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THE IFF MONITOR

ALLIANCES IN MOTION

Strengthening FIU Autonomy Across West and Central Africa

Operationally independent Financial Intelligence Units (FIU) are essential to effective action against financial crime and illicit financial flows. The regional workshop explored the legal, institutional and practical safeguards needed to protect FIU autonomy and strengthen regional cooperation.

Abuja, Nigeria – Operational independence is a prerequisite for effective financial intelligence and a resilient system for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other forms of financial crime. Without adequate institutional safeguards, FIUs may be exposed to political interference, limiting their ability to analyse and disseminate financial intelligence objectively – particularly in sensitive or politically exposed cases. This can weaken domestic investigations, undermine asset recovery and erode trust between national authorities and international partners.

Against this background, approximately 35 senior policymakers and FIU representatives from West and Central Africa met in Abuja in April 2026 for a regional workshop on FIU operational independence and autonomy. The workshop was organised by the Egmont Centre of FIU Excellence and Leadership (ECOFEL), in partnership with the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU). It was supported by the GIZ Global Program on Combating Illicit Financial Flows (GP IFF) and the AU Regional Program SFIFD on behalf of BMZ.

The discussions highlighted that independence is not limited to the formal placement of an FIU within the state apparatus. It also depends on clearly defined mandates, secure access to information, adequate resources, transparent appointment and reporting arrangements, and safeguards against

undue influence. These elements are reflected in FATF Recommendation 29 and Immediate Outcome 6, as well as in the Egmont Group's newly published 18 Requirements for an Operationally Independent and Autonomous FIU. They have now been incorporated into the Egmont Group Charter and are mandatory for all Egmont member FIUs.

By bringing together FIU leadership, ministries and parliamentary stakeholders, the workshop promoted a shared understanding of the political, legal and institutional dimensions of autonomy. Country experiences from Cabo Verde, Senegal and Gabon demonstrated that strengthening independence requires context-specific reform pathways and sustained engagement across government.

Supporting operationally independent FIUs is an important contribution to stronger AML/CFT frameworks, more effective regional cooperation and improved action against illicit financial flows. ■

From Financial Intelligence to Action: Enhancing Policy Impact and Operational Cooperation in GIABA Member State FIUs

A regional workshop in Abuja brought together Financial Intelligence Units and technical experts to translate financial analysis into policy reform, improve cross-border cooperation and establish working groups to strengthen information exchange, training and compliance.

Abuja, Nigeria – Financial Intelligence Units across West Africa are producing more financial intelligence than ever before. Yet, translating this analysis into policy reform and tangible operational impact remains a persistent challenge. This gap was at the heart of a two-day workshop held in Abuja on 24 and 25 April, bringing together Heads and representatives of FIUs of West and Central Africa and technical experts.

Jointly organized by the GIZ SFIFD and the GP IFF, the workshop aimed to strengthen the link between strategic analysis and concrete policy outcomes for the benefit of GIABA member states (the FATF Style Regional Body for West Africa). Heads and representatives of Central African FIUs were also invited to participate, given the potential to expand the initiative to the region. As the workshop demonstrated, not only do the two regions share borders, but also they face similar challenges, such as patterns of transnational organized crime.

Building on the November 2025 Forum of FIUs of the GIABA Member States' (FFIU-GMS) Accra Retreat, the secretariat of the Forum presented the results of three regional Preliminary typology reports on trade-based money laundering, illegal artisanal mining, and terrorist financing through fuel

trafficking. Their findings pointed to common underlying challenges: porous borders, fragmented data-sharing mechanisms, limited cross-border coordination, and the need for stronger inter-agency cooperation. In a separate session, delivered virtually by the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), participants examined how weak corporate governance and inadequate compliance systems can undermine the quality of suspicious transaction reports, reinforcing the need for closer engagement with the private sector.

The workshop's most concrete outcome was a proposal to formally establish four FFIU-GMS Working Groups focusing on information exchange, policies and procedures, technical assistance and training, and membership compliance. The proposal has been discussed and adopted by the Forum on the sidelines of the GIABA Plenary held in Cote d'Ivoire in May 2026.

