

**STRENGTHENING WORLD BANK GROUP  
ENGAGEMENT ON GOVERNANCE AND ANTICORRUPTION  
CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**



**MAURITANIA**

(JANUARY 4-5, 2007)

**Participants:** Ninety three (93) people participated in this face to face consultation (see attached list). As the Parliament is not yet in place, the newly elected parliamentarians were not consulted, however six mayors participated in the discussions.

**How did the process fit into the ongoing country dialogue?**

The CAS, currently under preparation, has put an emphasis on governance and anticorruption in line with the second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of Mauritania. The fourth pillar of Mauritania's PRSP aims to improve governance and strengthen institutional capacity. Therefore, it includes measures to strengthen the rule of law, to improve public administration, to develop the management of public resources, and to strengthen decentralization and the capacity of civil society.

The GAC consultation inputs will be used to improve the ongoing dialogue on governance and anticorruption in Mauritania through ongoing activities such as the public sector capacity building project (PRECASP) for improving PFM system and strengthening decentralization, the IDF for supporting procurement reform and the TF supporting extractive industry transparency initiative (EITI) implementation. These inputs will be also used for the elaboration of the anti-corruption study that will help Mauritania to develop its national anti-corruption strategy.

**What were the key issues/themes raised by participants?**

All participants emphasized the importance of GAC in the fight against poverty and in the socio-economic development of Mauritania. Socio-cultural factors – including tolerance of corruption – make it difficult to implement GAC measures, especially in a context where the public administration is manipulated by some powerful groups and has weak capacity.

Participants have proposed three types of critical actions for improving governance and fighting corruption:

1. On the process, participants proposed the following measures: (i) a national and open dialogue on governance and corruption in order to ensure that the same diagnostic is shared by all; (ii) a prioritization of the main problems of bad governance and corruption in order to determine potential entry points; and (iii) a far-reaching communications campaign aimed at educating the public on these issues and to develop a “governance culture” and the sense of citizenship.
2. On the content, participants proposed the following measures: (i) more strict application of existing laws and regulations through the implementation of sanctions foreseen in these texts; (ii) promotion of a transparent system of fiduciary management at the national and regional level; (iii)

establishment of a transparent system of recruitment and promotion in the public sector; and (iv) strengthening the judicial system in order to make it more independent.

3. On the monitoring and evaluation of GAC progress, participants proposed: (i) to include Mauritania into the Transparency international survey on an annual basis (Mauritania was included for the first time in 2006) and (ii) to identify benchmarking for Mauritania.

Finally, all participants have highlighted the importance to improve coordination with all the actors (government, civil society and donors) in order to ensure GAC reform implementation success.

Respondent Type	Consultation Reply
<b>1. Top governance challenges in country</b>	
[Government]	<p>Government and other stakeholders identified broadly the same main GAC challenges in Mauritania :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulty on the part of the authorities to accept the consequences of engaging in the fight against corruption, given the socio-cultural context of the country.</li> <li>- Lack of a value system: tolerance of corruption</li> <li>- Weak institutional and human capacity</li> <li>- No transparency in procurement</li> <li>- Inexistence of merit-based recruitment and promotion system</li> <li>- Low civil servant pay</li> <li>- Weak implementation of rules and regulations</li> <li>- No transparency in financial transactions</li> <li>- Existence of powerful vested interests institutionalized over the last 20 years</li> <li>- Weak public opinion</li> </ul>
[Representatives from Civil Society]	<p>Civil society identified main GAC challenges linked to government weakness and lack of an effective participatory approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No real and effective political commitment exists, an effective application of sanctions in case of bad governance or corruption is absent and there are no incentives for champions of reform.</li> <li>- No accountability of decision makers</li> <li>- Low civil servant pay</li> <li>- No development of meritocracy</li> <li>- Weak participation of civil society in reform agenda (elaboration, implementation and monitoring and evaluation)</li> <li>- Prevalence of bribery in public procurement</li> <li>- No transparency in financial transactions</li> <li>- Inexistence of asset declaration and control (of public officials)</li> <li>- Elite (intellectual and powerful groups) resistance to GAC reform and change</li> <li>- Weak judiciary system which lacks independence</li> </ul>
[Private sector]	<p>Private sector representative identified the lack of a participatory approach and weak and partial application of laws as the top GAC challenge in Mauritania :</p>

