

Ghana | Why Government granted us GCF observer rights

Being at the table when governments prepare decisions in relation to how they approach the Green Climate Fund (GCF) domestically is important for civil society to play a meaningful role as dialogue partner. As part of a multi-country project advancing civil society readiness to the GCF with a particular focus on Africa, civil society organisations in Ghana have been actively engaging in the national debates on the GCF.

In 2017, the SDG13 platform demanded from Government that CSOs be granted observer rights in the country's cross-ministerial Technical Advisory Committee. Eventually, Government acceded to our demands – and more. But why did we succeed?

Understanding GCF multistakeholder engagement

First things first. We need to understand that GCF multistakeholder engagement is part of the DNA of the Fund, with the GCF Governing Instrument mandating “the Fund to pursue a country-driven approach and promote and strengthen engagement at the country level effective involvement of relevant institutions and stakeholders.”¹ But how does this look like, in practice?

According to the GCF Secretariat, this strengthened country level involvement should be “inclusive and seek to engage all relevant actors within the government (...) civil society and other relevant stakeholders.”² That is, the GCF can only *recommend* that countries define own multistakeholder decision-making mechanisms to strengthen national GCF inclusiveness. So how did they go about it in Ghana?

¹ GCF Governing Instrument, Guiding Principle 3 (p2).

² GCF/B.08/45: *Initial best-practice for options for country coordination and multi-stakeholder engagement.*

What is the Technical Advisory Committee?

In Ghana, the National Designated Authority (NDA) was among the first countries to set up a multistakeholder decision-making mechanism, with the so-called "Technical Advisory Committee" (TAC) which meets quarterly and is chaired by the National Designated Authority (NDA) Secretariat under Ministry of Finance. Even if the purpose of the TAC is "to provide recommendations on the overall implementation of the NDA Secretariat's mandate", in practice the Committee decides whether the NDA Secretariat should issue Letters of No Objection, without which concept notes, proposals and requests for GCF Readiness submitted to the GCF Secretariat will not be considered.

Institutional and multistakeholder inclusiveness

TAC inclusiveness comes in two shapes: Institutional and multi-stakeholder. (1) The 11-member TAC consists of nine permanent institutional representatives of key ministries and commissions, not least Ministry of Environment which is not only the UN Climate Secretariat (UNFCCC) Focal Point but mandated to coordinate the National Climate Change Steering Committee, mandated to oversee all government climate interventions in Ghana. As part of ensuring institutional inclusiveness, the TAC must report to this national committee. This institutional arrangement helps bridge an often-seen divide between ministries of finance and environment, laying the foundation for country ownership. (2) The remaining two members of the TAC are named, permanent organisational representatives of private sector and civil society, in a bid to ensure multistakeholder participation.

Finding common grounds

For all the inclusiveness of the TAC, there was a deep sentiment among parts of civil society that their NDA-selected representative did in fact not represent civil society. Meanwhile, the climate policy sector of Ghanaian civil society is rife with deep, historical divisions – often most due to rigid donor projects that failed to ensure ownership. So how to find common grounds?

Rather than exacerbating those divisions among civil society by demanding that the NDA remove the (permanent) TAC civil society representative, the 100+ members of the Ghana SDG13 CSO Platform, convened by the Kasa Initiative and co-convened by CARE Ghana, decided

to demand for an additional representation on the Committee, according to a provision in the TAC Operational Manual.³

The first approach of the SDG13 Platform was to exert public pressure on the NDA, through publications, blogs and media involvement. Did it work? Well, the NDA was listening, and listening carefully, but the approach seemed to only create mistrust between the NDA and civil society.

The second approach was dialogue, by building trust through personal lobbying of selected NDA and TAC members and by calling for NDA and TAC representation in SDG13 Platform meetings, pointing to a TAC mandate to “coordinate and facilitate multistakeholder consultations and other country coordination mechanisms.” This paragraph opened doors into Ministry of Finance: No confrontational approach. No protest. No naming and shaming. Just an invitation for dialogue, based on a shared commitment to multistakeholder inclusion.

Finally, after a series of meetings stretching from May 2017 to September 2018, the NDA publicly acceded to our demands, announcing that henceforth all Ghanaian CSOs with GCF Observer Status shall be allowed to observe TAC meetings. Indeed, the TAC even opened for the possibility of the TAC civil society representative to henceforth be elected.

Do your homework!

Even if every national context is different, the universal lesson learnt from Ghana is really for civil society to analyse the context, do our homework and select our advocacy approaches accordingly.

Confrontational advocacy can be necessary under some circumstances, but seek first to understand why Government should accede to your demands. Understand first what unites, not what divides; Our advocacy win came about through persuasion, not coercion, making our advocacy win all the more sustainable because we did not unnecessarily jeopardise the hard-earned trust with Government.

³ Operations Manual (February 2016), GCF NDA TAC, p13.

*** Disclaimer: The case study represents the personal views of the author, not those of CARE International in Ghana, nor Kasa Initiative Ghana or the SDG13 CSO Platform.