Access to Information: The Bridge to Sustainable Development

Strategic Plan 2021-2025
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Access to information is both a fundamental human right and also a critical public accountability tool.
Introduction

Without public access to information, the journey to sustainable development will be a long and difficult one. The pandemic of Covid-19 has revealed that access to information is not only the difference between life and death, but also critical for transparent and accountable use of scarce resources donated and appropriated to fight the outbreak. Yet, both are challenged in Africa. People whose lives are disproportionately affected by a lack of information are at the same time most challenged in accessing it, our big concern. Policies matter, yet most African countries have yet to ratify, domesticate and effectively implement access to information laws - contrary to SDG 16.10.2 and African Union treaties.

Our new strategic plan, Access to information: The Bridge to Sustainable Development seeks to ensure that people can access information they need to survive current and future health and other crises. It also seeks to empower everyone, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable populations: women, people with disabilities, displaced persons and youth in Africa, to access the information they need to exercise all their rights and achieve their full potential.

Our previous successes and learning were made possible by hard work but also by the support of our funders, the United Nations system, African Union institutions and organs, national governments, our members, partners and the Governing Council. If access to information is going to be the bridge to sustainable development, our stakeholders will be the bridge for people in Africa to access public information.

We are grateful to IFEX, the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) and Dave Algoso for funding our strategic planning process.

Executive Summary

An Africa where all citizens can exercise their right of access to information.

Support a pan-African network of actors to advance the right of access to information on the African continent.

Our Mission

This strategic plan was formulated over the course of 2020 through reflections on the past work and achievements under AFIC’s prior strategic plan, intensive consultations with AFIC members, state actors, and communities we work with, and internal reflections with the AFIC team. The result sets out AFIC’s strategic direction for the next five years.
At the core of the plan is a set of four strategic priorities, and the outcomes we aim for within each of those priorities, in pursuit of our overall vision and mission.

1. **Right to Information**
   - Every individual in Africa realises their right to information in practice:
     1. African Union member states ratify and/or domesticate African Union treaties that guarantee the right of access to information for every individual in Africa.
     2. African Union member states implement ATI laws in target thematic areas.
     3. Citizens and CSOs actively demand public information to advance sustainable development.
     4. ATI oversight bodies (where established) have capacity to fulfill their mandates.

2. **Transparency and Accountability**
   - Public services are transparent, efficient, competitive, and deliver value for money for citizens in Africa:
     1. Open contracting standards and norms are adopted and implemented by member states.
     2. Whistle-blower protection mechanisms established and are functional.
     3. CSOs and other data users have capacity and use published data to promote efficiency, value for money, fair business practices, and better service delivery.
     4. Citizens' demand for transparency and accountability in public contracting increased.
     5. Improved governments' response to citizens' demand for transparency and accountability in public contracting.

3. **Membership Strengthening**
   - AFIC membership is well-equipped and effectively coordinated to advance the right to information and/or open contracting in respective countries:
     1. Improved capacity of AFIC members to promote and defend the right to access to information, transparency and accountability.
     2. Improved capacity of AFIC members to use regional, continental, and international mechanisms to promote the right of access to information, transparency and accountability.
     3. AFIC members are coordinated to collectively engage in international and regional campaigns and platforms on ATI.
     4. Knowledge and best practices are shared among AFIC members.
     5. Increased membership in countries where AFIC has no presence on the African continent.

4. **Institutional Strengthening**
   - AFIC is adequately resourced, sustainably funded, and well-governed to effectively promote the right to information at all levels:
     1. AFIC's staff have the capacity to fulfil its mandate.
     2. AFIC enjoys sustainable organisational funding.
     3. AFIC is a well-governed organisation.
CHAPTER ONE

Who we are

OUR VISION
An Africa where all citizens can exercise their right of access to information.

OUR MISSION
Support a pan-African network of actors to advance the right of access to information on the African continent.

OUR VALUES
1. Integrity
2. Transparency
3. Inclusivity
4. Equality & Equity
5. Collaboration

1.1 Why we focus on access to information

Access to information is both a fundamental human right and also a critical public accountability tool. It is central to promoting democratic rule, advancing socio-economic justice, and ensuring government transparency, integrity, and accountability.

A recognized human right

As a fundamental human right, access to information is recognized by the United Nations in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and by the AU through the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. In addition, the African Union underscores the significance of access to information in public participation through its treaties. These include the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the African Youth Charter, and the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service Administration. The importance of advancing and enforcing access to information is similarly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Most recently, in 2019, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights adopted an expanded Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa. The Declaration’s Principle 26 states that the right of access to information held by public bodies and relevant private bodies shall be guaranteed by law, expeditiously and inexpensively.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Target 16.10, Sustainable Development Goals

An enabler of other rights

Access to information is a critical enabler of informed expression, participation in governance, and public accountability.

As the world implements its commitment to eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, access to information is needed for the realization of other rights, such as physical and mental health, education, and equality.

Our strategic focus therefore undertakes access to information as a bridge to sustainable development.

1.2 Our membership and governance

AFIC was first registered in 2007 in Nigeria, and then established a permanent office in Uganda in 2009. In the years since, our network has grown to include 43 civil society organisations and think tanks across 22 countries. (See map on the next page).

We are governed by a General Assembly (GA) of our members, which sits at least once every three years to provide overall strategic direction and elect a Governing Council (GC) that manages the Secretariat for a three-year term.

“Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.”

For more on the 2019 Declaration, which replaced the 2002 Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression, see here: https://www.achpr.org/legalinstruments/detail?id=69
1.3 What we have achieved

As our membership has grown, we have contributed to the advancement of access to information within Africa and around the world. A few of our major achievements under our prior strategy (2015-2019) are listed below.

**Advanced ATI agenda in Africa through regional and international partnerships**

We worked through regional and international mechanisms to advance the right to information in policy and practice. Through shadow reporting, direct advocacy engagements, petitions, and meetings, we secured commitments, resolutions, and decisions in favor of ATI. Key among these is the United Nations General Assembly and UNESCO General Conference Resolutions Proclaiming September 28th as the International Day for Universal Access to Information.

**Increased adoption of progressive national ATI laws**

We have supported and collaborated with partners on campaigns that have increased the number of countries with ATI laws: from 15 countries in 2016 to 25 in November 2019. Our strategies have included: shadow reporting to treaty bodies like the Human Rights Council and the ACHPR; analysis of draft bills and providing feedback to national legislators; technical assistance to our members and partners at national level; mobilizing OGP commitments on ATI laws; petitions and letter campaigns; promotional missions; and working collaboratively with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa.

