



ECOSOCC
Economic Social & Cultural Council

**The Voice of the
African Citizenry**

ECOSOCC CSO MANUAL

Engagement with Regional
Economic Communities.






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FOREWORD

The African Union (AU) has always recognized the value that civil society brings in pursuit of a desired 'Africa We Want.' In its Preamble, the Constitutive Act establishing the AU posits that the institution will be 'guided by the common vision of a united and strong Africa and the need to build partnership between governments and all segments of civil society... in order to strengthen solidarity and cohesion among African people.' In Articles 5 and 22 of the Constitutive Act, the AU went further on this commitment on civil society by setting up ECOSOCC as its advisory organ with a mission to establish 'An African citizenry platform for engagement on cultural and socio-economic issues, that serves a consultative and advisory role to the African Union for Africa's inclusive development.' As such, ECOSOCC as an advisory organ serves as an interlocutor between the Member States of the Union and African civil society organizations.

Agenda 2063 also recognizes the role that civil societies play in the implementation of the aspirations encapsulated therein. It notes that 'Africa will be a continent where the institutions are at the service of its people. Citizens will actively participate in the social, economic, and political development and management.' Amongst the drivers and enablers needed to have a capable development state, empowered citizens and responsible civil society are fulcrum. The role of civil society facilitates in bringing about effective, accountable, and participatory institutions and governance based on transparent laws and rules, effective public policy, and services, strengthening the role of the state in development, enhancing the legitimacy of institutions, and building public trust.


Concerning engagement between regional economic communities and civil society on the continent, Article 90 of the Abuja Treaty establishing African Economic Communities recognizes the need for symbiotic relations between the RECs/RMs and African non-governmental organizations. The Treaty identifies civil society as a critical partner in mobilizing the human and material resources of Africa. As such relations of cooperation shall be established, with a view to encourage the involvement of the African peoples in the process of economic integration and mobilizing their technical, material, and financial support. ECOSOCC is the mechanism which has been set up to facilitate this engagement. Premised on the foregoing normative standing, ECOSOCC is in the process of developing toolkits and manuals which can be used as a resource by African civil society to facilitate effective engagement.

This manual is one such tool which we hope will foster improved collaboration between African civil society organizations and RECs/RMs.

The manual identifies existing entry points and how civil society organizations on the continent can use these in influencing agendas and policies.

This engagement is needed more than ever before in the wake of the AU's ambition for reintegration which finds expression through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The success of this agenda will hinge on the role of RECs/RMs as conduits. Beyond what was envisaged by the drafters of the Abuja Treaty, RECs/RMs also have a critical role to play in addressing cross border challenges which are emerging due to the quest for free movement of goods and services.

This means that platforms must be created to deal with issues of common interest such as, inter alia, emerging trends of foreign fighters in non-international armed conflicts, climate change, counter terrorism and socio-economic issues. RECs/RMs are the platform for such engagement as they can facilitate development of standard operating procedures and common approaches in responding to these challenges. CSOs then need to engage to make sure that emerging issues are not missed when regional agendas are being set; and to be available to support RECs/RMs in providing both normative and technical guidance to Member States when responding to issues of common interest.



That is the context within which this toolkit has been developed. It is our hope that the manual, in its small way, will be a useful tool in creating the Africa We Want through provision of the much-needed information on strengthening of engagement between RECs/RMs and CSOs on the continent.



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Acknowledgments

ECOSOCC would like to extend its sincere gratitude to team that worked on this important manual namely Dr Musavengana Chibwana, Erick Ngala and Jennifer Ndoria for their meticulous knitting of the content with the view to making it usable for CSOs on the continent. Appreciation also goes to the ECOSOCC Secretariat team that provided technical backstopping and leadership in the assignment namely William Carew, Kyeretwie Osei, Dr Raj Gowtam Chintaram and Bright Sefah.



ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	African Economic Community
AfCFTA	Africa Continental Free Trade Area
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)
AU	African Union
AUC	Africa Union Commission
CBOs	Community-based organizations
CCMS	Comprehensive CSO Mapping Strategy
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FARE	Forum of Associations Recognized by ECOWAS
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	Southern African Development Community
WACSOF	West Africa Civil Society Forum
WANEP	The West Africa Network for Peace building
WAWA	West African Women's Association



INTRODUCTION

ECOSOCC is an advisory organ of the African Union (AU), established in July 2004 under the provisions of Articles 5 (i) and 22 of the AU Constitutive Act. Its Statutes define it as a statutory and advisory organ composed of various social, private sector and professional groups of member states of the union, and the African diaspora (Assembly/AU/ Dec.48 (III)). Enabling civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage more constructively and strategically with regional economic communities and other regional mechanisms (RECs/RMs) is important as the latter facilitate regional integration between members of the individual regions through the wider African Economic Community (AEC) and are closely integrated with the AU's work and serve as its building blocks.

Objectives Of The Manual

This manual is meant to equip CSOs with relevant technical skills for effective policy engagement with RECs/RMs to influence their agenda, processes, and policies in the spirit of ensuring inclusive development. The specific objectives of the manual will be to:

1. Enhance understanding of the role of CSOs in engaging with RECs/RMs to influence policy decision making processes on the continent.
2. Identify entry points for CSO engagement with RECs/RMs and how they can leverage these in developing advocacy strategies, action plans, and campaigns.
3. Identify common challenges faced by CSOs and ways of averting these challenges in engaging with RECs/RMs.

Purpose Of The Manual

With the launch of the operationalization of the AfCFTA, this is a demonstration of the political commitment and momentum on regional integration. The subsequent outcome thereof is a growing need for CSOs and citizens to engage with RECs/RMs in their processes and programmes. The constitutive treaties of RECs/RMs provide for civil society participation, though the accessibility of these RECs/RMs' processes remain a challenge. For the greater part, decision-making remains state-centric despite growing CSO interest in the processes. This manual therefore provides practical steps for engaging with RECs/RMs, the existing entry points and some pitfalls which will need to be avoided.

Who Is This Manual For?

This manual targets the different types of civil society organisations who work or desire to engage with the RECs/RMs on advocacy. The target may also include other typologies of CSOs such as religious and public opinion organisations, development actors and international, bilateral, and multilateral partners. In view of the need to address the entire spectrum of the participants in equal measure, the language and level of instruction of the manual has been simplified so that it can be accessible to non-specialists. The manual offers a standardised framework that can be used as a self-learning tool or for formal training. The manual also provides detailed advice and guidance on how to operationalize CSO and REC engagement in the implementation of the policies and programmes of the Union.

How To Use This Manual

The manual can be used as a reference document by CSOs when they want specific information on engaging with a REC/RM in their advocacy. The manual can also be used as a tool in orienting new colleagues to the area of advocacy when engaging with RECs/RMs.



Structure Of The Manual

For ease of use, the manual is structured as follows:

Part 1: Institutional and Governance Architecture for CSO Engagement with RECs/RMs

This section covers the following aspects:

1. The context of CSO engagement, and provides ECOSOCC's definition of CSOs, in the context of their mandate.
2. The continental and regional architecture for the promotion of CSO engagement with RECs/RMs.
3. The continental and regional architecture for the promotion of CSO engagement with RECs; and the challenges for CSO engagement with RECs.
4. The key and necessary concepts for CSO engagement.

Part 2: Mechanisms for CSO Engagement with RECs.

This section covers

1. Mechanisms for CSO engagements with RECs,
2. Advocacy and lobbying, and communication and engagement,
3. Useful tips and guidance for CSOs when engaging with RECs/RMs.



01.

