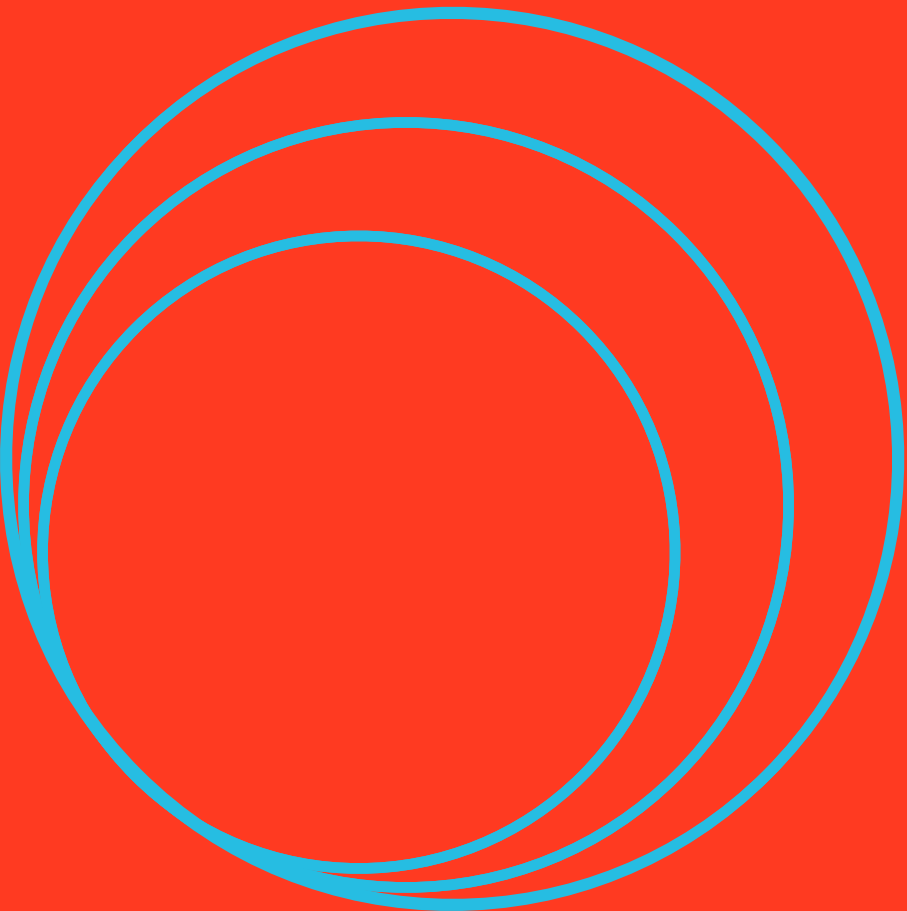


Snapshot of a Global Forum project in **Bénin and Togo**

Enhancing the visibility and network character of existing organizational efforts to implement the UN SDGs



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### PROJECT PARTNERS INVOLVED

The Institute of the Francophonie for Sustainable Development (IFDD - Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable), a subsidiary body of the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF - Organisation internationale de la Francophonie), together with the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE - Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung), acting as adviser to the project, has worked in partnership with two civil society umbrella organizations: the Maison de la Société Civile (MdSC) in Bénin and the Groupe de travail des organisations de la société civile sur les objectifs de développement durable (GT-OSC-ODD) in Togo. The project thereby supported a working group within the “Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies”.

# About the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies

The Global Forum is a network that connects the knowledge and experience of multi-stakeholder advisory commissions, councils and similar bodies for sustainable development. These bodies contribute to the national institutional architectures for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By bridging knowledge and interests of various stakeholder groups, multi-stakeholder advisory bodies foster social acceptance and cohesion within society in times of transformation. The demand for their work in facilitating negotiation outcomes cannot be underestimated.

This forum for and by national multi-stakeholder advisory bodies is as heterogeneous as the respective contexts its members are in, which vary accordingly in their institutional development, set-up, mandate and role. Constant exchange in and across working groups creates a rich marketplace of ideas, negotiation mechanisms and effective policy measures that can easily be transferred and tailored to local needs and demands elsewhere. As a demand-driven network, it constantly evolves its focus in collective processes. With its rich pool of collective knowledge, the forum effectively invites stakeholders and governments around the globe to adapt, implement and jointly accelerate the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.





## Foreword

Remaining within the boundaries that our planet provides is essential for a healthy and sustainable future for all. To achieve this objective, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight key issues that call for urgent action at all levels and across all stakeholders. The SDGs can only be realized with strong partnerships and all-embracing cooperation. Hence, to implement the ambitious and universal 2030 Agenda, the need to further promote the degree of organization and collaboration for sustainable development is urgent. Key structures for stakeholder collaboration, such as civil society umbrella organizations, therefore have a fundamental role to play in the complex transition towards sustainable societies. Our motivation behind the project presented in this publication is based on its contribution to enhancing the coordination of existing organizational efforts to implement the SDGs.





