

IMANI FRANCOPHONE ANNUAL REPORT

2015 – 2016



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Executive Summary

IMANI Francophone is the francophone extension of Africa's second most influential think tank, IMANI Center for Policy and Education. IMANI Francophone works to: (i) influence policy decisions at all government levels, (ii) shape public opinion on issues of national interests (iii) and improve political, civil society and media activism in its different countries of intervention in the interest of development.

Since its official launch in June 2014, IMANI Francophone has undertaken a number of activities true to its objectives, and within a short period of time, achieved an appreciable level of success and gained global media attention with appearances in AllAfrica.com, NextAfrique.com, La nouvelle Tribune, Le Point Afrique, African Business Journal, Jeune Afrique among many others.

IMANI Francophone was launched with the support of the Open Society Initiatives for West Africa (OSIWA) and currently operates in five West African countries – Togo, Benin, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina-Faso with at least one research assistant working on each country.

Benin is the focus country of the OSIWA-funded pilot project. IMANI Francophone-Benin technically started operating on March 26, 2015. Its thematic research areas include governance (economic, political, natural resource), trade and regional integration, and agriculture. The main objectives of the project are to shape public opinions on topical policy issues and influence public policy by producing evidence-based research. IMANI Francophone engaged the country's government officials based on the findings of its research work.

This report provides a detailed account of the Benin project. It highlights the activities, key initiatives, milestones and the impact of IMANI Francophone during the period 2015 to 2016. It also lays down key initiatives for 2016 and beyond.

Why the need for IMANI Francophone

Francophone countries in Africa lag behind their Anglophone counterparts in terms of civil society activism and citizen participation in policy making. The challenges of a globalizing world make it more pressing for African countries to have a balanced policy formulation and implementation framework. Evidently, civil society must be at the core of this framework.

Independent research has concluded that civil society organizations in Francophone Africa do not often have the wherewithal to develop and implement effective policy engagement strategies. Their lack of capacity has forced them to virtually remain mute on critical development issues. Even those think tanks that have the opportunity to be part the policymaking process promote nothing but populist and “anti-development” ideas that land countries in misery.

IMANI has since this realization dedicated parts of its work to Francophone Africa in order to change the status quo. We have an impeccable record in quality research and effective advocacy as well as a vibrant media activism that allow us to shape public opinion and influence public policy at all levels of government.

With the coming into being of IMANI Francophone, we are making sure that the principles of open governments, safer, more equitable and democratic Africa will gain grounds in Francophone Africa.

Publications

One way we fulfil our mission and attain our objective is to produce research-oriented, evidence-based and solutions-driven publications. In the past twelve months we have produced over 30 publications that have been widely reported in the Francophone media. A brief summary of some of the publications are provided below:

- IMANI Francophone-Benin

During the first six (06) months of the project implementation, ***economic governance*** was at the core of our advocacy initiatives. The following quarter was dedicated to ***regional integration***. We also instituted a virtual volunteer programme to train young civil society actors in Benin, Mali and Ivory Coast in the areas of research, fund raising and media activism. However, during the last quarter of the project, attention was shifted towards agriculture and the just ended presidential elections for which a thorough assessment of political parties' manifestoes was conducted.

1. Economic Governance

➤ Why Benin needs to improve its governance framework

In Benin, Governance remains a challenge. Economic governance is nothing to be desired with countless cases of corruption allegations. IMANI Francophone authored a paper regarding a report of financial mismanagement and embezzlement perpetrated by Government officials on the basis of which the Dutch Republic suspended its bilateral aid to Benin. The paper sought to pinpoint the gaps in the Governance infrastructure of the Country. Funds provided by the Dutch Republic for rural water projects were diverted in

the process by Government officials. Few weeks after the paper was authored and with a growing public outcry regarding multiple corruption scandals, the Minister of Water and Energy (whose Ministry was responsible for managing the projects) resigned. This event was followed by another paper pinpointing the financial irregularities and detailing the gaps in the bilateral cooperation of the two countries and how they can be rectified.

➤ **Advocating for open trade policies**

In 2015, IMANI Francophone-Benin took a critical look at the business climate in Benin with the objectives of drawing a roadmap for an improved business environment based on open trade policies. We relied on the doing business report and other literature to strike out and provide information about the top 2 areas in which Benin did well during the past 5 years (Starting a business and dealing with construction permits) as well as the 2 areas in which Benin did poorly (Paying taxes and enforcing contracts). We submitted recommendations for strengthening the judicial system, especially as its work relates to the private sector. According to the 2016 Doing Business Report, Benin made its way to the 10 best performers in the sub-region in terms of number of reforms undertaken.