**Promoted effective implementation of ATI laws in Africa**

From our first strategy (2011-2015) to our most recent (2015-2019), our work expanded from a focus on adopting laws to also promoting effective implementation. As part of that work, we developed training manuals for and delivered training to over 1,800 public officials, civil society representatives, and journalists in Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda. In addition, we piloted sector and thematic implementation of ATI laws focused on open contracting and women. Targeted governments improved on implementation, and CSO/journalist demand for public information grew. Significantly, delivery of services improved at community level as a result of disclosure and citizen monitoring of contracts and services.
Expanded use of ATI through open contracting, open data, and open government by AFIC members.

Public procurement accounts for 55-65% of most governments' expenditures, yet it is littered with secrecy, conflicts, collusion, and corruption. We believe that disclosure of public procurement information is key. Through promoting open contracting, we have seen governments disclose more—especially by using technology like the Government Procurement Portal in Uganda and the Nigeria Open Contracting Portal (NOCOPO) in Nigeria. We have worked with public procurement authorities to map disclosure levels and support them in publishing data in Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) formats to enable monitoring. We have also trained public officials in disclosure and citizens in contract monitoring. Finally, we have monitored public contracts and shared report findings with key accountability agencies to inform improvement of disclosure by public agencies. This work has shined a light on corruption and waste, enabling governments to fix problems.

Increased knowledge of ATI in advancing human rights, rule of law, and transparency and accountability.

One of the major barriers to ATI is simply lack of knowledge about this powerful tool, among both citizens and duty bearers. We have advanced knowledge and understanding of ATI through reports, case studies, and more, disseminating information to citizens, our members and other CSOs, government officials and public servants, development agencies, and regional and international institutions.

Promoted social inclusion for marginalized groups (incl. women, youth, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, and others) in ATI.

Through our work—including our feminist open contracting research, access to information baseline study, and project on winning against corruption with private sector players—we have shown how marginalized groups, who face difficulties accessing social services and enforcing rights, are also disproportionately disadvantaged in accessing public information. This is due to isolation and low social status, exacerbated by decision-makers' poor understanding and awareness of those challenges. This knowledge has helped create greater understanding of the need for inclusive programming.

1.4 Select project snapshots

See Annex 1 for further snapshots.

Enhancing good governance through citizens' access to information

This two-year project started with a baseline study to research the status of ATI in 16 African countries. It then involved training 90 public officials and 122 civil society leaders and journalists on ATI in Malawi, Kenya, and Uganda. Demand for public information and responsiveness of government agencies improved quickly: 75 information requests were filed within 4 weeks of the training. In Uganda, authorities responded to 50% of those information requests within the statutory 21 days of requesting; in Malawi, 37.5% received responses within a reasonable time. Platforms to discuss and follow-up on issues raised from information requests were created. More significantly, corruption was exposed and dealt with, enabling people to access basic health and education services.

Deepening open government through women's participation in public contracting

This action research project examined how open government engages women in Kenya, Nigeria, and Malawi. The research looked at women's access to and use of contracting information; women's role in co-creation of OGP national action plans; and government commitment to access and participation in public contracting. The findings revealed that public procurement is dominated by men, reinforced by the fact that most companies are owned and managed by men. Although inclusion-related laws exist, there is a lack of specific commitments such as ring-fencing procurement proportions for women. The project raised awareness of barriers to women's participation in public contracting, and informed engagement with procurement authorities in East Africa, who in turn resolved to promote inclusiveness.

1 This project was made possible with US$289,000 in support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

2 This project was funded by the International Development Research Centre and Results for Development.
1.4 Lessons learnt

Despite our achievements, significant work remains to be done: 30 African countries are yet to adopt ATI laws, and the 25 countries that have laws struggle with their implementation. Seizing these opportunities requires learning from our work so far. The following lessons from our last strategic plan inform this one:

Implementing commitments requires technical capacity and co-creation.

The Sustainable Development Framework, African Union Agenda 2063, and the Open Government Partnership have mobilized political will to pass reforms, leading to commitments on ATI, anti-corruption, and open contracting. However, making the commitment is just one step. Many governments lack the technical capacity, understanding of citizen needs, and space for collaboration with citizens and civil society to effectively implement commitments. For example, in Uganda, the government accepted AFIC recommendations to implement open contracting but was unable to re-design its procurement portal to meet OCDS requirements. AFIC supported the government in turning the commitment into reality. This strategy prioritizes co-creation of solutions with governments and other stakeholders to implement recommendations.

Disclosure is not enough to bring change to people’s lives—citizen participation and demand for information matter, as do accountability mechanisms.

ATI is fundamental for protecting other human rights and realizing sustainable development goals, whether it be ending poverty, empowering women and girls, promoting health and well-being, or ensuring climate resilience. However, while laws and policy frameworks that promote public disclosure are necessary, they are not sufficient on their own. We also need effective demand and citizen participation for these policies to realize their goals. And on the government side, these goals need to be matched with accountability mechanisms: corruption uncovered through ATI must lead to sanctions for culprits, rather than (as is often the case) administrative transfers to other agencies. This combination of transparency, participation, and accountability is necessary to address poor governance sustainably over time.

Regional and global bodies need civil society input as much as national and subnational governments.

The effectiveness of regional and international mechanisms such as ACHPR, UN special procedures, and UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review depend on the quality of feedback they receive from CSOs, which is used to provide feedback and/or recommendations to states parties. When CSOs do not provide reports and complaints to these mechanisms, these bodies are significantly constrained in making appropriate interventions. For their part, CSOs struggle to engage these mechanisms due to lack of awareness of their existence, lack of understanding of how such bodies work, and lack of resources (including travel funding) to engage them.

“I wish to express my profound gratitude to you personally and to AFIC for the support you gave me during the 56th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights through the provision of shadow reports. The reports enhanced my engagement with State Parties which presented their State Reports.”


Coalition building is critical.

Through advocacy for resolutions at the United Nations and elsewhere, as well as campaigns for ATI laws at the national level, we have learnt that coalitions are critical for increasing the legitimacy of issues, as well as for pulling together critical resources, expertise, and connections with key decision-makers. For example, working with our African Platform on Access to Information (APAI) partners, we mobilized support for resolutions for the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) by both the UNESCO General Conference and United Nations General Assembly.
CHAPTER TWO
Our context: New challenges and opportunities

The context for AFIC’s work is changing, and so our work must evolve to meet it. Our strategy process identified two major contextual factors that provide opportunities to advance our work, but we also face challenges—some in the general political and policy environments, and some specific to work on ATI. Finally, we see various needs specific to our network and its members.

