

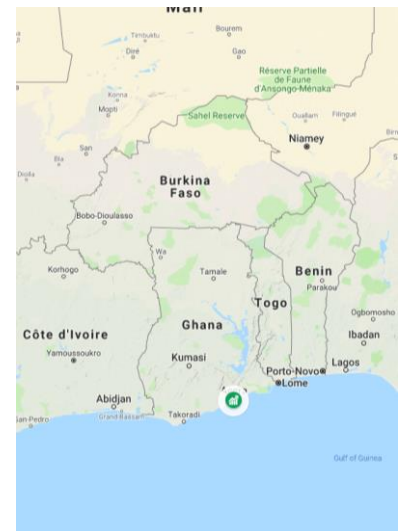


Ghana Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme

Highlights Eleven Accra-based civil society organisations (CSOs) working on social accountability, anti-corruption and governance joined forces in November 2014 to influence the design, implementation and monitoring of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-backed extended credit arrangement for Ghana (2015–18). Prior to the formation of the Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme, there had been no citizen initiative specifically dedicated to a serious economic intervention like this in the country. The Civil Society Platform has been at the forefront of CSOs' engagement with key stakeholders (i.e. the IMF and Government of Ghana), articulating the views of ordinary citizens in language that policymakers can relate to.

Introduction

Ghana's economic environment became very unstable in 2014, due to a rapidly depreciating currency, high debt burden, and rising inflation that hit ordinary household pockets the hardest – along with the loss of policy credibility and investor confidence. The situation was further complicated by electricity supply shortages that worsened the health of the economy. Facing the deteriorating economic climate, the Government of Ghana sought non-partisan homegrown solutions to the challenges that confronted the economy in a three-day national economic forum in May 2014. Nonetheless, the challenges persisted, and in August 2014, the Government of Ghana requested a bailout programme from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). On 3 April 2015, the IMF Board approved a three-year Extended Credit Facility (2015–17, extended to year-end



Map data © 2019 Google

2018) of about US\$918m or 180 per cent of Ghana's quota at the IMF; this was the country's sixteenth stabilisation programme with the IMF since independence in 1957. The IMF programme aimed to restore debt sustainability and macroeconomic stability in order to foster a return to high growth and job creation while protecting social spending.

The previous 15 stabilisation programmes with the IMF involved very little citizen buy-in due to the lack of space for citizens to share their views on these important fiscal agreements. Therefore, in November 2014 11 CSOs, thinktanks and NGOs working on social accountability, transparency and anti-corruption issues, all based in Accra, came together and formed the Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme (now the Economic Governance Platform, and hereafter referred to as the 'Platform'). The Platform's aim was to advocate for civil society inclusiveness in major public financial management issues and, in particular the IMF programme design, implementation and monitoring in Ghana, by creating dialogue spaces between CSOs, government and the IMF as well as other development partners.

Timeline

2014	August 2014	Nov 2014	Nov 14	March 2015	April 2015	2016
Increased economic instability in Ghana	Government of Ghana requests a bailout programme from the IMF	11 CSOs, thinktanks and NGOs come together and form the Civil Society Platform	First forum for citizens' inputs to the IMF stabilisation programme design	Fiscal accountability workshop to build capacity of programme and advocacy actors	IMF Board approves a three-year Extended Credit Facility of about US\$918m	Passing of the public Financial Management Act and the amended Bank of Ghana Act

How It Works

The Platform on the IMF Programme has a secretariat operated by the Coordinator and overseen by a Steering Committee made up of representatives of the 11 member organisations. The Steering Committee meets quarterly to approve and appraise the work of the secretariat. Decision-making by the Steering Committee is largely by consensus.

The Platform's secretariat largely relies on finance and administrative support from the host organisation given that the Platform's Coordinator, who doubles as the Resident Economist, is its only paid staff. Membership of the Platform is voluntary and has increased to 16 organisations from the initial 11.

The functions of the secretariat are:

- Managing the Platform's human, financial and technical resources, including people management, regular communication, reporting and coordination of Platform activities; scheduling and convening of meetings of the Steering Committee and other forums;
- Planning, budgeting and the implementation of project activities, including content generation and inviting facilitators and resource people;
- Grant proposal writing, grant management and reporting;
- Engaging all external stakeholders, namely government and its agencies as well as Ghana's main donors, including the World Bank and the IMF on fiscal and monetary policy issues;
- Producing policy briefs and media releases on Ghana's fiscal governance issues to strengthen the Platform's evidence-based advocacy;
- Leading and liaising with members of the Platform and other stakeholders to produce common positions on fiscal governance in Ghana;
- Developing a system to stimulate greater citizen participation in the country's public financial management issues; and

- Managing the Platform's online and social media content.

Enabling Participation

Through global-to-local advocacy, five national civil society forums have been organised by the Platform to facilitate citizen engagement with the IMF programme. At each forum, CSOs and ordinary citizens share their views on the management of the economy and provide on-the-ground feedback to strengthen programme implementation. The forums, held in Accra, bring together 60–100 participants from existing networks of CSOs, thinktanks, academia, media, government agencies, the IMF and other development partners with an interest in public finance and economy-wide issues and the general populace.