➤ **Informing the public, Shaping public policy**

In 2015, the Beninese Parliament voted for a Public Sector Reform Policy regarding the age limit of public servants. The process adopted by the Government was partisan and appeared non-inclusive. IMANI Francophone “attacked” the process and argued that a Public Sector Reform Policy regarding the age limit of public servants needed to take into account the demographic transition of the Beninese population, the effectiveness of the public sector and the growth of the private sector and not mere political considerations. According to Government insiders, there are reasons to believe that Benin will soon make headway in the right direction.

➤ Advocating for effective bilateral trade agreements

IMANI Francophone-Benin delved into the economic implications of bilateral



agreements with the aim of suggesting ways to improve the economic rapports between Benin and donor countries such as France and China. From our research findings, it appears that the beggar-giver model entertained by Benin is adversary to the promotion of local industries. We exposed the

fundamental challenges confronting Benin with its partners and proposed avenues for an improvement of the trade architecture.

2. Regional integration

In a number of advocacy-oriented publications, IMANI Francophone criticized many Regional Integration Policies and how they were being implemented. Some of those articles were featured in the African Business Journal. Visit <http://www.imanifrancophone.org/fr/integration> for more information on our work on Regional Integration in Africa.

3. Agriculture

IMANI Francophone-Benin took a critical look at the Cotton sector, which has been of extreme significance in Benin agricultural sector. As such, much attention has been placed on the development of the sector since 1990. In a number of publications, we suggested ways government could diversify the agricultural sector. We also authored a research paper on how land administration is affecting the growth of the agricultural sector and what to do about it.

➤ **IMANI Francophone Cited in “Le Monde Afrique”**

IMANI Francophone conducted a thorough assessment of the political dynamics in Benin before, during and after to the 2016 Presidential election. We produced policy briefs, Manifesto Assessment Reports and “Policy Blueprint” as part of our activities. Our work on the election was cited in one of the prestigious Global Newspapers, “Le Monde”.

Other IMANI Francophone publications

➤ **Demanding accountability and political responsiveness**

In Mali, the effectiveness of the public sector remains an issue of concern. Ordinary Citizens have one option: to pay bribes in order to get public services delivered to them. For over two years, the Passport Authority in Mali was unable to deliver passports to Malians. The Government remained unconcerned. Citizens who needed passports were forced to pay “big bribes”. Through, a commentary piece, IMANI Francophone literally issued an “attack on the government” and demanded more political responsibility. The media responded to our call and in turn asked the government to act in good faith. Few months later, government reacted and subsequently undertook a number of corrective measures.

Serving as an informed and independent voice in policy debates in Togo and Senegal

In Senegal, in collaboration with Think Tank IPODE, our local partner, we tackled issues of corruption, accountability, civil society development and education. Also, IMANI Francophone waved in strongly in the 2015 presidential election in Togo, and advocating for private sector reforms in Benin. We also authored a publication regarding a decaying public sector administration and agricultural development policy in Togo.

➤ **Contributing to regional issues, advancing regional integration and economic openness**

Francophone Africa arguably has one enemy: a dysfunctional political system. IMANI Francophone undertook a series of publications that sought to establish the gaps in Francophone democracy. In several papers, we identified challenges and submitted recommendations that will help strengthen democratic governance in Francophone Africa.

In many research papers, IMANI Francophone advocated for opening up African borders to allow for greater economic movements within the sub region. IMANI Francophone also added its voice to the call for free, fair and clean elections in Ivory Coast and Burkina-Faso.

Trainings and capacity building



We are committed to strengthening the capacity of civil society agents in Francophone Africa to enable them to effectively discharge their tasks. We do this through targeted training programs. Staying true to its mission of promoting civil society and media activism in its countries of intervention, IMANI Francophone launched on 10 June 2015 a 3-month Virtual Volunteer Program dubbed Programme for Democracy and Good Governance. The objective of the programme was to amplify the voices of youth on issues such as Good Governance, Regional Trade Integration, Corruption, Democracy, Health and Human Rights.

In order to get the best out of the volunteers in Mali, IMANI Francophone conducted from 29th to 30th September a 2-day packed capacity building workshop. The workshop which brought together over 30 participants (IMANI Francophone Volunteers, Media Practitioners, civil society leaders) was organized in collaboration with Centre d'Etude et de Reflexion au Mali (CERM), a Malian think tank and the University of Bamako.

