



IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation
African Development Bank

Evaluation Synthesis of Policy Dialogue

CONCEPT NOTE

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AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

1. Introduction

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) is launching an Evaluation Synthesis of Policy Dialogue as part of its 2023 Work Program approved by the African Development Bank Group's ("AfDB" or "the Bank") Board of Directors. According to the IDEV Evaluation manual, evaluation synthesis is an approach for addressing questions that can be satisfactorily answered with existing data and information, without conducting additional primary data collection. An evaluation synthesis is a systematic procedure for collating, analyzing, and organizing findings from several (sometimes disparate) evaluation studies and other scientific studies. It brings together existing evaluation evidence, assesses it, and uses it as a database for answering specific policy and/or program questions.

This note presents the conceptual framework for preparing an evaluation synthesis report on Policy Dialogue. The synthesis will take stock of current knowledge and lessons on undertaking effective policy dialogue as drawn from existing evaluative evidence from the AfDB, other Multilateral Development Banks, UN agencies, bilateral agencies, and other development agencies. It will inform the Bank's Board, Management, and staff on possible improvements in the design and implementation of the AfDB's approach to policy dialogue, critical factors enabling and hampering success, and the identification of good practices and lessons. The synthesis report will present lessons that will inform the implementation of the new Ten-Year Strategy (2024-2033) and its corporate and sector policies, strategies, and programs.

This Concept Note provides the background and proposed objectives, scope, questions, methodology, team, and timeline for the policy dialogue evaluation synthesis to inform initial consultations with relevant Bank complexes and departments to pave the way for the development of a more elaborate Approach Paper (AP).

2. Background and Context

Over the past decades, the Bank has greatly enhanced its capacity to engage in policy dialogue and support its Regional Member Countries (RMCs) with other forms of soft support which include technical advice, capacity development, analytical and knowledge, and partnerships. Together, they have enabled the Bank to effectively deploy its full range of instruments¹ including non-sovereign operations and bring its know-how in key areas of economic governance, including macroeconomic management, domestic resource mobilisation and public financial management as well as in sector policies, to accompany its infrastructure investments. The Bank's Ten-Year Strategy (TYS) 2013 – 2022, identified policy dialogue as one of the four critical areas of reforms to enable the Bank to enhance its own development impact by becoming bigger, better, and transformative. The other three included: i) adaptation and flexibility of the operational model to effectively respond to global and regional changes; ii) building long-term partnerships with all development partners to support joint and complementary actions; and iii) strengthening its institutional model through improving quality and efficiency of operations, actively supporting private sector development, investing more in its people, and building a stronger learning culture. These critical areas of success demonstrate the Bank's commitment to key tenets of the Paris Declaration and enhance the Bank's contribution to the UN 2030 Agenda, vis-à-vis, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the AU Agenda 2063.

Although there is no common definition of policy dialogue in development literature, the Bank considers policy dialogue as an important platform for the Bank's engagement with RMC's, to understand their reform priorities, and identify and promote policies that will contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic and social development across the continent². This is achieved through: convening stakeholders, sharing knowledge, and providing advice to help countries make informed policy decisions in the areas of the Bank Group's strategic and operational priorities. Sustained policy dialogue, through working with RMCs over the long-term, also helps to ensure and sustain the reform momentum. Policy dialogue also facilitates open discussion with the public and private sectors and civil society actors on critical policy issues and contributes to strengthening domestic ownership of development policies.

The Bank has also played a critical role in policy dialogue, and contributed over the years to informing decision making, promoting public debate and quality of negotiations, building analytical capacity in RMCs, enhancing the quality of the Bank's portfolio, and informing the development of regional and national policies, strategies, and plans. The Bank recognizes that policy dialogue on key reforms must be evidence-based and has

¹ The Bank's instruments among others include: PBOs, Results Based Financing, Investment Operations, Policy Dialogue, Technical Advice, Knowledge and Analytical Works, and Capacity Building.