## The project

With the project “Enhancing the visibility and network character of existing organizational efforts to implement the UN”, piloted in 2021 in Bénin and Togo, we have pursued an approach that accentuates the potential of SDG stakeholder mapping, local round table dialogues and digital visibility for accelerated SDG delivery. As the main outcome, the project has brought forth a digital map which aims at making visible, and thereby strengthening the engagement of relevant civil society organizations (CSO) in implementing the SDGs. This in turn has the potential to better connect civil society engagement to relevant national governance architectures and sustainable development policies. The creation of an accessible digital map of active SDG actors and their organizational efforts has allowed for detailed knowledge on local areas of activity and the sector-specific topics of all engaged CSOs. The enhanced visibility has also made it possible to uncover interlinkages between SDG stakeholders and thereby potentially develop innovative partnerships for further coordination and knowledge sharing towards a common goal. Moreover, the project has raised awareness beyond those CSOs already engaged in SDG implementation, and therefore bears the potential to provide a pull-factor for other actors to initiate action in the future.

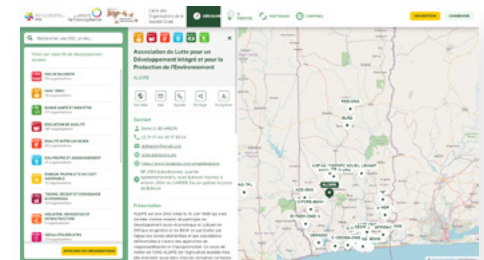
To achieve these objectives, the implementing organizations

- organized local roundtables to connect and identify relevant CSOs, sensitize them for the SDGs, and identify local network themes;
- developed a verified inventory of active CSOs as an overview and reference-point to connect existing organizational efforts;
- created a digital and easily accessible online map, to make the inventory available to relevant policymakers and a wider public, including the option to add organizations in the future.

## Why a digital map?

The creation of an inventory and its visualization through a digital mapping tool represent an innovative approach to mobilize SDG stakeholders and enhance cooperation across all sectors. Through the combination of eye-catching data visualizations and the innovative representation of organizational efforts, the added value of this project therefore lies within the effective entry point for conversations on the role those local actors play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The digital map was created on a designated web page to make the inventory visible to a wider public, as well as accessible and easy to use for all actors involved. The digital map was discussed at length with all project partners and its form was chosen based on its feasibility and added value for the CSOs at local level. The digital map enables the search for CSOs based on a variety of criteria. It improves the visibility of organizational efforts to implement the SDGs and thereby enables links between CSOs working in the same region or on the same SDGs. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the digital map was designed in a way that I would guarantee an easy inscription of additional CSOs directly on the web page in the future. A clearing position within the implementing organizations will then verify these new entries to be added to the digital map.

*Please find  
the digital map here*





## What did we do?

IFDD and RNE jointly developed a six-step methodology and an inventory template. To facilitate the process of inventorying and classifying CSOs, a preliminary training workshop was organized in early 2021. In this workshop, all partnering organizations jointly discuss the project's objectives and engaged in interactive training sessions on the mapping exercise. In this way, the implementing partners developed a common understanding of the project and familiarized themselves with the process, the methodology, and the inventory template. They adapted it to their respective national contexts through practical case studies to ensure high data quality and efficient procedures throughout the project.



### GOOD PRACTICE: INTERACTIVE TRAINING MODULES

The interactive modules were particularly helpful and facilitated data collection in each region. The workshop allowed the partners to take ownership of the various tools and hence to train their local staff appointed for data collection. They also allowed the anticipation of difficulties that could have emerged during the implementation phase.

### SIX-STEP METHODOLOGY

- ① **Outset:** training, status quo assessment, pre-selection, networking, conceptualization.
- ② **Roundtables:** identifying a maximum of relevant CSOs and their core areas of work, inviting them to local roundtable dialogues, connecting them to each other, raising their awareness for the SDGs.
- ③ **Research:** gathering data on the identified CSOs, creating a preliminary inventory.
- ④ **Verification:** verifying the data based on a three-step process (self-evaluation, quality control by the implementing partner, quality control by an independent source).
- ⑤ **Inventory:** creating the inventory.
- ⑥ **Classification:** classifying all organizational efforts and activities of identified and verified CSOs according to the 17 SDGs and 169 targets.