Respondent Type	Consultation Reply
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weak financial system</li> <li>- Weak participation of all stakeholders in reform agenda identification, implementation and monitoring</li> <li>- Absence of corporate governance</li> <li>- Weak judiciary system</li> <li>- Low civil servant pay</li> </ul>
[Media]	<p>As other representatives from civil society, the media identified government weakness, lack of an effective participatory approach and weak government commitment to apply sanction as top GAC challenge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Politically difficult change : Politicians and officials blocked reforms</li> <li>- No transparency in political parties financing</li> <li>- No community empowerment</li> <li>- Absence of public discussion and dissemination of policy reform results</li> <li>- Public official accustomed to corruption</li> <li>- Inexistence of public service sense and ethic</li> <li>- Low civil servant pay</li> <li>- Weak and no independent judiciary system</li> <li>- Absence of a value system → corruption is accepted and has become a cultural problem</li> </ul>
<b>2. Promising areas of governance and anticorruption reform and potential obstacles</b>	
[Government]	<p><u>Reform areas</u> : Reform to improve the capacity, transparency and accountability of public institutions and administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public financial management (PFM) system and procurement reform; reinforce PFM system; budget execution de-concentrated to line ministries; reinforcement of budget control and dissemination of control reports.</li> <li>- Civil service reform: build a transparent merit-based and promotion system with adequate pay</li> <li>- Sectoral governance such as extractives industries: implementation of EITI</li> <li>- Elaborate and implement anticorruption strategy in collaboration with all stakeholders</li> <li>- Improve financial transaction tracking</li> <li>- Strengthen an independent judiciary system</li> </ul> <p><u>Potential obstacles</u></p> <p>Political change: no guarantee of commitment of next elected government to continue GAC reform, potential resistance to change.</p>

Respondent Type	Consultation Reply
[Representatives from Civil Society]	<p><u>Reform areas:</u> Reform public administration and increase opportunities for participation and oversight by civil society and communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seek to strengthen the public's demand for better governance, educate public about GAC and its negative impacts, involve women in the debate</li> <li>- Improve decentralization</li> <li>- Improve the participatory approach : help civil society to play an effective role in the design, implementation and monitoring of the GAC program</li> <li>- Seek GAC good experience outside Mauritania : inform leaders about best practices in GAC implementation around the world</li> <li>- Prepare sectoral GAC strategy for each sector to take into account specific problems within sectors</li> </ul> <p><u>Potential obstacles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resistance to change, no involvement of community and civil society, no real political commitment</li> </ul>
[Private sector]	<p><u>Reform areas:</u> Reform public administration that creates enabling environment for a competitive and responsible private sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote corporate firms and effectively apply laws</li> <li>- Improve fiscal system in order to treat firms equally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve financial transaction tracking</li> <li>- Strengthen the judiciary system</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Potential obstacles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No involvement of private sector actors in identification of reforms</li> <li>- Elite's (intellectuals and powerful business men) resistance to reform implementation</li> </ul>
[Media]	<p><u>Reform areas:</u> Strengthening public administration through improved fiduciary system and civil servant reforms is the main promising reform area. But it is important to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support media's role in increasing transparency and accountability of government actions</li> <li>- Integrate education program on GAC and civic education</li> <li>- Create an anticorruption entity (observatoire de lutte contre la corruption)</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. How can the Bank better assist your country on governance reforms? What further actions would you like to see from the Bank and in the GAC strategy?</b></p>	
[Government]	The WB should provide support to build capacity of new parliament