² ADF-13, The African Development Bank Group's Role in Policy Dialogue with ADF Countries, Information Note, November 2013

operationalized flagship knowledge products and diagnostic studies. These include the African Economic Outlook (AEO), Regional Economic Outlooks (REOs), Economic Sector Works (ESWs), Country Performance and Institutional Assessments (CPIAs), Country Diagnostic Notes (CDNs), and Country Resilience and Fragility Assessments (CRFAs), among others and provide a solid foundation for policy dialogue with RMCs and other stakeholders on Africa's most pressing development challenges. Policy dialogue is also a key to identifying countries and other partners' priorities and needs. Over the years, the Bank increased its policy dialogue by enjoying a unique comparative advantage, based on its legitimacy through its contribution to the continent's socioeconomic transformation, to leverage effective policy discussion with RMCs through various channels. These include Regional Integration Strategy Papers (RISPs), Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), Policy Based Operations (PBOs), and many other Bank programs and projects in line with the Ten-Year Strategy (TYS), the high five priorities (High-5s), and specific thematic or sector policies and strategies. The Bank has also produced various documents and organized many events dedicated to high-level policy dialogue pertaining to specific and global topics or challenges facing African countries. The key events through which the Bank facilitates policy dialogue, includes the African Economic Conferences (AEC), Africa Investment Forum (AIF), and the Global Community of Practice (G-CoP) Seminar series (ECAD), among others. These events contribute to raising awareness about the importance of policy dialogue on various topical issues within and outside the Bank.

Among the Bank's full range of instruments, Policy Based Operations (PBOs) inextricably integrate policy dialogue. The AfDB's 2012 Policy on PBOs (ADB/BD/WP/2011/68/Rev.3/), refers to policy dialogue as frank and constructive dialogue between donor partners RMC governments on broad national or sectoral policy reforms and general budget priorities. As a core input to a PBO and a fundamental component of the implementation of Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and Regional Integration Strategy Papers (RISPs), policy dialogue should be informed by well-targeted knowledge and analytical works. It should also be informed by consultations with stakeholders, including civil society, as it provides an opportunity to contribute effectively to the content and sequencing of government policies. Note that policy dialogue can be also based on many other Bank instruments such as Investment Projects, or within Government/Development Partner working groups.

The Bank recognizes the importance of policy dialogue as part of its non-lending engagement with RMCs. From ADF-13³ to ADF-15, the African Development Bank clearly stated the importance of engaging in policy dialogue to overcome various challenges and convince parties of the need for Africa's transformation by promoting extensive development of private sector, regional infrastructure, or adequate consideration of fragile contexts in Africa or transforming the lives of Africa's most vulnerable people. This has also been echoed in the 7th General Capital Increase (GCI-VII) which was approved in 2019. In 2016, the Bank underlined the necessity to strengthen its policy dialogue and advocacy engagement on governance, macroeconomic issues, and knowledge leadership (ADF-14, 2016). In 2019, it called for strengthening institutional capacity for effective and sustained policy dialogue with ADF countries and various stakeholders including governments, private sector, and civil society (ADF-15, 2019). In 2022, among others, the Bank acknowledged the ADF-16 as an important instrument to strengthen its engagement with all stakeholders, including finance ministries and central banks, to enhance policy dialogue to advance women economic empowerment at the macro level (ADF-16, 2022).

This high-level positioning of policy dialogue in the Bank's activities seems to be appreciated in RMCs. For example, the 2016 institutional assessment of the AfDB conducted by the Multilateral Organizations Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) found that partners have a strong and positive view of the AfDB's performance on many different aspects of partnering behavior. These include how the Bank engages with country systems, how it seeks to synergize its bureaucratic procedures with those of other external partners operating in the country, and what it brings to and engages in policy dialogue, both at a regional and country level. Building on the previous point, the 2022 MOPAN assessment found that the Bank aligned its organizational structure to a more strategic and programmatic focus, supported by a major decentralization effort that has been a game-changer for establishing stronger partnership and policy dialogue with regional member countries (RMCs). This was also facilitated by the contribution of the Bank's knowledge products, at the global level.

However, the IDEV [2018 PBO evaluation](#) found that **the Bank is not fully utilizing its comparative advantage and "African Voice" to ensure PBO results via policy dialogue**. This finding is not dissimilar to that of the

³ In 2013, the African Development Bank prepared "ADF-13: The African Development Bank Group's Role in Policy Dialogue with ADF Countries - Information Note".