2.1 Opportunities: Technology and citizen demand for better services

While technological progress has created new threats for activists and journalists, from state surveillance to malware, it also presents major opportunities: technology can protect democratic spaces and accelerate growth and development. Innovators have relied on technology to craft solutions to social challenges and many industries are seeking efficient uses of technology to maintain a sustainable planet.

However, the distribution of and access to technology remain imbalanced, skewed against poorer nations. Where this has been seen as a weakness, it has also been a strength that allows these countries to leapfrog others. Over the last decade, rapid expansion of technology—especially mobile telephones—in the Global South has led to service delivery innovations in key areas such as health and education. This has also allowed greater access to information, linking parts of the world together and increasing awareness on a range of issues.

Based on our experience, we also see a special opportunity in the use of technology in public contracting to advance value for money, efficiency, fair business practices, and better service delivery. Contracting is the main channel through which governments provide goods and services, but the World Bank estimates that over 30% of contract value is lost through corruption and inefficiency in public procurement processes and delivery of basic services in Africa.

The second major opportunity we face is the massive increase in people—particularly young people—demanding better public services. These young people are digital natives: savvy users of technology in their day-to-day lives. They have exposed gaps in access to information and created opportunities for innovative thinking on social challenges. Such innovations have been met with skepticism by most governments, which lag behind in policy formulation on tech-aided development.

Both of these opportunities are broader than our work on access to information, but both provide key leverage points we can use to advance our mission.

2.2 Challenges: Political and policy environments, and citizen demand

Despite the progress made in our past work and the opportunities ahead of us, we see challenges at three levels across the countries where AFIC members work: in the political environments beyond access to information; in the policy and regulatory environments specific to ATI; and in citizen demand for information.

Challenges in the political environment beyond ATI

The active involvement of the public in fostering accountability and exercising oversight in development creates avenues for improving service delivery. However, it is difficult to maintain accountability mechanisms in unstable and/or secretive political environments. A global resurgence of citizens’ interest in governance has been accompanied by the need to also strengthen democracy, whose most visible indicator is the holding of regular, free, fair, and credible elections.

Unfortunately, voters are often unable to effectively participate in electoral processes and ultimately hold leaders accountable due to the challenges to being informed about critical issues.

In addition, the astronomical costs of electoral campaigns keep public offices in the hands of moneymen whose interests are not aligned with poor and marginalized populations. The lack of transparency on the sources and uses of political funding make it harder for elections and democracy to serve as transformative processes that deliver tangible change.

Challenges in the policy and regulatory environments for ATI

Most African governments operate on the basis of official secrecy laws inherited from colonial regimes or enacted under one-party political systems. Even in countries that have enacted ATI laws, the best practice of proactive disclosure is rarely embraced. Though citizens want to know more from and about their governments, most states instead conceal information and encourage secrecy.

While technology has supported challenges to state secrecy, states have responded by deploying surveillance technologies to intimidate the citizenry. This threatens the privacy and digital security of citizens, especially human rights defenders and others who hold the powerful accountable. Practices that undermine free expression and organizing have been extended to the online world. In the hands of commercial players, the internet has also become a contested space in which collusion between state and commercial actors has prevented access and kept critical voices out.

The policy and regulatory environments for ATI are shaped by treaties, laws, and their implementation. We see gaps in all of these.

Africa mirrors the global context in these dynamics. But further to this, abuse of public office is rampant and impunity presents a key challenge. Citizens do not have sufficient information, capacity, and mechanisms to hold public officials accountable. This is also because most public transactions occur away from the public view, with little scrutiny. This tends to allow corruption to thrive as service delivery is compromised, especially with public procurement processes being shrouded in secrecy and mystified. Public-private partnerships for infrastructure development are similarly mired in corruption, leaving the public bearing most of the costs.
Lack of treaty ratifications

Through multiple treaties, the African Union recognizes the right of access to information by every individual, as a human and people’s right and also as a tool for the promotion of democracy, anti-corruption, and public participation. However, as of the end of 2020, a significant number of African Union member states were yet to ratify and domesticate these treaties.

African Union Treaty Ratifications

**African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration**
- **19 / 55 RATIFIED**

**African Charter on Statistics**
- **23 / 55 RATIFIED**

**African Union Convention on Prevention and Combating Corruption**
- **43 / 55 RATIFIED**

**African Youth Charter**
- **39 / 55 RATIFIED**
Lack of laws

The treaties listed above and the SDG 16.10.2 call on states to adopt and implement national access to information laws. However, only 25 African countries have done so (an increase from 14 at the beginning of AFIC’s last strategic plan, in 2015). That leaves 30 African countries yet to adopt ATI laws. The absence of such laws makes it difficult for officials and citizens to know what information should be accessible, including by whom, how, when, and from whom—and what appeal and oversight mechanisms apply.

Inadequacies in laws

Even where countries have enacted laws, a related set of challenges emanates from the quality of the laws. For example, in a number of countries, such as Uganda and Nigeria, the laws do not provide for an independent oversight mechanism responsible for promoting and overseeing implementation. Other issues include: wide exemptions, lack of sanctions for errant behavior like refusal to comply with the law, problematic appeal processes, and ambiguity.

Poor implementation and enforcement of laws

Studies done by AFIC (as well as others by Global Integrity, the Carter Centre, and UNESCO) show ATI laws are not being implemented to a great extent. Public officials often are not aware that the laws exist or do not understand their obligations under them. This is sometimes driven by misunderstanding of conflicting laws, like Secrecy Acts.

As a result, even countries with strong laws may not have systems for receiving and responding to requests, proactive disclosure, records management, and reporting. Consequently, proactive disclosure obligations are flouted, information requests routinely go unanswered, responses are made beyond statutory limits, and reporting obligations are violated.

Where oversight agencies (such as Information Commissioners) exist, they often lack the capacity to fulfill their mandates, as is the case in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan. They often do not sanction public bodies or covered private bodies for failure to implement the law. When oversight bodies report to their parliaments, reports are not debated or errant officers are not questioned. Lack of compliance and enforcement creates a culture of abuse of the law with impunity.

Low citizen demand for information

Transparency and accountability work often focuses more on duty bearers or “supply side”, rather than on the rights holders who demand information and accountable governance. Unfortunately, across countries, citizen demand for information is weak, owing to a lack of awareness of their right to information and how to exercise it through ATI laws. When denied access, the majority of citizens do not appeal. In addition, across many African countries there have been attempts to keep people ill-informed and limit their access to internet through various barriers.

Beyond the use of ATI by individual citizens, strategic groups—such as journalists; women, youth, and child rights advocacy groups; trade unions; and anti-corruption agencies—are not actively using ATI in their work. They are also not engaging important social groups, including farmers, workers, urban poor, migrants, people with disabilities, youth, and children.

