculture; notably to mitigate impact on fragile environments especially in the context of increased land conversion. The merits of an entrepreneurial approach to farming to maximise access to climate financing was raised. DG INTPA reaffirmed that sustainable agriculture is a priority for the EU across sub-Saharan Africa, and certain facets may be more visible in national-level, rather than regional-level, programming.

Related to the circular economy, while processing of electronic and plastic waste is welcomed, advocacy to mitigate the import of waste to sub-Saharan Africa is equally important. Participants highlighted that initiatives on circular economy from the Indian sub-continent and Latin America may provide useful good practice to adapt to SSA, and advocated amplifying opportunities for South-South dialogue and peer-to-peer learning.

Women engaged in entrepreneurial activities could be overlooked as entrepreneurs due to both structural and cultural factors. Therefore, particular attention is needed to include women in projects relating to the business-support ecosystem and to bolster entrepreneurial support mechanisms aimed at the informal economy, in which women entrepreneurs may predominate.

On the theme of digital infrastructure and connectivity, affordable access and data protection were raised as key concerns. While investment projects on digital infrastructure are a longer-term aim, guaranteeing accessibility now within existing connectivity structures is a top priority. The African European Digital Innovation Bridge (AEDIB) concerning innovation and start-ups was identified as an area for discussion in future meetings in light of its likely inclusion in AAP 2024.

Participants sought further clarification on CSO dialogue and engagement. EUDs were confirmed as key to dialogue with CSOs and local level consultation with CSOs, with a scope including concrete activities, is envisaged as an ongoing feedback loop, giving CSOs opportunities to be involved in formulation, implementing and monitoring and evaluation.

III. Closing remarks

In her closing remarks, **Ms Rofi** concluded that gender and climate emerged as important, well-established horizontal themes. A clear appetite exists to ensure that actions are in synergy with ongoing initiatives. She noted actions encompassing themes of decent work and South-South cooperation as of particular interest going forward. Thanking those involved in coordinating the meeting, she signalled the next meeting would be scheduled at the end of 2023 and would focus on the AAP 2024.