IDEV 2011 PBO evaluation which described the Bank as “punching below its weight” in policy dialogue with respect to PBOs. Several other IDEV evaluations including Country Strategy and Program Evaluations also corroborate this finding. For sectoral or cross-cutting issues, the option of programme-based operations has not been widely used to engage in policy dialogue on gender issues (IDEV, 2020)⁴. Policy dialogue and analytical work on inclusive green growth were also found to be limited and their results unevenly reflected in CSP design and policy reform (IDEV, 2015). This is consistent with the findings of the Evaluation of Mainstreaming Green Growth (GG) and Climate Change (CC) into the AfDB’s Interventions which suggested that the Bank’s GG-CC policy dialogue was challenged by what stakeholders described as inconsistent understanding of GG– both within the RMCs (especially those with no clear national GG policy) and within the Bank (IDEV, 2021)⁵. IDEV’s Evaluation of the African Development Bank’s Regional Integration Strategy and Operations for Central Africa in 2018 (IDEV, 2018a) emphasized on the Bank’s significant contribution to the financing of several regional integration and businesses competitiveness projects, particularly in the national and multinational infrastructure sector. But it pointed out that the Bank’s performance has been hampered by a series of shortcomings related to policy dialogue, leadership, and coordination with other donors, as well as poor consideration of the role to be played by the private sector and civil society organizations.

Notwithstanding, since 2016 the Bank has undertaken some initiatives and commitments to strengthen its ability to engage in policy dialogue with RMCs, mainly:

- Strengthening its decentralization, increasing its physical presence to 41⁶ out of 54 RMCs and the recruitment of Directors General, Deputy-Directors General and the reconfiguration of the Terms of Reference of Resident Representatives into Country Managers. At the technical level, policy dialogue is undertaken by specialized Bank staff, notably Lead/Country Economists and sector staff (AHVP, FIVP, PEVP, PIVP) guided the Policy Reform Dialogue Matrix (PRDM) has adopted in 2020 for RMCs.
- The preparation of the Policy Dialogue Guidance Note in the context of PBOs (ECGF, 2020) which sets out the principles for conducting effective PBO related policy dialogue and provides a standard tool for documenting PBO-related policy dialogue, which will accompany the PBO over time to reflect policy concerns as they arise. Although this guidance note has not yet been officially adopted by the Bank, it served as a basis for the training of several Bank staff in 2020 on how to plan and effectively conduct policy dialogue. However, this capacity enhancement training shouldn't be a one-off event but a continuous process to accommodate changes in staff assignments and ensure that staff remain updated on recent developments.
- The Bank has also developed and launched the 2021-2025 Strategy for Economic Governance in Africa (SEGA) and the 2022-2031 Knowledge Management Strategy which are aimed at strengthening its policy dialogue among other priorities.
- The Bank has also responded by enhancing its organizational structure and operations through its processes and HR capacity- i.e. Decentralization; hiring of staff with policy analysis/dialogue competencies and situating this at the country level; and establishment of process to plan and monitor policy dialogue, among others.

Similarly, the Bank has committed under GCI-VII (Objective 3, Action 11) that “By 2021, the Bank applies a more systematic approach to identifying and supporting policy reforms including through economic and sector work”. In terms of operationalizing its commitments, PRDM is an innovative instrument that allows the Bank to systematically plan, budget, implement and monitor results of the dialogue on key policy reforms. In this regard, it combines into one single-unified instrument, all Bank lending and non-lending activities in all 54 countries that

⁴ IDEV. (2020). Evaluation Synthesis of Gender Mainstreaming at the AfDB. African Development Bank group. <https://idev.afdb.org/en/document/evaluation-synthesis-gender-mainstreaming-african-development-bank>

⁵ IDEV. (2021). Evaluation of Mainstreaming Green Growth and Climate Change into the AfDB's Interventions. <https://idev.afdb.org/en/document/evaluation-mainstreaming-green-growth-and-climate-change-afdb-interventions>