2.3 Needs: Membership strengthening and support

AFIC members are at the forefront of defending the rights of citizens to access information in their various countries. In order to fulfill that role, AFIC members need the capacity to mobilize and empower citizens to demand and protect their access to information rights. They also need expertise, which they may not have in-house, on passing and implementing ATI laws. Organisationally, they often need support with fundraising efforts, including help identifying potential funding sources.

Separate from direct support that individual organisations need, the AFIC network needs coordination to share information, knowledge, and best practices through peer learning.

One specific area of work where AFIC members and other CSOs need support is in advocating through regional and international mechanisms that exist for monitoring and promoting state compliance with ATI obligations. These mechanisms include: the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights; Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council; UN Special Procedures; and UNEAC Review. State parties are required to submit reports, which these bodies use to make findings and recommendations for implementation. Even though AFIC’s observer status gives its members access to engage directly with these bodies, AFIC members and other CSOs are often not familiar with these systems: lacking understanding of how the mechanisms work and resources to attend meetings limits their engagement.

4 Those with laws include: Angola, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya; Liberia; Malawi; Morocco; Mozambique; Nigeria; Niger; Rwanda; South Africa, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER THREE
Strategy: Theory of change and strategic priorities

3.1 Theory of change

Our theory of change is built on four strategic priorities: Right to Information, Transparency and Accountability, Membership Strengthening, and Institutional Strengthening.

Our first two strategic priorities—Right to Information, and Transparency and Accountability—are fundamental to sustainable development. We have set ultimate outcomes for our work in each area. Under Right to Information, we aim to ensure that every individual in Africa can realize their right to information in practice.

In Transparency and Accountability, we focus on making public services transparent, efficient, competitive, and able to deliver value for money for citizens in Africa. These outcomes are prerequisites for good governance and for ensuring that public resources lead to effective delivery of public goods and services.

3.2 Target thematic areas

Our strategic priorities of Right to Information and Transparency and Accountability are broad areas with relevance across all aspects of government. Under our previous strategic plan, we realized that some sectors presented greater barriers to progress on transparency and accountability, and that greater focus was needed to realize impact. Therefore, we target a subset of thematic areas where achieving our goals has the greatest potential to advance sustainable development, and where success can set a standard for other sectors.

Our thematic areas are:
- Agriculture
- Education
- Health
- Elections
- Extractives and natural resources
- Infrastructure

3.3 Priority actors and stakeholders

AFIC works in partnerships with international, national, and local CSO networks—especially through our membership engagement—to promote advocacy and campaigns for advancing rights and good governance through transparency and accountability. Along with these partners, we engage key platforms at the global and African Union level to ensure legal change. (See Appendix for full list of key actors and platforms in ATI.)

We also aim to engage groups of citizens that will be direct beneficiaries of reforms and whose livelihoods stand the best potential of being transformed. These groups include: women, youth, persons with disabilities, and displaced persons and refugees. We aim to empower these communities on their rights, including prior informed consent, as well as how to engage duty bearers, including in the private sector.
3.4 Strategic priorities

**Strategic Priority 1: Right to Information**

**Ultimate Outcome:** Every individual in Africa realizes their right to information in practice.

**Intermediate Outcomes:**
1. African Union member states ratify and/or domesticate African Union treaties that guarantee the right of access to information for every individual in Africa.
2. African Union member states implement ATI laws in target thematic areas.
3. Citizens and CSOs actively demand public information to advance sustainable development.
4. ATI oversight bodies (where established) have capacity to fulfill their mandates.

Access to information is an enabler of all human rights and a tool to facilitate transparency and accountability. Therefore: if African Union treaties that guarantee the right of access to information for every individual in Africa are ratified and domesticated; if ATI laws are adopted and effectively implemented in different sectors; and if citizens’ awareness and knowledge about the right to information is improved; then every individual in Africa will be able to demand, enforce and realize their right to information in practice.

**Strategic Priority 2: Transparency and Accountability**

**Ultimate Outcome:** Public services are transparent, efficient, competitive, and deliver value for money for citizens in Africa.

**Intermediate Outcomes:**
1. Open contracting standards and norms are adopted and implemented by member states.
2. Whistle-blower protection mechanisms established and are functional.
3. CSOs and other data users have capacity and use published data to promote efficiency, value for money, fair business practices and better service delivery.

Our work under this strategic priority focuses on open contracting, whistle-blower protection and anti-corruption in order to advance value for money, efficiency in public service systems, fair business practices and better service delivery. When open governance is advanced through a variety of factors—the adoption and implementation of whistle-blowers protection mechanisms; open contracting commitments, norms, and standards; citizen demand for transparency and accountability; and government response to citizen demand—then public services will be transparent, efficient and competitive, and will deliver value for money for citizens.

**Strategic Priority 3: Membership Strengthening**

**Ultimate Outcome:** AFIC membership is well-equipped and effectively coordinated to advance the right to information and/or open contracting in respective countries.

**Intermediate Outcomes:**
1. Improved capacity of AFIC members to promote and defend the right to information and open contracting.
2. Improved capacity of AFIC members to use regional, continental, and international mechanisms to promote ATI and open contracting.
3. AFIC members are coordinated to collectively engage in international and regional campaigns and platforms on ATI.
4. Knowledge of best practices is shared among AFIC members.
5. Increased membership in countries where AFIC has no presence on the African continent.

When AFIC members are well-equipped with skills and knowledge, and effectively coordinated to collectively engage in international and regional campaigns and platforms, they are able to advance ATI within and across their respective countries. Knowledge sharing is especially critical on promoting ATI for marginalized, disabled, and multilingual communities via digitized procedures and other ICT-based solutions.

**Strategic Priority 4: Institutional Strengthening**

**Ultimate Outcome:** AFIC is adequately resourced, sustainably funded, and well-governed to effectively promote the right to information at all levels.

**Intermediate Outcomes:**
1. AFIC’s staff have the capacity to fulfill its mandate.
2. AFIC enjoys sustainable organisational funding.
3. AFIC is a well-governed organisation.

When AFIC is adequately resourced and well-governed, and its staff has capacity, expertise, and experience, then we will be able to fulfill our mandate across our strategic priorities. AFIC will increase its staffing, as well as put in place new training, procedures, and management tools to effectively deliver on its strategic plan. Special attention will be given to monitoring, evaluation, and learning; strategic communications; financial management; and board engagement.
3.5 Approaches and activities

AFIC uses several approaches and activities across our strategic priorities, with some activities serving multiple priorities—e.g., our Membership Strengthening work often occurs hand-in-hand with our work under Right to Information or Transparency and Accountability.

