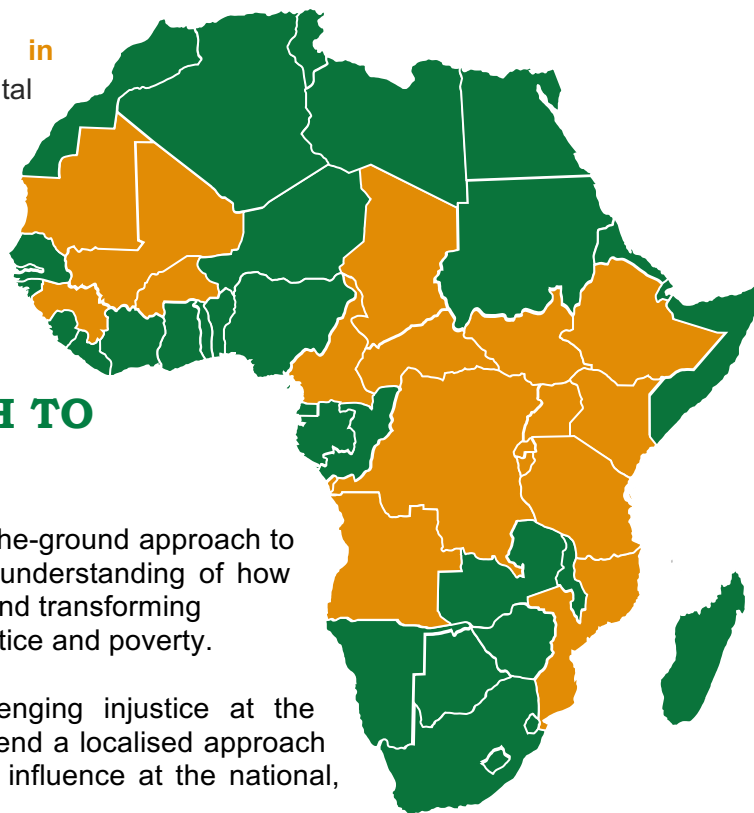




ADVOCACY STRATEGY AND CAPACITY STATEMENT

ACORD (Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development) is a Pan-African non-governmental organisation that has been working for social justice and development in Africa since 1976. ACORD's work is guided by a number of fundamental values and working principles, chief amongst these is the belief that individuals are the primary actors in their own development.



ACORD'S INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ADVOCACY

Advocacy work plays a key role in ACORD's practical, on-the-ground approach to development work and is an essential part of ACORD's understanding of how change must be achieved: by engaging with, challenging, and transforming the systems and underlying structures that perpetuate injustice and poverty.

ACORD's approach to advocacy is grounded in challenging injustice at the grassroots level, through forms of engagement that transcend a localised approach and confront power structures that stifle meaningful local influence at the national, continental and global levels.

This multi-dimensional approach reflects the fact that although poverty, exclusion and injustice are experienced at the local level, the structures and systems which perpetuate them are broader in reach. ACORD values an approach to advocacy that not only works to empower people to be the primary actors in their own development, but aims to address the wider barriers that prevent people from being able to participate and exert influence over political, social and economic systems that hinder development.

For ACORD, advocacy must both empower individuals to positively contribute to change, and challenge decision makers and other powerful actors to pursue systemic changes that create the conditions for social justice and the achievement of human rights. This means an approach which values action at all levels, and which implies a role in advocacy for all staff within the organisation.

HOW IT WORKS

EMPOWERMENT

ACORD's vision and mission have at their heart a commitment to the empowerment of people. ACORD seeks to empower individuals to become advocates for their own rights and active citizens with the power to influence decisions that affect them. ACORD's focus is on strengthening a democratic culture at the community level, through building the capacity of communities and supporting them in establishing social institutions and norms for democratic participation, and in establishing vertical accountability from democratic representatives – both elected and non-elected. This approach is based on an idea of sustainable and dynamic change: social justice and human rights will not be achieved simply through changes in policy from the top, but are by their nature an expression of the needs and interest of those at the bottom, and their achievement relies on an active citizenry participating in a democratic system to ensure they are upheld.

ACORD facilitates social action to create the foundation for an ongoing and participatory political dynamic by which to achieve sustained social justice. This approach runs powerfully through ACORD's programming, which upholds a strong emphasis on raising awareness in communities of their rights and the policies that impact their lives, building the capacity of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) to more effectively engage in wider policy issues, and strengthening CSO networks and alliances.

POLICY INFLUENCING

ACORD understands that for programmes to facilitate bottom-up social action they must be complemented by actions that will influence different spheres in which power is exercised. The lack of voice and power of citizens in decision-making exists from the local to the global spheres, and necessitates an approach in which ACORD works to influence policy formation and implementation. When there is a lack of agency and power amongst communities, then there is also a gap in decision making where people's voice and perspective are not heard.