Participants were trained on the following topics: Strategies for think tank management, Guides for writing research papers, social media activism, working in hostile political environments and media relations. The 2-day workshop which did not only record success but also had an undeniable practical function was brought to end by a panel discussion led by former Prime Minister of Mali, His Excellency Moussa Maura, also executive member of CERM on the topic ***“Peace and Security: Why good governance matters”***

The Virtual Volunteer Program, which is still in operation, connects young civil society leaders to online resources that help them succeed in their respective fields.



Policy engagement

One way to influence policy is to engage the right audience. IMANI Francophone has attracted policymakers' attention by producing quality content at the right time and in the right format.

Typically, governments adopt a top-down approach in policy formulation and implementation. As a result, Civil Society Organizations have to fight their way to the policy engagement table in order to be able to exert a certain level of influence. Engaging with top policymakers requires a strategic approach to policy issues. IMANI Francophone understands that language.



With limited resources – both financial and human, we have been able to grab global attention through quality research and evidence based advocacy. Our topnotch work did not escape the eyes of Malian policymakers, namely His Excellency Moussa Mara and Mr.

Ousmane Sy, respectively former Prime Minister of Mali and former Minister for Territorial Administration and Local Communities, who invited the IMANI Francophone team to a policy dialogue relating to local Governance and Decentralization in Mali.

In the same vein, an aspirant (name withheld) to the 2016 Presidential elections in Benin solicited the advice of IMANI Francophone in the formulation of his Manifesto. Together with his team, they visited the offices of IMANI Center for Policy and Education to receive policy advice he would not have otherwise had access to.

The Africa Performance Index (2015) - which is a ranking and advocacy tool developed by IMANI Francophone to assess the performance of various ministries of finance in western and central Africa - has been widely acclaimed in the Francophone media fraternity, especially in Ivory Coast. The Index shaped many public discussions in francophone Africa, especially regarding the future of economic planning in the UEMOA Zone (West African Economic and Monetary Union).

The African School of Economics (ASE) also acknowledged our quality inputs in public policy and invited the Director of IMANI Francophone to share his perspectives on the topic “Politics, Governance and Development: Are they interconnected?” at the 2015 Summer Institute of Economics (SIER). The goal of the SIER is to contribute to the establishment of networks of collaborative, multidisciplinary research and policy engagement involving African academics and policy makers.

Strategic Initiatives



IMANI Francophone believes in strategy – effective strategies that are able to capture and retain the attention of our stakeholders. Over the years, we have undertaken a number strategic of initiatives that have helped us to advance our goal. Some of them are listed below.

2016 Presidential elections in Benin: Technical evaluation of Manifestoes

The importance of political parties manifesto cannot be overemphasized, especially in countries like Benin where democratic governance is still unfolding. Yet, the exercise of putting together the very ideas and policies that will set the agenda for the development of the country is overlooked by politicians and not patronized by the citizens as one would expect.

In the face of the 2016 Presidential elections held in the country, IMANI Francophone developed a [blueprint](#) which listed areas of policy reforms and structural adjustments.

IMANI Francophone subsequently developed an assessment framework based on the blueprint to analyze the “integrity” and competitive nature of the [22 publicly-available political parties’ manifestoes](#) .

Out of the 22 manifestoes, IMANI Francophone identified 05 as “*best*”; 12 as “*most competitive*”; and the other 5 as “*less competitive*”. The assessment was accompanied by key recommendations to political parties on how they can improve their manifesto formulation.

The framework and methodology used for the assessment are detailed in a special [report](#) and available on our website.

The quality of the data produced; coupled with cogent recommendations have been subject of public debates and referencing by politicians (who obviously find interest in doing so).

Grands Debats – Agenda 2063

The Heads of State and Governments of the African Union (AU) adopted Agenda 2063 at their 24th Ordinary Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 30-31 January 2015. Agenda 2063, according to the AU is “*both a Vision and an Action Plan. It is a call for action to all segments of African society to work together to build a prosperous and united Africa based on shared values and a common destiny.*”

In order to understand the essence of the Agenda, IMANI Francophone in February 2016 launched the ***Grands Débats – Agenda 2063*** whose objects are: to scrutinize the content of the Agenda, test its feasibility and its relevance to the current challenges facing the continent. The youth remain the focal point of the project. Our aim is to generate evidence-based debate around the Agenda and subsequently present concrete recommendations to the AU in terms of its strategic planning at the next Students and Young Professionals African Liberty Academy (SYPALA), an annual seminar organized

by IMANI Center for Policy and Education. More details can be found here <http://www.imanifrancophone.org/fr/agenda2063/>