⁶ The Bank has presence in 41 RMCs (Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé & Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe). Currently the Bank does not have presence in 13 countries (Botswana, Cabo Verde, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Gambia, Lesotho, Libya, Namibia, Seychelles, and Somalia)

support critical reforms. Following the approval of the PRDM by OpsCom in July 2020 and the Board Information Note on the PRDM of September 2020, it was decided upon request from the Board in July 2021, to include an updated version of the PRDM for each country in each programming document taken to CODE/Board. Work is underway to develop the PRDM as an online tool. It is expected that the PRDM will be fully completed and populated with data in 2023, after which it will be updated regularly. This will allow Board members (and other users) to monitor which key reforms the Bank supports in each of our 54 countries, with a strong focus on results achieved. Thus, the PRDM is a true milestone in transforming the Bank into a results-focused leader of policy reforms on the African continent. In addition to these initiatives and commitments, the Bank would like to learn from the experience of other development actors undertaking policy dialogue, particularly on what works, what does not work and why, factors enabling and hampering the success of policy dialogue, and lessons that the Bank could draw to strengthen its own policy dialogue.

3. Objective, Scope, Questions, and Audiences

Objectives. The objective of this evaluation synthesis is to assemble findings, good practices and lessons based on existing evaluation evidence and studies that can help deepen the understanding of the relevance and effectiveness of policy dialogue by the Board, Management and Staff of the Bank, and how its coordinated with other development partners. The evaluation will also provide lessons for strengthening engagement with RMCs and other development partners going forward. Ultimately, this will inform the implementation of the AfDB Ten-Year Strategy (2024 – 2033).

Scope. The evaluation synthesis will focus on the relevance, coherence, and effectiveness of policy dialogue within the Bank while also drawing lessons and good practices from other MDBs and development agencies. It will examine the institutional setup, complementarity of policy dialogue with other Bank instruments, and adequacy of design, implementation arrangements, tools, and resources for policy dialogue. It will also focus on the role of policy dialogue in enabling and catalyzing the achievement of desired results of Bank supported operations via various instruments (PBOs, investment projects, Analytical Works and Knowledge Products, and others) while taking into account the diversity in regional and country contexts, as well as enabling and inhibiting factors. While recognizing that policy dialogue is multi-faceted and is undertaken at various levels (Global, Continental, Regional, National and Thematic/Sectoral levels), the focus will be at the country level and to extent possible and where applicable, at regional level.

In order to capture solid evidence, the synthesis will firstly gather findings, good practices, and lessons from IDEV evaluations undertaken during the period of the TYS (2013 – 2022) and its extension to 2023, however, IDEV's PBO evaluation in 2011 will also be included as an exception as it is the first know evaluation of a Bank Instrument that covered policy dialogue in its scope. In this regard, the evaluation will include country strategy and programme evaluations (CSPEs), thematic evaluations, and relevant project performance evaluation reports (PPERs), including project completion report evaluation notes (PCRENS) and, where relevant, other evaluations. Secondly, based on the review of other relevant evaluation studies, the synthesis team will draw important lessons from other Multilateral Development Banks, UN agencies, bilateral agencies, and other development partners. The evaluation will also include other publications, in particular relevant literature and other studies with independent, rigorous, and evidence-based findings, as appropriate, within and outside the Bank. In line with the above, the evaluation will not include reports of events undertaken by the Bank and other development partners which facilitate policy dialogue but will include evaluations and studies that inform these events if they meet the elaborate criteria to be developed in the Approach Paper.

Synthesis Questions. The preliminary questions to guide the synthesis exercise are listed below. These questions have been formulated while taking into account consultations with relevant Bank Complexes and Departments and ERG members, and they may be further refined during the development of the Approach Paper.

- To what extent were policy dialogue interventions relevant and responsive to the needs, priorities, and context of RMCs in which they took place?
- How was the quality of design of the policy dialogue interventions? To what extent were the interventions adapted over time in response to changing circumstances?