ACORD, by acting as an actor to influence policy at national to global levels, seeks to fill this gap, and in doing so address the wider factors that impact on the realisation of social justice. This usually involves focused approaches aimed at specific decision-making bodies that wield power, usually governmental but it can also include institutions within the private sector, in order to achieve changes in official policies or legislation. This can mean ensuring a new policy is designed, a proposed policy is blocked, or an existing policy is implemented. In most cases this means partaking in the policy formulation process through official engagements, such as government consultations or meetings, engaging with decision makers through holding meetings, and influencing debates over policy by publishing reports and publicising our positions.

CONVENING FOR CHANGE

Increasing evidence from the field demonstrates the advantages of a form of advocacy less focused on 'demanding' specific changes, and instead aiming to foster collective action to solve problems and bring about change. The role here for CSOs is in "convening for change," in building the relationships, space and trust between different stakeholders so they can come together to collectively work for solutions. This approach acknowledges that often the impediments to achieving change are in galvanising collective action between stakeholders, including communities, private sector actors, and governments, instilling a sense of shared purpose and mutual confidence in the actions and roles of others. CSOs do not propose direct solutions, but instead take the position that a solution needs to be found and bring stakeholders together to define what roles they need to take in finding it. In many countries it is difficult for CSOs to take an active position against government policy, and so instead of bringing an issue onto the agenda by demanding a specific action on it a convening role would try and build the space to have a constructive dialogue.

This approach is already happening on the ground, including within ACORD programmes. ACORD builds active citizenship and awareness, giving communities and their representatives the capacity to partake in policy dialogues with credibility. A convening role allows ACORD to build the spaces and relationships in which local actors can play a more engaged and active role in decision-making.

ACORD'S CURRENT AND PAST ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNS

LOCALIZATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

ACORD has been actively involved in ensuring the "localization" of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this regard, ACORD and its partners have been involved in both the High-Level Panel (HLP) and the Open Working Group processes in the post-2015 development agenda. ACORD led a civil society organisation (CSO) delegation to Monrovia to pledge support to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and ensure that the new global framework will feature citizen participation, especially from marginalised groups.

ACORD developed a methodology that united the voices of people in positions of power with citizens. ACORD also led the formation of an African Working Group to support the head of the African CSO Secretariat in outreach activities in Monrovia and Bali.

The UN Economic Commission for Africa selected ACORD, FEMNET as well as the African Women's Development Fund to support the African Union High Level Committee in engendering the Common Africa Position. ACORD organised citizen-driven workshops in 13 African countries to document citizens' hopes and aspirations for the successor framework. The outcomes of the workshops are captured in the African Women and Girls at the Grassroots: Their Say on the World Post-2015 report, as well as the Africa in 2030: Responsive States, Empowered Citizens report.

Following the adoption of the SDGs by the UN General Assembly, ACORD and partners are focusing on implementing the SDGs at a national level. ACORD is currently developing an advocacy strategy for awareness-raising at national and grassroots levels in Africa, collaborating with citizens in developing targets and indicators for the achievement of the SDGs, and lobby Parliamentarians for budget legislation for the implementation of the SDGs.

COMPREHENSIVE AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CAADP)

ACORD, as part of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) Non-State Actors group, CAADP is a pan-African agreement and development programme aimed at boosting productivity in agriculture, alleviating poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability. ACORD has been working hard to influence this process to ensure that the needs of Africa's small-scale producers are reflected in these decisions and that governments take the necessary actions to realise their stated goals on transforming agriculture on the continent. A key part of this has been to coordinate a landmark statement on behalf of African civil society actors, detailing the 10 essential policies and approaches needed to ensure that African leaders move "From rhetoric to action."

The policies are: 1) Increase quantity of agriculture spending; 2) Improve quality of agriculture spending; 3) Improve policy making under CAADP to be more effective, mutually accountable and participatory; 4) Improve transparency of agriculture spending; 5) Eliminate the gender and youth gap in agriculture; 6) Strengthen small-scale producers land rights through improved resources for land governance and adoption and implementation of the AU "Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa"; 7) Increase investment in inclusive agriculture research, development and extension services; 8) Foster access to markets for small-scale farmers, investment in small-scale farming, and responsible private sector investments; 9) Integrate sustainability and climate resilience into national agriculture plans; 10) Put in place mechanisms for preventing and managing the recurrent food and nutrition crisis. Over 120 African non-governmental organisations, producers organisations, and civil society networks have signed the statement.

ACORD has also put forth some clear policy recommendations to enhance CAADP implementation. These are presented in the report, "Putting small-scale farming first: This report analyses the National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs) of five countries – Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Burkina Faso – and assesses the extent to which they are likely to benefit smallholder farmers. The NAIPs are the flagship strategies of governments, outlining how they will support the agriculture sector in the coming years and include ambitious spending plans.

As a result of ACORD's efforts with the CAADP CNC (non-state actors group), in 2014 the Malabo Declaration was signed enshrining ACORD's ten critical policy points. ACORD continues to work closely with the CNC, which it hosts in its Nairboi offices, to advance the interests of small shareholder farmers.