Africa Performance Index (API)

In the same context as the IMANI Public Sector Leadership Awards (IPSLA <http://imaniafrica.org/ipsla>), IMANI Francophone launched the Africa Performance Index (API) in collaboration with Financial Afrik (financialafrik.com), a financial magazine. Africa Performance Index evaluates and ranks the performance of public sector institutions in 14 francophone African countries against a set of quantitative indicators. The framework of the index was built on three main indicators, each of them having a set of sub-indicators: Institutional framework, fiscal governance and external factors. The exercise is undertaken on a sectorial basis – meaning all institutions considered in the study must all operate in the same sector. The maiden edition of the API looked at the performance of Ministries of Finance and economy. According to the results of the API, Ivory Coast recorded the best score and Equatorial Guinea was at the bottom of the ranking. The full report is available on the IMANI Francophone web site.

Partnerships, Milestones and Impact

Within a short period of its existence, IMANI Francophone, through its quality content and effective advocacy tools, has been able to attract global attention. Thanks to its vibrant team, IMANI Francophone continues to engage development actors in the francophone world to take actions that favor development. One of such engagements was with West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI) and the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) of President Barack Obama. The partnership with these two originations permitted IMANI Francophone to increase its visibility in the francophone world and host the Mandela Washington Fellows. As part of these partnerships, IMANI Francophone hosted

one intern from WACSI to work on the IMANI Francophone-Benin project as well as three Mandela Washington Fellows to work on different aspects of the IMANI Francophone project.

IMANI Francophone signed a partnership agreement with CERM, a Malian think tank, as part of its strategy to increase visibility and influence policy at the local level.

IMANI Francophone has also signed a partnership with some media outlets: l'Autre Quotidien and La Nouvelle Tribune (Benin), Journal du Mali, Kakufuni, and Infoset (Mali). It has also concluded a partnership with a Malian think tank CERM (In english: Center of Studies and reflection of Mali) and ALCRER, an advocacy-driven NGO in Benin.

Aside these engagements, IMANI Francophone's projects have been cited by top international media and other globally respected research institutes. In two separate joint-reports by Centre d'Etudes sur l'Integration et la Mondialisation and Institut d'Etudes Internationales de Montréal at the University of Quebec in Montreal (<http://uqam.ca/>), IMANI Francophone's articles on economic partnership agreements and regional integration were [cited](#). Another article on the development of the agricultural sector in Africa was published and featured in a [report](#) by The Agricultural Hub, a multidonor project.

We also granted interviews to Regional Media outlets like [Ouest Afrique](#) in Senegal, the African Business Journal in Morocco, [Réussir Magazine](#) in Senegal and Financial Afrik in Morocco. Furthermore, global media outlets like Le Point Afrique (afrique.point.fr), Survie (survie.org) also quoted IMANI Francophone on many occasions.

Next Actions

As stated earlier, publications, stakeholder engagements and trainings form part of the core activities of IMANI Francophone. Our plan for 2016 and beyond is as follows:

- We will continue to increase our efforts to cover more young civil society agents in our training and capacity building programs. We plan to implement the following
- Francophone Development Program: we will design and implement training programs aimed at increasing the effectiveness and impact of civil society leaders in four francophone countries: Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso.
- We will organize SYPALA next year in Benin. SYPALA forms part of IMANI's core objective of training a new corps of future visionaries and leaders who will carry the torch of liberty and blaze the trail of prosperity in the coming dawn of African renaissance.
- A second edition of the Africa Performance Index will take place in 2016.
- IMANI Francophone will run social media campaigns on issues affecting francophone Africa, especially our countries of intervention. Funding willing, we will organize a conference based on the recommendations of the Grands Debats - Agenda 2063 project.

Funding

IMANI Francophone operates with a meager budget. Almost 85% of our work is financed internally. The sustainability of the project depends on the availability of funds. The unavailability of resources – especially financial resources – limits our capability to make the most of impact in our different countries of intervention. A long-term financial support to IMANI Francophone will advance the cause of a greater accountability and transparency and better democratic governance in West Africa.

Conclusion

The absence of independent watchdog and research organizations like IMANI in many parts of Francophone Africa gives politicians the room to take actions that negatively affect the development of their nations. With well thought-strategies, effective advocacy tools, IMANI Francophone is changing the status quo. It can only get better. Given the availability of funds, IMANI Francophone has the potential to play more influential role, in shaping public policy in the interest of development.



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