Our approaches and activities include:

*Advocacy for adoption of ATI laws:*
AFIC advocates for the adoption of ATI laws, ratification and domestication of ATI treaties, and reporting to respective treaty bodies. These activities include: campaigning for commitments on ATI in respective Open Government Partnership National Action Plans; engaging national governments directly; supporting campaigns of our members and partners with media campaigns; shadow reporting to treaty bodies; letters of appeal; and other interventions.

*Research and knowledge generation:*
We are increasing knowledge generation and dissemination to influence public policy. To that end, we produce annual ‘State of Right to Information in Africa’ reports on different themes of our strategic plan; we document case studies; and we facilitate knowledge sharing sessions amongst various stakeholders in Africa and beyond.

*Monitoring delivery of contracts and services:*
We are expanding monitoring of contracts and services in African countries. This includes development and deployment of relevant technology platforms and dashboards, training and deployment of community monitors, tracking delivery of services, and providing feedback to respective duty bearers. In addition, other stakeholders like media, CSOs, and businesses will be provided with findings and facilitated to use them to increase their contribution in demanding accountability.

*Co-creation:*
Providing recommendations and feedback is not enough. Through constructive engagements, AFIC works with its stakeholders to find solutions to emerging problems. We do this through joint fundraising, joint capacity building, technical support, and other activities.

*Public sector capacity strengthening:*
AFIC helps public bodies and appropriate private bodies to comply with respective national ATI laws, including by ensuring they understand their legal obligations. We do this through training, mentorship, and development and dissemination of tools and templates for the effective implementation. In particular, we work with selected information commissioners in the Africa Network of Information Commissioners.

*CSO capacity building:*
AFIC develops tools and delivers training, mentorship, and coaching for its member CSOs and partners across the continent. As part of this, we help CSOs use regional and international mechanisms to advance the right to information, including by helping them obtain observer status at, monitor, and provide reports to treaty bodies.

*Monitoring compliance with treaty obligations:*
We are expanding our work of leveraging treaty compliance and providing recommendations for improvements. We do this by conducting studies, producing shadow reports, facilitating CSO consultations and input in respective shadow reports, missions, and engagement of respective bodies and mandates. More importantly, AFIC and its members will
CHAPTER FOUR
Implementation

Implementation is made possible by our team members and the systems and processes we put in place to support them.

4.1 Our team

AFIC has a vibrant and focused technical team that coordinates work at the Secretariat and promotes the objectives of the strategic plan.

The current AFIC organogram (see below) is aligned with this strategic plan and the four strategic priorities. Through robust fundraising, we will generate enough funds to fairly remunerate staff, as well as to provide the equipment they need and an open and conducive working environment.

Furthermore, AFIC is committed to strengthening the representation of under-represented groups, including directly affected communities, women, youth, and other groups that are historically disadvantaged. This leadership is achieved most notably at the level of the General Assembly and Governing Council, where we aim for gender parity in these oversight bodies.

Our strategy and theory of change are only as good as our ability to implement.
4.2 Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

Our monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approach ensures we track progress toward our goals, collect and use data, document lessons learnt, and share knowledge and best practices with our members and other partners. The system will be an iterative process of monitoring, evaluating, learning, adjusting, and adapting.

Our MEL system has four components:

1. We conduct **baseline assessments** to provide a situational analysis prior to every program intervention, as well as to gather data that will help the program set realistic targets. These assessments also inform learning questions that guide learning throughout the strategic period.

2. We develop **annual work plans** through a participatory process involving AFIC staff, members, and partners. This also involves conducting feedback surveys, physical review meetings, field monitoring, and online consultations. We monitor our progress against specific indicators that feed into our overall M&E Plan. Our annual work planning is informed by an assessment of trends in various indicators to determine whether prior assumptions still hold or should be adjusted. Work planning also includes setting or adjusting learning questions.

3. We hold ourselves accountable for meeting **performance indicators**, both internally on our teams and by presenting findings at the GC's annual meetings, so that necessary adjustments can be made to our work plans. Additionally, before every annual work planning session, we assess trends in various indicators to determine whether our results framework assumptions still hold. AFIC also collects feedback from partners and all our stakeholders on performance, relevancy, and needs.

4. We convene a **learning network** to serve as a platform for interpreting and understanding M&E data, lessons, best practices, and success stories. It is composed of the different working groups (e.g., Open Contracting or Litigation) as well as focal persons from government and CSO partners at regional and national levels. The network is led by our M&EL Coordinator, working closely with the Communications and Advocacy Officer so that lessons learnt can be shared in communications materials as program highlights and success stories. The learning network meets twice a year.

4.3 Communication

Implementing our strategy will require significant communications capacities. Separate from this strategic plan, we will develop a robust **communications and advocacy plan** outlining how we will use digital as well as traditional media to reach clearly defined stakeholders at local, national, regional, and international levels.

A sample of activities and capacities that will be included in the communications and advocacy plan:

**External activities**
- Monthly newsletter production
- Regular update of the website, blog, and social media feeds
- Generation of media content
- Production of AFIC promotional materials
- Featured talk shows on AFIC's work (radio and TV)
- Regular podcasting
- Production of program video infomercials and other visuals
- Strategic media engagements (print and press)
- Documentation, production, and dissemination of key reports