<b>Respondent Type</b>	<b>Consultation Reply</b>
[Mayor]	The WB has to avoid creating project units outside the administration. Bank support should contribute to strengthening public administration. It is important to decentralize Bank support by providing assistance directly to communities and empowering them.
[Representatives from Civil Society]	The WB has to be selective and support reform in critical sectors. The WB should provide support (i) to educate young and new generations on GAC and (ii) to organize open and large debate on GAC in Mauritania.
[Private sector]	The WB should support reform in judiciary sector and financial sector to develop a responsible private sector.
[Media]	The WB has to involve all stakeholders (particularly beneficiaries) in project implementation and anticorruption actions. It is also important to support media's role in increased transparency and accountability in the government action.
<b>4. How to ensure fair and consistent treatment across countries</b>	
[Government]	The WB has to use consensual, objective and measurable indicators for its resources allocations.
[Representatives from Civil Society]	The WB's opinion and involvement should not be linked to international politics. WB resource allocation should be based on objective and Measurable indicators.
<b>5. How to strengthen the Bank's work with champions of reform outside the executive branch of government – parliament, judiciary, civil society, media and the private sector</b>	
[Mayor]	The WB should provide technical support to strengthen community representatives' capacity.
[Representatives from Civil Society]	The WB should work with all stakeholders and not only with central government. Involvement of vulnerable groups (as final beneficiaries of basic services) in GAC reforms is critical. The WB should also work closely with civil society and community representatives. This will permit to identify adequate reforms and implement measures on the ground. The Bank should contribute to building capacity of champions of reform outside and within the central government. The WB should encourage tripartite (Government-civil society-donors) dialogue within the country..
<b>6. How to mitigate fiduciary risk in Bank operations?</b>	
[Government]	The WB has to ensure transparency in recruitment of project coordinators and staff.
[Representatives from Civil Society]	Stronger involvement of beneficiaries, communities and civil society is needed in preparation, implementation and monitoring & evaluation of Bank operations. The WB has to ensure transparency in recruitment of project Coordinators and staff.
[Media]	The WB has to involve all stakeholders (particularly beneficiaries) in project implementation and anticorruption actions. The Bank should improve communication on project activities and results.

Respondent Type	Consultation Reply
<b>7. The Bank's role vis-à-vis other donors in supporting governance reform</b>	
[Government]	Government has to lead and coordinate donor activities while providing assistance to governance reform.
[Representatives from Civil Society]	The WB should work closely with other donors in each country in supporting GAC reform. The Bank, as well as other donors, has to support the country agenda and not implement their own agenda.
<b>8. How to monitor progress in governance and anticorruption at the country level</b>	
[Government]	Country (government and other stakeholders) and development partners should work together in evaluating GAC. They have to share the same GAC diagnosis, reform agenda and monitoring indicators. It is important to identify together measurable indicators and baseline reference and have a common and unique monitoring and evaluation system.
[Representatives from Civil Society]	Civil society and community representatives should be involved in country GAC diagnosis, reform identification and progress evaluation. Transparency International and national anticorruption entity should be involved in GAC diagnosis and monitoring progress.
<b>9. Areas for improvement in GAC strategy and country-level support</b>	
[Government]	The Bank should revise its strategy to take into account that INT investigation results should not negatively impact the overall country portfolio but only the investigated operation. Otherwise, country will be afraid to inform Bank and INT about corruption case.
[Donors]	INT should revise its strategic approach to ensure that its investigations will have the credibility and broad support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Revise its disclosure policy so that investigative results are shared with partners</li> </ul> Promote work in partnership with country level agencies (and other donors)
<b>10. Other key issues</b>	
[Government]	The cultural and social aspect of weak governance and corruption needs appropriate treatment. A social protection strategy for potential 'losers' has to be identified. Religious leaders and powerful tribal leaders have to be involved in cultural and social change. All stakeholders and the Mauritanian people in general have to share the same definitions and diagnosis of corruption in the country.
[Representatives from Civil Society]	A social protection strategy for potential 'losers' has to be identified. Religious leaders and powerful tribal leaders have to be involved in cultural and social change.