In closing, participants were encouraged to take the lessons, insights, and connections developed in Abuja back to their respective national frameworks. It was a fitting conclusion to a workshop whose theme – from analysis to action – captured both the progress achieved across the region and the work that remains to be done. ■

Strengthening FSRBs' AML/CFT and Operational Capacity Through Benchmark Visits

Sydney, Australia – Supported by the Global Program Combating Illicit Financial Flows (GP IFF) on behalf of BMZ, the Secretariat of the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) conducted a benchmarking visit to the Secretariat of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG). The objective of the participants of the ESAAMLG delegation was to gain insights on how to further strengthen their operations at a time when FATFs fifth round (ESAAMLGs third round) of mutual evaluations (ME) have already commenced. The visit, both strategic and essential, was requested to ensure the secretariat is better equipped to meet its obligations, enhance institutional resilience, and deliver on its expanded mandate in line with the best regional and international practices.

The benchmarking exercise provided a valuable opportunity for APG and ESAAMLG to exchange experiences, identify common challenges and explore areas for closer cooperation. Both FATF-Style Regional Bodies (FSRBs) face similar challenges in supporting members to prepare and undertake MEs as well as dealing with ICRG processes. Assessor recruitment and training were identified by both as one of the current key challenges, especially with a view to the slew of MEs coming up with the new round of MEs. Furthermore, it was noted that communication around FATF is highly dynamic, with Secretariats working to keep member jurisdictions informed of key processes while ensuring that communications remain focused and manageable. As FATF continues to strengthen the role of FSRBs, there are opportunities to further support

the meaningful engagement of Global South perspectives in its processes. Participants also welcomed the progress FATF has made towards greater inclusivity.

A key takeaway from the study trip was the strong potential for peer learning and practical knowledge-sharing between FSRBs, particularly as both organizations face similar institutional, operational and member-engagement challenges. One area requiring further attention that was highlighted by both FSRBs is the need for internal structuring and learning processes for FSRB secretariats. This included the need for structural differentiation, institutional knowledge management and training and capacity building for staff members.

The study tour was a resounding success. This was mainly due to the openness and trust exhibited by both Secretariats in sharing their efforts and challenges as well as new approaches and potential success. It furthermore confirmed that there is considerable potential for continued cooperation between APG, ESAAMLG, and possibly other FSRBs. German Development Cooperation can capitalize on this by supporting formats of knowledge sharing in areas of common interest identified by both Secretariats. At the same time further support is needed to its partners in developing joint solutions or in scaling up solutions that have innovative potential for other FSRBs. ■

IMPACT IN ACTION

Supporting Algeria's Path to Exit from FATF Increased Monitoring

Algiers, Algeria – As Algerian authorities are preparing for the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) International Co-operation Review Group's (ICRG) on-site visit, they are supported by their partners in GIZ. As part of their ongoing efforts to strengthen Algeria's Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) framework, the GIZ Strengthening Development Finance in Africa through Combating Illicit Financial Flows and Effective Debt Management (SFIFD) program organized a simulation workshop from 6 to 9 April 2026 . SFIFD is commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The workshop was led by international experts Giuseppe Lombardo and Ahmed Shahid, who worked closely with the Algerian authorities to assess their progress against the FATF action plan and strengthen their readiness to demonstrate effective implementation and concrete results.

The preparation focused on key areas of the action plan, including risk-based supervision (RBS), beneficial ownership transparency (BOT), suspicious transaction reporting (STR), targeted financial sanctions, money or value transfer services, and Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs). The experts also supported the authorities in identifying relevant evidence and preparing for technical discussions with the ICRG Review Group.

The simulation workshop encouraged coordination among the relevant Algerian institutions and reiterated the importance of broad-based participation by all relevant actors, including NPOs. One of the pitfalls of successfully manoeuvring ICRG for partner countries is to present a country's results convincingly. Thus, the workshop also aimed to ensure that progress and results could be presented clearly, consistently, and on an evidence-based basis. This strengthened Algeria's ability to demonstrate that the momentum achieved would be sustained beyond the ICRG process. The activity formed part of the broader SFIFD support to Algeria to strengthen institutional capacities and support the effective and sustainable implementation of FATF standards.

One of the pitfalls of successfully manoeuvring ICRG for partner countries is to present a country's results convincingly.

At its June 2026 plenary session, the FATF decided to remove Algeria from its list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring (*the grey list*) – a success for Algeria and the support through German Development Cooperation (GDC). ■

Strengthening the Regulatory Compliance of Non-Profit Organizations in Tunisia

GIZ, in cooperation with Tunisia's FIU and the IFEDA Center, is strengthening the regulatory compliance of NPOs through targeted capacity-building activities ahead of Tunisia's 2026 FATF mutual evaluation.