**Internal capacities**
- Staff training on digital communications and digital security
- Communications support to project leads
**APPENDIX 1: Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ultimate Outcome</th>
<th>Intermediate Outcome</th>
<th>Outcome Indicators</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Means of Verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Every individual in Africa realizes their right to information in practice.</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>African Union member states ratify and/or domesticate African Union treaties that guarantee the right of access to information for every individual in Africa.</td>
<td>1.1.1 Number of African Union member states that ratify 6 treaties that recognize the right of access to information for citizens.</td>
<td>10 ratifications over the next 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.1.2 Number of states that adopt ATI laws consistent with AU model law on ATI and SGD 16.10.2.</td>
<td>15 countries to pass such a law during the plan period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>African Union member states implement ATI laws in target thematic areas.</td>
<td>1.2.1 Percentage of citizens' reporting to have awareness and knowledge about RTI, 15% increase.</td>
<td>Endline Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.2 Number of states implementing ATI provision in line with SDG Indicator 16.10.2.</td>
<td>25 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.3 Number of ATI oversight mechanisms enforcing ATI laws.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Citizens and CSOs actively demand public information to advance sustainable development.</td>
<td>1.3.1 Number of individuals and CSOs trained.</td>
<td>1000 CSOs, 50,000 individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.3.2 Number of information requests made.</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>ATI oversight bodies (where established) have capacity to fulfill their mandates.</td>
<td>1.4.1 Number of staff of ATI oversight bodies and implementing agencies trained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimate Outcome</td>
<td>Intermediate Outcome</td>
<td>Outcome Indicators</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Means of Verification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Public services are transparent, efficient, competitive and deliver value for money for citizens in Africa.</strong></td>
<td>2.1 Open contracting standards and norms are adopted and implemented by member states.</td>
<td>2.1.1 Number of states that have adopted open contracting standards and norms on the African Continent.</td>
<td>10 countries</td>
<td>Success stories, Documentaries, Outcome harvesting, Activity reports, Media reports, CSO reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.2 Number of public agencies that are publishing procurement information in open data formats on the African Continent.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 countries</td>
<td>Success stories, Documentaries, Outcome harvesting, Activity reports, Media reports, CSO reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.3 Number of OGP commitments on ATI and OC made by African members (national and sub-national governments)</td>
<td></td>
<td>% 20 increase in the number of ATI and OC commitments made in the last OGP plans.</td>
<td>Success stories, Documentaries, Outcome harvesting, Activity reports, Media reports, CSO reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Whistle-blower protection mechanisms established and are functional.</td>
<td>2.2.1 Number of countries that enact whistle-blowers protection laws.</td>
<td>5 countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.2 Number of CSOs and journalists trained in whistle-blower protection.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.3 Number investigative journalists whose capacity is enhanced.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 CSOs and other data users have capacity and use published data to promote efficiency, value for money, fair business practices, and better service delivery.</td>
<td>2.3.1 Number of CSOs and other data users trained in OC.</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.2 Number of CSOs and other data users reporting to be using open data e.g., through monitoring, research, assessments and advocacy.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4 Citizens' demand for transparency and accountability increased.</td>
<td>2.4.1 Number of citizens engaging governments on issues of transparency and accountability.</td>
<td>2 million citizens across African continent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.4.2 Number of recommendations made by citizens as a demand for transparency and accountability.</td>
<td></td>
<td>200 recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.5 Improved governments' response to citizens' demand for transparency and accountability in public contracting.</td>
<td>2.5.1 Number of recommendations from citizens adopted and/or implemented by governments.</td>
<td></td>
<td>20% of recommendations made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5.2 Number of commitments made towards recommendations and demands for accountability by citizens.</td>
<td></td>
<td>30% of the recommendations made</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. AFIC membership is well-equipped and effectively coordinated to advance the right to information in respective countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ultimate Outcomes</th>
<th>Intermediate Outcome</th>
<th>Outcome Indicators</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Means of Verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Improved capacity of AFIC members to promote and defend the right to information and open contracting.</td>
<td>3.1.1 AFIC members demonstrating knowledge on ATI and OC issues, best practices, standards, policies, and regulations across national, regional, and global levels.</td>
<td>43 members (ALL)</td>
<td>Success stories Activity reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Improved capacity of AFIC members to use regional continental and international mechanisms to promote ATI and open contracting.</td>
<td>3.2.1 Number of AFIC members reporting ability to use regional, continental and international mechanisms to promote ATI and open contracting.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>AFIC members are coordinated to collectively engage in international and regional campaigns and platforms on ATI.</td>
<td>3.3.1 Number of AFIC members who participate in international and regional campaigns and platforms on ATI.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3.2 Number of AFIC promoting access to information during the International Day of Universal Access to Information.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Knowledge of best practices is shared among AFIC members.</td>
<td>3.4.1 Number of members testifying of peer and shared learning of best practices among membership.</td>
<td>43 ALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Increased membership in countries where AFIC has no presence on the African continent.</td>
<td>3.5.1 Number of organisations recruited into AFIC membership in countries where AFIC has no presence.</td>
<td>25 organisations</td>
<td>Membership registration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. AFIC is adequately resourced, sustainably funded and well-governed to effectively promote the right to information at all levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ultimate Outcomes</th>
<th>Intermediate Outcome</th>
<th>Outcome Indicators</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Means of Verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>AFIC’s staff have capacity to fulfil its mandate.</td>
<td>4.1.1 Number of AFIC staff whose capacity is built to fulfil its mandate.</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>Staff training reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2 AFIC enjoys sustainable organisational funding.</td>
<td>4.2.1 Funding available for at least 5 years of the SP.</td>
<td>SP budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.3 AFIC is a well-governed organisation.</td>
<td>4.3.1 Number of meetings conducted AFIC governance body.</td>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.4 Knowledge of best practices is shared among AFIC members.</td>
<td>4.4.1 Number of members testifying of peer and shared learning of best practices among membership.</td>
<td>43 ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5 Increased membership in countries where AFIC has no presence on the African continent.</td>
<td>4.5.1 Number of organisations recruited into AFIC membership in countries where AFIC has no presence.</td>
<td>25 organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The text is displayed in a tabular format with columns for Ultimate Outcomes, Intermediate Outcome, Outcome Indicators, Target, and Means of Verification.
APPENDIX 2:

Key actors and platforms in ATI

At the AU Level, AFIC has been engaging and shall continue to work with and influence platforms and institutions like:

- The African Union Commission
- The Summit
- Pan-African Parliament (PAP)
- African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- The Executive Council
- The Court of Justice
- The Permanent Representatives Committee
- The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOC)
- The Specialized Technical Committees
- The Peace and Security Council

We shall engage and work with existing financial institutions that include:

- The African Development Bank (ADB)

We shall also work with key regional economic communities like:

- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- Common Market of East and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)
- Southern African Development Community (SADC)

- The African Development Agency - New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AFDB-NPAD)
- Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
- African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC)
- African Governance Architecture (AGA)
- African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)
- AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL)

- African Union Development Agency - New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUDA-NEPAD)
- Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
- African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC)
- African Governance Architecture (AGA)
- African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)
- AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL)
- Pan-African University (PAU)
- Pan-African Institute for Education for Development (IPED)/African Observatory for Education
- Pan African Postal Union (PAPU)
- African Energy Commission (AFREC)

We shall also seek to influence key global spaces like:

- The UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU)
- United Nations Liaison and Representation Offices
- Other AU Regional Partnerships like:
  - The African Union (AU)–European Union (EU) Partnership,
  - Africa–League of Arab States (LAS)
  - Africa–South America Cooperation Forum (ASACOF)

- International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR)
- AU Institute for Statistics (STAFRICA)
- African Union/International Centre for Girls’ and Women’s Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA)
- Fund for African Women (FAW)
- Pan African University (PAU)
- African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT)
- AFRIPOL
- Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)
- AIDS Watch Africa (AWA) and Pan African Women’s Organization (PAWO)

Our influence shall also spread to other organs and mechanisms of the AU like:

- African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC)
- African Union–Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU–IBAR)
- Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA)
- African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT)
- African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL)
- Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)
- AIDS Watch Africa (AWA) and Pan African Women’s Organization (PAWO)

We shall also work with key regional economic communities like:

- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- Common Market of East and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)
- Southern African Development Community (SADC)

- Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD)
- Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)
- Economic Community of Sahel-Saharan States (ECOWAS) and East African Community (EAC).
APPENDIX 3:
Budget and finances

Strategic Plan Budget Estimates

1. Financial Resources

This Strategic Plan requires funding in the region of 12,313,811 USD million over the 5 years. It will be generated through a robust fundraising strategy that reaches out to the membership, development partners, interested individuals and partnering with various networks to deliver this strategy.