CHAPTER ONE:

Economic, Social And
Cultural Council
(ECOSOCC)

CHAPTER ONE

1.1. About ECOSOCC

ECOSOCC was established to give effect to the commitment by the AU to enhance the participation of African civil society in the implementation of the policies and programmes of the Union, including those to promote and defend a culture of good governance, democratic principles and institutions, popular participation, human rights, and freedoms as well as social justice. It utilizes ten thematic cluster committees to contribute advice to the African Union ecosystem, including clusters on peace and security, political affairs, and gender. These Committees are envisioned as the key operational mechanisms of ECOSOCC to formulate opinions and provide inputs into the policies and programmes of the African Union. This is a key part of the organ's efforts to continuously execute its mandate of promoting and strengthening the institutional, human, and operational capacities of the African civil society.

1.2. Composition

ECOSOCC is composed of 2 CSOs from each Member State; 10 CSOs operating at regional level and 8 at continental level; 20 CSOs from the African Diaspora, as defined by the Executive Council and covering the continents of the world; and 6 CSOs, in ex officio capacity, nominated by the AUC and based on special considerations, in consultation with Member States. The ECOSOCC Statutes also provide for Member State, regional, continental and Diaspora representatives to be elected on the basis of 50 percent gender equality and 50 percent aged between 18 and 35. Members are elected for 4-year terms and may be re-elected once. CSOs are a platform for popularizing AU policies, programmes, and initiatives.

Box 1: ECOSOCC's Mandate

1. Promote dialogue between all segments of African people on issues concerning the Continent and its future.
2. Forge strong partnerships between governments and all segments of civil society (in particular, women, the youth, children the Diaspora, organized labour, the private sector, and professional group).
3. Promote the participation of African Civil Society in the implementation of the policies and programmes of the Union.
4. Support policies and programmes that promote peace, security and stability and foster Continental development and integration.
5. Promote and defend a culture of good governance, democratic principles and institutions, popular participation, human rights, and social justice.
6. Promote, advocate, and defend a culture of gender equality.
7. Promote and strengthen the institutional, human, and operational capacities of the African civil society.

In ECOSOCCs definition, CSO groups include:

1. Social groups such as those representing women, children, the youth, the elderly and people with disability and special needs;
2. Professional groups such as associations of artists, engineers, health practitioners, social workers, media, teachers, sport associations, legal professionals, social scientists, academia, business organizations, national chambers of commerce, industry, and agriculture as well as other private sector interest groups; non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and voluntary organizations;
3. Cultural organizations and associations; and
4. Social and professional groups in the African Diaspora.

1.3. Structure

The institutional structure of ECOSOCC, as provided for in article 8 of the Statutes, includes: a general assembly; a standing committee; sectoral cluster committees; a credentials committee; and a secretariat.

1.3.1 The General Assembly is the highest decision and policy making body of ECOSOCC. It is headed by a presiding officer and five deputy presiding officers, who make up the bureau of the assembly. The ECOSOCC Statutes requires that the selection of representatives to its assembly from all the constituencies of ECOSOCC (member states, regions, the continent, the diaspora, and the nominated categories) should be in line with the AU's principle of gender and youth parity (AU 2004a: articles 3 & 4).

1.3.2 The Standing Committee is the principal coordinating organ of ECOSOCC. Its members have a two-year term of office (AU 2004a: article 10).

ECOSOCC Sectoral committees provide a platform for experts to make substantive input to matters affecting the Union.

1.3.3 The Sectoral Cluster Committees (ten¹) have been established as the key operational mechanisms of ECOSOCC. These sectoral cluster committees have been aligned to the departments that make up the AU Commission. Cluster committees may be amended by the ECOSOCC General Assembly as it may deem necessary (AU 2004a: article 11).

1.3.4 The Credentials Committee is a nine-member committee established by the General Assembly of ECOSOCC. It is responsible for examining the credentials of CSO members of ECOSOCC and of their representatives. It is guided in its work by rules of procedure adopted by the General Assembly (AU 2004a: article 12).