## Step ① : Outset

First, the implementing organizations assessed the status-quo of the project's key audience in their respective countries. This entailed a pre-screening of the civil society landscape to get a rough estimate of the total number of actors to be included (around 2000 in Bénin / 700 in Togo). Based on the scope and quality of existing inventories of civil society organizations, the MdSC and GT-OSC-ODD decided on the focus areas of the project. Both chose a geographical approach (regional in Togo, departmental in Bénin) based on the thematic pools already identified within their respective networks. At this stage, it was particularly important to identify CSOs that had a high potential to act as multipliers in their respective communities and could therefore provide access to new actors working on the SDGs. Both organizations then activated their national networks to reach out to a maximum of CSOs by inviting them to the roundtables.



### GOOD PRACTICE: BUILDING ON EXISTING STRUCTURES

Both, the MdSC in Bénin and the GT-OSC-ODD in Togo, relied on their extensive networks across the country. Regional/departmental networks and individual multipliers were harnessed to organize data collection, support the roundtables, and thereby serve as levers for other CSOs to get involved. Referents were then appointed in each zone for data collection. The delegates of the general assemblies applied the data collection tool to their organization before scaling up, preparing to be tutors for the organizations that mandated them.

## Step ② : Roundtables

Multi-stakeholder roundtables were a crucial component of the project and represented one of the first points of reference, as well as the basis for the following research, verification, and classification processes. They were organized to reach a maximum of CSOs working on the 2030 Agenda, identifying their core areas of work along the SDGs, and connecting them to each other. During the preparation of the roundtables, a tailored outreach strategy was conceptualized, relevant actors were invited, and training material was compiled. The training material consisted of information brochures on the SDGs, training tasks for the classification process, and a template for the participant's self-assessment. In addition to updating and expanding already existing lists, the roundtables provided an excellent opportunity to sensitize the participants for the 2030 Agenda and raise awareness for each other's niche in contributing to the 17 SDGs. The identification process enhanced networking and highlighted emanating synergies across civil society organizations.



In **Bénin**, MdSC brought together CSOs, local governments and sectoral ministries in three roundtables. The roundtables facilitated the strengthening of local ownership towards the SDGs and their spatialized priority targets. The restitution work carried out in the aftermath by the participating organizations also allowed for the dissemination of the emanating recommendations to more than 2000 relevant actors. Thanks to the interactive group work that took place during these meetings, the inventory of organizations was enriched by the recommendation of nearly 300 new CSOs. Through this exercise, a more refined portrait of the contribution of Béninese civil society towards implementing the SDGs took shape. The first analysis work carried out by the MdSC already made it possible to visualize sectors in which CSOs are most active, as well as sectors that need additional support in order to enhance the contribution to SDG delivery.

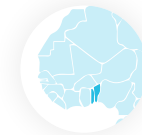
In **Togo**, GT-OSC-ODD held six regional roundtables in the administrative region capitals, and one roundtable at national level to ratify the previous exchanges. GT-OSC-ODD had already carried out a first data collection prior to the roundtables based on regional networks and main actors. The roundtables therefore served to validate the list of CSOs working on the SDGs in each region. The validation process added 297 new entries to the inventory of CSOs. The participants familiarized themselves with the inventory, completed the initial data gathering through interactive group work and positioned their activities in relation to the SDGs. The exchanges strengthened the ownership of the SDGs and highlighted the importance of the visibility of their efforts. The roundtables facilitated a refined portrait of Togolese civil society's contribution to sustainable development and fostered awareness of the SDGs.

#### GOOD PRACTICE: ROUNDTABLE FORMATS

The roundtables served their purpose well. The presentation of the project's objectives strengthened the commitment of CSOs to fill in the inventory tool. The roundtables also provided an excellent opportunity to sensitize the participants for the 2030 Agenda and raise awareness for each other's area of expertise in contributing to the SDGs. In Bénin, they also allowed CSOs to be better informed about the content of the SDG spatialization and the national indicators set by the government of Bénin.



## Roundtables



DAPAONG  
Regional roundtable  
for Savanes

27 participants

### Togo

KARA  
Regional roundtable for Kara

27 participants

SOKODÉ  
Regional roundtable for Centrale

27 participants

ATAKPAMÉ  
Regional roundtable for Plateaux Ouest

27 participants

KPALIMÉ  
Regional roundtable for Plateaux Est

27 participants

TSÉVIÉ  
Regional roundtable for Maritime

27 participants

LOMÉ  
National roundtable

39 participants

Total participants: 201  
Verified civil society organizations: 346

### Bénin

BOHICON  
Regional roundtable for the northern  
departments

32 participants

ABOMEY CALAVI  
Regional roundtable for the southern  
departments

39 participants

COTONOU  
National roundtable in Cotonou

47 participants

Total participants: 118  
Verified civil society organizations: 244



## Step ③: Research

The creation of the inventory already started prior to the roundtables with the identification of local coordinators and CSOs that had a high potential to act as multiplier. Together with their training, a first phase of data collection was launched. This included the dissemination of the inventory template via established channels of the implementing partners, as well as individual support to help CSOs better fill out the form. Based on the existing list of civil society actors and the data generated through holding the roundtables, the implementing organizations entered a second research phase of the project. This entailed the sourcing of a maximum of data and was aimed at identifying the needed information of all relevant actors in the country, thereby ensuring a high degree of exhaustiveness, and allowing for a complete picture of all CSOs, working on the implementation of the SDGs. Through a combination of methods (online research, telephone calls, emails, etc.), the implementing organizations achieved a preliminary inventory of 352 organizations in Bénin and around 500 organizations in Togo. At this stage, active involvement and engagement of key CSOs proved to be crucial.