Further, Secretariat staff should be able to undertake income-generating activities including consultancy services for which the organisation receives the fees, as staff will be undertaking such work as part of their employment.

2. Budget Summary

The implementation of this SP will require the following budgetary estimates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Plan Budget Summary - 2021 to 2025</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA 1: Right to Information</td>
<td>547,500</td>
<td>684,175</td>
<td>724,151</td>
<td>777,724</td>
<td>575,220</td>
<td>3,308,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA 2: Transparency and Accountability</td>
<td>753,000</td>
<td>798,620</td>
<td>834,246</td>
<td>850,328</td>
<td>872,357</td>
<td>4,108,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA 3: Membership Strengthening</td>
<td>262,500</td>
<td>290,725</td>
<td>320,590</td>
<td>352,243</td>
<td>285,845</td>
<td>1,511,903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA 4: Institutional Strengthening</td>
<td>282,500</td>
<td>280,725</td>
<td>288,590</td>
<td>292,234</td>
<td>32,112</td>
<td>1,176,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme support</td>
<td>395,700</td>
<td>429,050</td>
<td>439,895</td>
<td>456,785</td>
<td>486,996</td>
<td>2,208,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>2,241,200</td>
<td>2,483,295</td>
<td>2,607,472</td>
<td>2,729,314</td>
<td>2,252,530</td>
<td>12,313,811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 4:
Additional project snapshots

Several projects implemented under our 2015-2019 strategic plan are listed in section 1.3 (page 7).

Strengthening disclosure and citizen participation to improve value for money in public contracting in Africa (Hewlett I)

Transparency and public participation in public contracting in Africa is challenged, compounding corruption and collusion and denying citizens much needed services. With a US$300,000 grant from the William and Flora Foundation, AFIC and its members implemented a 2-year ‘strengthening disclosure and citizen participation to improve value for money in public contracting in Africa project’ in Uganda, Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria.

The project successfully mobilized commitments for disclosure of procurement information by respective governments, trained 123 public officials in project countries on disclosure obligations and its advantages, supported governments to create better platforms for disclosure, and created spaces for continuous engagement between CSOs and governments on open contracting. It also trained 159 civil society leaders on open contracting, data use, and constructive engagement. Governments appreciated the value of disclosure of procurement information and citizen monitoring.

This in turn made it easy for the 5 East African procurement oversight authorities to accept AFIC’s recommendation on the need to institutionalize open contracting through publication of data in Open Contracting Data Formats (OCDS).
Improving disclosure and value for money in health procurement

Female Media practitioners being trained on the role of media in promoting access to information

Staff House at a Kasheregyenyi Health Centre IV under construction

Deepening and Broadening Open Contracting in Africa (Hewlett)

Informed by lessons from the first phase the ‘Deepening and Broadening Open Contracting in Africa’ project, the aim of the project is to improve delivery of health and education services through the promotion of disclosure, public participation, efficiency, value for money and competition in public contracting in Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda by 2022. Specifically, the project will enhance transparency through disclosure of contract information, increase citizens’ participation in government processes, promote fair business practices, and improve governments’ responsiveness towards citizen’s demands for accountability and transparency. This will be achieved through use of tools and data analysis to advocate for disclosure of information, capacity building, monitoring of contracts by citizens, and continuous engagement and advocacy for change.

Improving social service delivery to citizens through open contracting in Uganda (DGF 1 & 2)

The Democratic Governance Facility supported AFIC to improve government responsiveness to citizens’ demand for public procurement information, increase citizens and CSOs demand for public procurement information and enhance government responsiveness towards citizens’ feedback on public procurement accountability issues for 21 months with a grant of US$450,000. During this period, AFIC supported PPDA to redesign the GPP aligned to OCDS, making Uganda the first African country to reach this fit. Since the launch of the redesigned portal, the portal has had more than 13,000 unique visitors with an average loading time at 7.3, which is well above average page load by Google’s 22-second benchmarking standards. The portal has a 51% bounce rate, which has been attributed to the increased awareness campaigns and the increased data uploaded that led to more people visiting the portal and staying much longer. There is increased number of PDEs registered, of these 73% proactive disclose information an indication of improved capacity, responsiveness, and trust among public officials. AFIC supported 141 CSOs that included representatives from CSOs and media houses that were supported in contracts monitoring and demand for ATI. From this engagement alone, 14 media houses and 16 CSOs have already aligned ATI into their programming that contributes to their progressive engagements with government agencies and promotes citizens’ participation.

Following successful implementation of the first phase, DGF in March 2020 approved the second phase of the project with US$670,000 to expand the project into 10 districts and selected national agencies in Uganda.

National Endowment for Democracy - (NED 1 and 2)

Transparency of electoral processes and campaign finance is challenged in Africa, leading to cheating, violence and doubts on the legitimacy of electoral outcomes. With a US$42,000 National Endowment for Democracy grant, AFIC and Article 19 conducted studies on transparency of election campaign financing and called for efforts to make financing of election financing transparent from 2015-2016. In 2020, AFIC in collaboration with The Gambia Press Union and Panos Southern Africa in implementing a US$120,000 project to promote electoral transparency in The Gambia, Uganda and Zambia on the basis of African Union Guidelines on Access to Information and Elections. The project is advocating for respective countries to adapt African Union Guidelines and actively disclose electoral information to citizens. It is also training citizens on how to request and use accessed electoral information.

Promotion of governance for health and human rights in Uganda and Kenya (OSIEA)

The delivery of health services is increasingly being marketized with the ability to pay being a major consideration. Of concern, governments in Africa have encouraged the role of private sector in the delivery of health services. Business interest has the potential to skew public
decision-making in favor of business, sometimes corruptly, rather than transparently for public good. With support from the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa, AFIC and the International Commission of Jurists initiated a project to promote access to information in the health sectors of Kenya and Uganda. The project conducted baseline studies, trained 55 public officials on disclosure obligations, and supported access to information request campaigns by CSOs in respective countries.