AU VISION 2063

ACORD played an active part in the consultative process that led to the development of the post-2015 agenda and culminated in the adoption of the “Transforming our World; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and new global goals for sustainable development. In coming years, member states will be integrating the global goals and climate commitments in national policy implementation to reflect country specific needs and aspirations. In Africa, Agenda 2030 is pursued through the African Union’s Vision 2063, which incorporates and links with continental frameworks and policy agreements. As members of the African Working Group, ACORD is supporting in the implementation of the Agenda 2063. Currently, ACORD is co-convening around creating synergies between Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, and national plans. ACORD is exploring how synergies can be created among these agendas for concrete implementation. This process is also helping to identify current gaps in policies and programs.

Successes in these efforts thus far include: initiating, leading and supporting processes of domesticating SDGs at the national level in countries like Tanzania, Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, etc; establishing and/or supporting national SDG CSO platforms in countries across Africa; promoting the establishment of multi-stakeholder forums at the national level; and developing national review frameworks, including participating in the development of national and regional indicator frameworks to monitor SDG implementation. Certain countries have made great strides in integrating the SDGs with national development plans and framework (Ghana, Cameroon, Niger, Togo, Kenya, Tanzania). For example, in Ghana SDGs have been fully integrated in the national development plan. In Cameroon, there is almost 88% alignment of SDGs with national plan. Going forward, ACORD's role as part of the African Working Group, is to strengthen collaboration with government and other stakeholders; generate knowledge and resources to advance development in Africa in general and SDG implementation in particular; sharpen the development of the global, regional and national indicator frameworks to promote efficient Monitoring and Review and data availability; strengthen inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms and mechanisms for participatory decision making; document and scale SDG successes at sub-national, national and regional levels; strengthen and/or build the capacity of civil society networks, movements, platforms, and organisations in Africa to engage in the implementation and monitoring of Africa’s development commitments; align SDGs with RECs work plans to maximize impact and optimize resources; provide technical engagement and support to African governments and other development actors to advance our common agenda for development in Africa; and provide an annual reports on the status of the implementation of the agendas 2030 and 2063.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION (ICGLR)

ACORD has been instrumental in the facilitation process involving women engagement at peace talks and mediations in various African countries. For the last couple of years, ACORD has worked closely with a group of regional organisations (ISIS-WICCE, EASSI, Akina Mama wa Africa, among others) on issues of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). ACORD believes that conflict and SGBV cannot be delinked, it is important that factors contributing to sexual violence within conflict context be looked at in wider dimensions including, political, economic, rule of law and governance.

ACORD hosts trainings to enable women to discuss proposed peace and mediation frameworks at length and come up with concrete programs promoting lasting peace that are gender sensitive. Involvement of women in peace talks is an important opportunity that allows them to air their concerns and be active participants in the peace making process. By enabling women from these countries take part in the trainings it will strengthen a regional approach to conflict transformation and peace building in the region, while lobbying for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 on the peace building processes across ICGLR countries and Africa. UNSCR 1325 addresses not only the inordinate impact of war on women, but also the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution, and sustainable peace.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples, communities and countries to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food and land policies, which are appropriate to their unique circumstances (ecologically, socially, economically, and culturally). Food Sovereignty proposes a set of precise policy measures focusing on food for people, valuing food providers, localising food systems, putting control of resources locally, building knowledge and skills, and working with nature. ACORD worked to support and mobilise networks and movements in Africa to take action and find solutions to hunger through a food sovereignty approach. ACORD's advocacy in this domain focused on two of the main factors that affect food security and hunger in Africa: trade and agricultural policies. Unjust international trade rules lock poor countries in to a situation of powerlessness and poverty. For Africa, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are especially important. ACORD believes that the rules of trade need to be changed and trade must be managed to ensure that it supports the welfare of people and the environment.

MY BODY MY RIGHTS

ACORD has completed 'legal audits' on sexual and gender-based violence in five countries in the Great Lakes region of Africa: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. All the countries are signatories to the *Great Lakes Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children* which is one of the most progressive pieces of legislation existing on this issue. The audit looked in detail in each country at what laws are in place to deal with sexual violence and violence against women; whether and how those laws are enforced and implemented in practice; and procedures in place in the key institutions for establishing the chain of evidence, including health institutions and the police. ACORD followed-up these audits with more detailed studies on the need for compensation and reparation for survivors of sexual violence. Three pan-African conferences on violence against women have now been convened by ACORD, in alliance with civil society organisations.

STOP THE STIGMA

ACORD, in partnership with the renowned Kenyan artist Kwame, launched the song Stop the Stigma, in Addis Ababa, during the 16th ICASA Conference on 4th December 2011. The song denounces stigma and discrimination against Hard to Reach communities and vulnerable minority groups including people living with HIV, sexual and ethnic minorities, sexually abused women, people with disabilities, and refugees among others. After the performance, broadcast live on Ethiopian television, numerous live testimonies acknowledged that stigma is indeed HIV's silent weapon and together WE MUST STOP IT! The song has also been performed during the SafAIDS (Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service) launch of the toolkit for HIV and gender-based violence prevention for people who identify as Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transsexuals and Intrasexuals (LGBTI).



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