The Platform often relies on the expertise of academics to prepare position papers and independent assessments, and key resource persons to help translate/explain the implications of macro figures to participants. Member organisations that undertake budget tracking are sometimes given the space to share their findings.

At the end of each forum the overarching themes are issued in a communiqué with a call for action by the IMF and the Government of Ghana, both of which are usually represented at the forum. Usually, the secretariat appoints two rapporteurs to document the proceedings. The secretariat later summarises the key themes and emails them to participants for their comments before communiqués are issued.

The first forum was held in November 2014 for citizens' inputs to the IMF programme design. The Platform's requests were submitted to Ghana's president and leaders of the negotiation teams from Ghana (in Accra) and the IMF (both in Accra and Washington DC), with critical support from the Oxfam office in Washington DC. Oxfam leveraged its worldwide network to scan for influencing opportunities and effectively create dialogue spaces with senior officials of the IMF on the need to engage with Ghanaian CSOs as input to the IMF programme negotiation. Consequently, in November 2014, and again in February 2015, Oxfam and the Platform's representatives met the IMF Executive Directors (or their advisors) from the US, Germany, France, UK, Japan and China in Washington DC to request their support for the Platform's policy recommendations to be included in the final agreement.

Furthermore, the Platform organised a fiscal accountability workshop (12–13 March 2015) to build the capacity of hands-on programme and advocacy actors within the CSO space in Ghana (i.e. the people who actually implement programmes and advocacy initiatives) on innovative approaches to effectively track public expenditure and resource flows through the various strata of government. The aim was to enable participants to determine how much of originally allocated public resources reach each intended end and whether such funds are used in the most economical, effective and efficient manner for improved fiscal accountability in Ghana. This was timed alongside the commencement of the 2015 fiscal year.

Outcomes

The Platform has made demonstrable impacts by implanting itself in the minds of policymakers and key stakeholders. Over the past four years, the Platform has been invited to and participated in several high-profile meetings and has had constructive dialogue on improving the Ghanaian economy. Representatives have also attended meetings with the leader of the government's negotiating team, senior officials of the IMF, the World Bank and the Ministry of Finance, as well as representatives of the Economic Management Team (EMT).

The approved IMF programme granted many of the Platform's requests, including provisions on:

- Improving fiscal discipline;
- Deepening accountability and transparency;
- Linking stabilisation to transformation; and
- Safeguarding 15 pro-poor and social protection spending.

Examples of pro-poor and social protection spending that were safeguarded include the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme that delivers a monthly cash transfer to the underprivileged in society; a fertiliser subsidy; and the provision of a feeding grant to special schools for disabled children.

Gaining the trust of the IMF to engage with citizens and CSOs in Ghana is a big achievement given that initially the Platform did not agree with IMF staff on several issues. Both parties grew to understand each other with time and have built an enviable relationship. The IMF valued the quality of the Platform's analysis as it provided a reality check for the IMF's own prescriptions as well as government's account of events.

The passage of key structural and legal reforms such as the Public Financial Management Act, 2016 and the Amended Bank of Ghana Act, 2016 among others as part of the Platform's advocacy were critical to reforming the management of public finances, providing greater assurances on government liabilities and also preventing the Central Bank financing of the budget (dominance of fiscal policy over monetary policy).

This citizens' initiative in Ghana has become a model for other countries. The Managing Director of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, recognised the useful feedback from the Platform on the IMF Programme in Ghana (and that of Ukraine) during the CSOs' town hall meeting at the October 2017 annual meetings of the World Bank and IMF in Washington DC. She also said that this citizens' initiative to bridge the governance loop was commendable and will serve as a model for IMF citizen engagement across the globe.

References

Aloryito, G.K. (2019) *Linking Participation and Economic Advancement. Ghana Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme: Case Study*, Brighton: IDS. Available at: <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/14533>

Authors Godson Korbla Aloryito, Mariah Cannon and Jodie Thorpe

The Institute of Development Studies and Authors cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this report. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the IDS and Authors.



© Institute of Development Studies 2020. This is an Open Access Brief distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial 4.0 International license (CC BY-NC), which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original authors and source are credited, any modifications or adaptations are indicated, and the work is not used for commercial purposes. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

Image: Participants at the third national civil society forum on the IMF bailout programme for Ghana held in Accra, March 2016

Photographer: © Economic Governance Platform, all rights reserved

Funding Supported by a grant from the Open Society Foundation.

This Case Summary forms part of the collection of materials produced for the 'Linking Participation and Economic Advancement' project led by the Institute of Development Studies. This research project recognises that economic processes impact the lives and livelihoods of people who frequently have little or no power in these processes. Through this research we identify alternatives: ways that communities, governments and enterprises are making economic decisions in which 'ordinary' people have a real voice.

IDS is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (No 877338).

Institute of Development Studies, Brighton BN1 9RE UK
 T +44 (0) 1273 606261 E ids@ids.ac.uk W www.ids.ac.uk
 W www.eldis.org/collection/participation-economic-advancement
 T twitter.com/IDS_UK F facebook.com/idsuk