The project created strong incentives for proactive disclosure that became critical during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the pandemic, the project also developed and disseminated a checklist for information disclosure for health information that was very well-received by stakeholders in project countries and beyond.

Financing for Development (FFD)

Government and donor funded projects have come and gone, but material conditions of intended beneficiaries have not improved significantly. AFIC with support of Oxfam in Uganda and Oxfam NOVIB implemented a five-year EUR 250,000 project, 'An Efficient Public Finance System in Uganda: Promoting Fiscal Measures That Will Enhance Inclusive Growth and Active Participation of The Citizenry'. The project trained 149 public officials from 15 districts of northern Uganda, that had been ravaged by a two-decade conflict, on disclosure and citizen engagement. 173 civil society leaders were trained on access to information and facilitated to monitor public contracts. District Local Governments were provided with recommendations which they implemented to improve delivery of services. The project also facilitated community dialogue with duty bearers which helped to bridge the gap between them. These efforts resulted in exposing issues in the contracting, supervision, and implementation of public contracts which in turn led to better performance of contracts and public services.

Accountability Research Centre (ARC)

One of the challenges affecting sustainability of project development outcomes is lack of beneficiary participation and ownership. Through its Citizens Engagement Framework, the World Bank commits to ensure citizens access to information and participation in its funded projects. In 2019, AFIC with funding from the Accountability Research Centre of the American University documented a case study of its experiences with Uganda’s ministries of Education and Sports as well as that of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries. Feedback was provided to both the World Bank and Ugandan officials.

In 2020, AFIC together its members in Malawi (Centre for Human Rights rehabilitation), Ghana (Ghana Anticorruption Coalition) and Nigeria (Public and Private Development Centre) received funding from the Accountability Research Center to monitor the extent to which respective countries were implementing World Bank’s Civic Engagement Framework in practice.

In Uganda the project is focusing on application of the World Bank’s Civic Engagement Framework in the Uganda Reproductive Maternal and Child Health Services Improvement Project. Findings will be shared with the World Bank, Uganda’s Ministry of Health as well as other Government Ministries and agencies implementing World Bank funded projects with a view of bridging the implementation gap between civic engagement commitments and their implementation in practice.
Commemoration of the 2020 International Day for Universal Access to Information in Uganda

The procurement and deployment of Digital Technology Systems is playing a critical role in Africa’s economic development. However, questions have been raised regarding the secrecy around how they are procured and deployed, cost, source of funding, legal framework, safeguards around privacy security and inclusion. To try and understand these questions, AFIC in 2020 obtained a one-year US$150,000 grant to conduct research and dissemination activities in Liberia, Nigeria and Uganda. The project is being implemented in partnership with our members: Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (Liberia) and Public and Private Development Centre (Nigeria).

Contracts in public sectors of health, education and agriculture. The project, implemented in 5 districts in Uganda, lead to increased disclosure of public contracting data evidenced by an increase from less than 4,000 to over 60,000 contracts being published, monitoring of contracts and submission of 42 recommendations to Districts and central government ministries and agencies in health, education and agricultural sectors. 922 citizens trained on access to information and how to track the execution of contracts and delivery of services as well as laws, policies and regulations governing public access to information and contracting. 45% of the recommendations were implemented by government, resulting in authentic community participation in delivery of contracts and services, leading to community ownership of projects and better service delivery.

International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)

In spite of the recognition of the right of every individual to access public information in the SDG framework and the African Union through its 6 treaties, only 15 African countries had ATI laws at the end of 2014. With support from IFEX, AFIC through shadow reporting to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review as well as direct engagement with governments and support to its members and partners campaigned for adoption of ATI laws in several countries including Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Algeria, Cameroon, The Gambia, and Zambia among others.

In addition, AFIC together with African Platform on Access to Information were supported by IFEX to successfully lead a global campaign for the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution proclaiming September 28th as the International Day for Universal Access to Information. At the inaugural first celebration of this global event, IFEX together with the Democratic Governance Facility and UNESCO collaborated with and sponsored a high-level dialogue that attracted key stakeholders like the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information, Hon Jamesina E. King, the UN Resident Coordinator, H.E Rosa Malango, Members of Parliament, digital and media platforms like Twitter, among others. During this dialogue, key issues on access to information were raised as well as commitments to addressing challenges to access to information.

Omidyar Network

The procurement and deployment of Digital Technology Systems is playing a critical role in Africa’s economic development. However, questions have been raised regarding the secrecy around how they are procured and deployed, cost, source of funding, legal framework, safeguards around privacy security and inclusion. To try and understand these questions, AFIC in 2020 obtained a one-year US$150,000 grant to conduct research and dissemination activities in Liberia, Nigeria and Uganda. The project is being implemented in partnership with our members: Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (Liberia) and Public and Private Development Centre (Nigeria).
Beyond its programmes, AFIC has become a home to and supported other initiatives that promote public access to information as well as transparency and accountability at national, regional and international level. These include:

**Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIAnet)**
This is an international information-sharing network of organisations and individuals working to promote the right of access to information. It runs a discussion list for news and debate on the right of access to information around the world. FOIAnet currently has 976 members including civil society representatives, lawyers, academics, information commissioners and others with a specialised interest in the right to information. (https://foiadvocates.net/)

**CoST- Uganda**
CoST Uganda is the Ugandan Chapter of CoST International, the global infrastructure transparency initiative. The programme started in Uganda in 2014 initially being hosted by the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) and later by Uganda Youth Martial Matrix (YOMMINT). Following years of instability and stagnation, AFIC was in July 2016 requested to host the initiative, provide secretariat services and leadership for the young institution. CoST Uganda has been institutionally strengthened and has grown to become a strong voice for transparency and accountability on infrastructure issues among public institutions, private sector and civil society actors in Uganda. Since 2018 AFIC has also been supporting other CoST programmes in Africa (https://www.cost.or.ug/).

**African Platform on Access to Information (APAI) Working Group**
This brings together nine civil society organisations promoting access to information in Africa. The Working Group organised the September 2011 Pan African Conference on Access to Information which adopted the African Platform on Access to Information (APAI) Declaration. The declaration formed the basis of subsequent successful campaigns that resulted in the proclamation of September 28th as the International Day for Universal Access to Information. As a secretariat, AFIC coordinates meetings of members as well as the working group's campaigns and strategies (http://www.africanplatform.org/).

**Uganda Contracts Monitoring Coalition (UCMC)**
UCMC brings 24 civil society organisations that monitor public contracts in Uganda. Since 2015, the coalition has monitored over 100 contracts and provided findings and recommendations to various government agencies (http://ucmc.ug/).