- How did the institution undertaking the interventions collaborate with other multilateral development agencies, bilateral donors, and other partners in its policy dialogue efforts? What role did various stakeholders play in shaping and participating in policy dialogue processes?
- Which factors enabled the success of policy dialogue work as a mechanism to facilitate and enhance contributions to achieving sustainable development outcomes?
- Which factors hampered the success of the policy dialogue instrument, and how have these challenges and barriers been addressed or mitigated?
- What are some of the good practices and lessons from the AfDB and other development partners to strengthen the effectiveness of policy dialogue interventions?

Evaluation audiences. The primary audience for this evaluation synthesis includes the Board of Directors, Bank management and Staff, and RMCs private sector beneficiaries, regional bodies, and civil society in RMCs; and other development partners and collaborators.

4. Methodology

As indicated above and according to the standard IDEV approach for evaluation syntheses, the primary instruments will be a desk review, interviews and where necessary discussions with stakeholders and key informants, without field missions. ***The aim being to make clear on what is known and what is not known at this stage on what works, what doesn't work and why, when it comes to policy dialogue within the Bank and other sister development institutions.*** The Annex provides a preliminary list of documents that will be reviewed including operational documents of AfDB and other institutions. In order to enrich the output, the exercise will be broader than a synthesis of evaluation findings by IDEV (and other organizations) – principally by undertaking a broader and more extensive review of various AfDB documents that are not from IDEV evaluations, as well as non-AfDB documents.

The desk review will be supplemented by semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions with selected AfDB staff to better understand the issue of policy dialogue within the Bank. The interviews will also seek feedback to deepen understanding of the findings of the evaluation synthesis and validate those on the relevance of AfDB.

These interviews may be based on a common questionnaire for the different sets of stakeholders. If deemed useful, an electronic survey may be issued to allow for some quantification of findings. In attempt to benchmark AfDB approach and to validate lessons, a rapid review will be undertaken of the policy dialogue practices of three other development partners, together with studies and evaluations on the topic. It should be noted that the evaluation synthesis will not assign a rating since the findings will come from evaluations and studies that have used different methodologies.

Limitations: As a general point, it should be noted that evaluation syntheses are conducted with limited budget based on a desk study in a shorter time period, as compared to various other types of evaluation that include field missions to multiple countries. Furthermore, there are some specific factors that could make synthesis of available information and comparisons challenging.

First, the evaluations that constitute the sample for this exercise have different objectives, scope, and time periods, ranging from 2011 to 2022. The evaluation designs also differ in that they include a mix of country, sector, thematic, and project level evaluations. **Second**, the depth and quality of information with regard to policy dialogue in the available evaluations or the documents varies, depending on a number of factors. Some documents may provide rich information, others may not.

In order to address such possible limitations, as indicated earlier, this evaluation synthesis will go beyond that of a pure desk review of evaluations. Also, depending on the quality and richness of relevant information found in the existing evaluations, or based on the information obtained from interviews, the scope and depth of the review in different components may be adjusted during the exercise.

5. Evaluation team and proposed timeline

Evaluation team: The study will be undertaken by a team that will be comprised as follows: Clement BANSE, Chief Evaluation Officer, Andson NSUNE, Principal Evaluation Officer, Yaya KOLOMA, Analyst Consultant and

Lawan Nafiou Sakina MAMAN, IDEV intern. The Internal Peer-review will comprise of Joseph MOUANDA, Chief Evaluation Officer and Andrew ANGUKO, Chief Quality and Methods Advisor. Raky GASSAMA, Senior Knowledge Management Officer, will lead knowledge management and communications, supported by Roberta Blankson, while overall guidance will be provided by Rufael FASSIL, Division Manager, IDEV.1 and Karen ROT-MUNSTERMANN, Evaluator General. Henda AYARI, Team Assistant, will provide administrative support. The evaluation synthesis will also benefit from a high-level external peer review by established academic and/or professional institutions/bodies.

Proposed timetable. The indicative timeframe is provided below.

Milestones	Timeline
Concept Note	August 2023
Consultation with key stakeholders in the Bank including ERG	August - September 2023
External peer reviewer identification	September 2023
Approach Paper	September 2023
Document collection, documents and literature review and analysis, interviews	–September- November 2023
Draft Synthesis Report	December 2023
Final Synthesis Report for Management (for capitalisation workshop)	February 2024

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