Tunesia – As part of its support to Tunisia in strengthening its AML/CFT framework, GIZ, through the REFIS project (*Renforcement de l'administration fiscale nationale et soutien des réformes fiscales*), on behalf of BMZ, has supported a series of capacity-building activities for NPOs. Implemented in cooperation with the Tunisian Financial Intelligence Unit (*Commission Tunisienne des Analyses Financières, CTAF*), and

Photos taken during the workshop on "Association Compliance," held in July 2026 in Sousse, Tunisia.

the IFEDA Center, Tunisia's public institution for training and support to associations, the initiative contributes to Tunisia's preparations for its 2026 FATF mutual evaluation. Plenary discussion is scheduled for November 2026.

The training series targets 200 NPOs representatives by the end of the project, with more than half of this target reached to date. The sessions focus on their regulatory compliance and aim to strengthen their capacities in governance, transparency and management. They cover key legal, tax, social and accounting obligations, as well as requirements related to the National Register of Companies (*Registre National des Entreprises, RNE*) registration, AML/CFT and FATF/CTAF requirements, beneficial ownership declarations and personal data protection. The training also addresses risk management, financial reporting and good management practices, helping NPOs better understand and meet their regulatory obligations, mitigate compliance risks and strengthen their sustainability.

During the activities, the *Practical Guide on Taxation and Governance of Associations*, developed in cooperation with the OECD as a practical reference for NPOs, was disseminated. Together, these efforts contribute to strengthening the capacity of Tunisian NPOs to operate in a transparent, accountable and compliant manner, while supporting the country's broader efforts to strengthen its AML/CFT framework ahead of the 2026 FATF mutual evaluation.

As a further step, the initiative brought together representatives of NPOs and the *Direction Générale des Associations et des Parties Politiques* (DGAPP) responsible for associations and political parties. This not only created space for direct dialogue and exchange, but also helped bridge different perspectives, address practical compliance challenges, clarify mutual expectations and promote a shared understanding of the need for a risk-based and proportionate approach to the NPO sector, in line with FATF Recommendation 8.

As a next step, a Training of Trainers (ToT) for chartered accountants is envisaged to further expand the reach of the initiative. The ToT will equip them with the knowledge, training methodologies and practical tools needed to deliver training to NPOs that have not yet been reached. The aim is to establish a pool of national trainers capable of progressively extending AML/CFT awareness and capacity-building activities to a broader range of NPOs across Tunisia. ■

Cameroon Strengthens DNFBP Compliance Through Practical AML/CFT Training

Practical training sessions equip compliance officers from key non-financial sectors with the tools to apply AML/CFT measures and support Cameroon's efforts to exit the FATF grey list.

Yaoundé and Douala, Cameroon – Placed under the increased monitoring of FATF's grey list since June 2023, following its Mutual Evaluation (ME) in 2022, Cameroon has stepped up its efforts to strengthen its Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFBP) compliance. This move recognizes that the effective application of preventive measures cannot be achieved through regulation alone.

As part of the dedicated support provided to Cameroon, the GIZ SFIFD program, on behalf of BMZ and in collaboration with ANIF (Cameroon's FIU), organized two practical training sessions in Yaoundé and Douala from 4 to 8 May and 6 to 10 July, respectively. These workshops brought together around 70 compliance officers from the real estate, legal, accounting, gambling, and mining sectors.

Trainings focused on FATF Recommendations 22 and 23, as well as Immediate Outcome 4. Recommendation 22 demands that Customer Due Diligence (CDD) and Know Your Customer (KYC) rules are applied to the non-financial sector, including lawyers, real estate agents, etc. Recommendation 23 extends reporting and compliance duties to DNFBPs. Immediate Outcome 4, which measures the effectiveness of the legal framework requires DNFBPs to implement preventive measures based on the risks to which they are exposed and to report suspicious transactions.

Each session included hands-on practical exercises covering customer due diligence, beneficial ownership identification, application without delay of targeted financial sanctions measures and red flags for suspicious transactions. The exchanges proved highly productive, allowing participants to raise the practical difficulties they face in meeting their obligations, with concrete solutions proposed in response. Sector-specific action plans were also jointly validated by participants and supervisors.