## Step ④ & ⑤: Verification & Inventory

The verification of the preliminary list of CSOs was conducted by the implementing organizations. A three-step process ensured the quality of the data. First, identified civil society actors engaged in a self-assessment of their organization and their activities. Second, the implementing organizations conducted a quality check, entailing a cross-checking with all available information. Third, an independent source was identified to verify the actor's existence, their level of activity and the accuracy of information. Only after passing this verification process, CSOs were included in the official inventory.

## Step ⑥: Classification

For the purpose of creating the inventory, all CSOs were then classified according to their concrete organizational efforts, along the 17 SDGs and 169 targets. The CSOs not only had to demonstrate their intention to contribute to specific SDGs, but they also had to prove that they were actively involved in their implementation. As a result, the final step brought forth the optimal classification and verification of all active CSOs working on the SDGs in Bénin and Togo. It simultaneously enabled further sensibilization on the topic of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs



## Reflections and lessons learned

### Further good practices that contributed to the project's success

**Increased awareness of the SDGs:** Frequently, CSOs engage in implementing the 2030 Agenda without being aware of it or explicitly linking their work to the SDGs. Against this backdrop, the project allowed CSOs to position their activities in light of the SDGs and in relation to the targets prioritized at national level, thereby revealing potential synergies between their various organizational efforts and creating new spaces for action to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda.

**Constant communication:** Due to the difficulties encountered by many organizations in completing the inventory, it was crucial to maintain open and extensive communication with CSOs, particularly through low-threshold communication channels, such as WhatsApp. In this regard, the monitoring and assistance provided by the implementing partners played a pivotal role.

### Encountered challenges

**Knowledge of the SDGs:** While the existence of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs seemed to be well known among the CSOs involved, the details of their targets and their spatialization were largely unknown. This made it difficult for some organizations to position their activities along the SDGs. However, the individual support offered by the implementing partners and the roundtables have proven to be key components to raise

awareness. Although limited resources and pandemic constraints inevitably reduced the number of roundtables and therefore the opportunities for direct interaction on the subject, those organized were a success and largely contributed to strengthening ownership of the SDGs and the digital map.

**Data literacy and quality:** The implementing partners encountered the challenge that several CSOs did not fill out the inventory template (Excel file) correctly, despite a previous introduction to the tool. This was partly related to the unfamiliarity of some actors with using Excel. Several measures were put in place to address this challenge: the creation of a help sheet to learn how to use Excel and the inventory template; close monitoring and assistance by the implementing partners; ultimately, the development of a google form to automatically fill out the template. Several organizations also encountered difficulties in providing the geo-localized coordinates of their organization's headquarters. At the same time, while being a key component, the three-step verification also was a time and resource intensive method. Some CSOs provided faulty data, resulting in additional work for the implementing partners. This delayed the completion of the final inventory. However, should the project be extended to other countries in the future, these difficulties regarding data literacy and data quality will be eliminated, since the data collection will be done directly via the web page, using a simplified inscription form.

The challenges serve to some extent as explanation for the divergent numbers of organizations estimated in the preliminary phase (around 2000 in Bénin, 700 in Togo), the number of organizations' data collected (352 in Bénin, around 500 in Togo), and the number of final organizations included in the inventory (244 in Bénin, 346 in Togo).

## Outlook

The verified inventory and subsequent creation of a digital mapping tool will allow for better coordination and thereby streamline efforts to reduce overlap or gaps in civil society's action. The enhanced visibility will make it possible to uncover interlinkages between SDG actors and thereby develop innovative partnerships for further coordination and knowledge sharing. Rather than being overwhelmed by complex information, the digital mapping tool enables easy and visually appealing access to information at local level. The project will hopefully encourage the subsequent development of a similar exercise and digital mapping tool in other countries. The ability of the project's main objectives and mapping exercise to be customized allows for easy replication, which could allow for rapid scaling. Moreover, the project might create momentum through an increased exchange between relevant actors, raise public awareness and encourage collaboration between SDG advisory bodies, as well as civil society umbrella organizations, thereby holistically strengthening sustainable development advocacy.



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