Challenges remain in translating this knowledge acquired during the training into daily practice. Over the coming six months, DNFBPs are expected to formally adopt the sector-specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) developed with the support of the SFIFD program, while supervisors conduct on-site visits to verify their implementation. This will constitute a concrete step towards supporting Cameroon's efforts to exit the FATF grey list. ■

INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT

Full-Scale Overhaul of Zambia's Business Register to Align with Modern Digital Governance Practices and Enhance Beneficial Ownership Transparency

GIZ's Good Financial Governance's (GFG), commissioned by BMZ, support for the Zambian Patent and Company Registration Authority (PACRA) in establishing a world-class beneficial ownership registry promotes financial transparency, uncovers shell companies, and combats corruption and tax evasion.

Lusaka, Zambia – Zambia has enacted the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2025, which took effect on 30 December 2025. It creates and implements one of the most comprehensive frameworks for transparency reforms regarding beneficial ownership in Africa, requiring immediate action on the part of companies. The law demands that companies maintain accurate records of beneficial owners, prohibits bearer shares, and imposes heavy fines for concealing ownership structures.

Zambia has recognized the importance of transitioning to a fully digitized beneficial ownership registry to collect high-quality data on beneficial owners and ensure that this data is available to and can be used by the stakeholders who need it. In collaboration with Open Ownership, GFG is supporting PACRA, which is leading these efforts. It is taking a user-centered approach to designing its future digital registry of beneficial owners, thus strengthening transparency, accountability and financial integrity.

To ensure this, PACRA conducted a comprehensive assessment of existing IT systems and user needs and is now building the new system with a team of in-house developers, researchers, and subject matter experts. This will help improve data quality, facilitate access, and promote regulatory compliance through more accurate and reliable reporting.

These reforms enable Zambia to meet the requirements of the Financial Action Task Force and the guidelines on combating money laundering. They demonstrate the country's efforts to use beneficial ownership data to repatriate assets, further mobilize domestic tax revenue, and pursue its goals in the fight against corruption, tax evasion and terrorism financing. ■

Regional Launch of ImpactaIFF: Strengthening the Fight against Illicit Financial Flows in Latin America

**Following the money across borders:
A regional response to Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs)**

Lima, Peru – On behalf of the BMZ, the new GIZ regional project ImpactaIFF is starting its work to strengthen the prevention, investigation and recovery of illicit assets across Latin America. It connects the regional capacity of the FATF-Style Regional Body of Latin America (*Grupo de Acción Financiera de Latinoamérica, GAFILAT*) with experiences developed in Ecuador, Mexico and Peru.

Proceeds generated through drug trafficking, illegal mining, corruption, illegal deforestation often move between countries, enter formal economies and finance organized crime networks. Because illicit money crosses borders, tracing it requires institutions to exchange information and act in a coordinated manner beyond their own jurisdictions.

ImpactaIFF addresses this challenge by connecting two mutually reinforcing levels of action: regional cooperation and stronger national capacities. Implemented by GIZ, the project works with GAFILAT and institutions in Ecuador, Mexico and Peru. Focusing on the prevention and financial investigation of IFFs, as well as the recovery of stolen assets, the project implements the holistic Follow the Money approach to combating IFFs that guides German Development Cooperation.

At the regional level, ImpactaIFF strengthens GAFILAT's strategic and operational capacity to support its 18 member states in implementing international standards. It also supports studies on illicit economies and emerging money-laundering methods, generating knowledge that can improve understanding of shared risks and guide coordinated responses.

The project also strengthens GAFILAT's Asset Recovery Network (*Red de Recuperación de Activos de GAFILAT, RRAG*) to facilitate the exchange of information on criminal assets. This exchange is essential to ensuring that an asset identified in one country can be traced, located and recovered even when it has been transferred to another jurisdiction.

In Ecuador, Mexico and Peru, ImpactaIFF develops and tests digital solutions and good practices to improve access to, as well as analysis and exchange of information. Experiences generated in these countries can inform regional cooperation, while regional standards and knowledge can help strengthen national responses.

The presentation of ImpactaIFF during the 53rd Plenary Meeting of GAFILAT Representatives, held in Lima in July 2026, provided an opportunity to share this approach with regional partners.

In this way, ImpactaIFF seeks to build a cycle of cooperation, connecting information, capacities and experience across countries to follow the money, reduce the profitability of organized crime and recover illicit assets more effectively. ■

For more information on our work click here.

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