1.3.5 The Secretariat manages day to day activities of ECOSOCC. The key opportunities for engaging CSOs through the secretariat include regional CSO formations, ECOSOCC National Chapters, and Sectoral Cluster Committees.²

Figure 1: ECOSOCC's Internal Organs and their Key Roles



¹ Peace and security; political affairs; infrastructure and energy; social affairs and health; human resources, science, and technology; trade and industry; rural economy and agriculture; economic affairs; women and gender; and cross-cutting programmes cluster committee, created to cater for all other cross-cutting issues.

² Virtual Meeting | ECOSOCC (auecosocc.org)

ECOSOCC Secretariat: managing the day to day activities of ECOSOCC, ensuring, as it were, that CSO inputs that come through ECOSOCC are fed into the broader AU process, and that feedback is appropriately channeled to the relevant ECOSOCC organs and duty-bearers (AU-2002a:article 14)

1.4. Decision-Making Processes

Box 2: ECOSOCC Decision Making

1. The General Assembly shall take all its decisions by consensus failing which it shall be two-thirds majority of those present and voting.
2. Decisions on questions of procedure shall be taken by a simple majority of the Members of ECOSOCC present and voting.
3. Decisions on whether or not a question is one of procedure shall also be determined by a simple majority of the Members of ECOSOCC present and voting.
4. Abstentions by a Member of ECOSOCC shall not prevent the adoption by the General Assembly of decisions by consensus.
5. Members who abstain from voting are considered as not voting.

Voting: Each Member of ECOSOCC shall have one vote.

Observer status: ECOSOCC grants observer status to organizations based on needs. An organization that has been granted observer status to ECOSOCC may, at its own expense, participate in the deliberations of the General Assembly, without a right to vote. The General Assembly may allow Member States, AU organs, RECs and other regional or international organizations with a particular interest in the matter seized by the General Assembly to participate, at their own expense, in the deliberations of the General Assembly as observers without a right to vote.

Submission of proposals: Observers may submit proposals to the General Assembly which may be put to a vote at the request by any Member of ECOSOCC. Representatives of observers shall be required to submit their credentials to the Credentials Committee at least two (2) days before the beginning of a session.

Amendment of Decisions: An initiator may withdraw a proposed decision or an amendment(s) any time, prior to it being submitted to a vote. Any other Member of ECOSOCC may reintroduce the proposed decision or amendment that has been withdrawn.

Table 1: Key ECOSOCC Focus Areas by Clusters

Cross-Cutting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV/AIDS, International Cooperation etc Programmes 	Economic Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Integration • Monetary and Financial Affairs • Private Sector Development 	Human Resources, Science and Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & ICT • Human Resources • Science and Technology
Infrastructure and Energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy; • Transport; • Communications; • Infrastructure and Tourism 	Peace and Security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict Management • Peace Building • Prevention and Combating Terrorism • Drug & arms trafficking • Security reforms 	Political Affairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights & Rule of Law • Democratic and Constitutional Rule • Good Governance • Electoral Institutions • Humanitarian Affairs
Rural Economy and Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Economy • Agriculture and Food Security • Environment; • Water and Natural Resources • Desertification 	Social Affairs and Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Children & Youth • Drug Control • Population & Migration • Labour and Employment • Family & Elderly • The Physically Challenged • Sports & Culture • Social Integration 	Trade and Industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade • Industry • Handicrafts • Customs and Immigration Matters
Women and Gender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and Girls • Gender mainstreaming 		

1.5. Key Mechanisms For CSO Engagement

- 1.5.1** The Comprehensive CSO Mapping Strategy: ECOSOCC has put in place a 'Comprehensive CSO Mapping Strategy' (CCMS) for a thorough mapping of African CSOs actively engaged in the advancement of the continental development agenda.

The CCMS comprises of two main components, namely:

- a. Online CSO Portal
- b. Continental Directory of African.³

Development of a harmonized accreditation for African CSOs is underway that is envisaged to address existing gaps in CSO accreditation.

- 1.5.2** Connect2ECOSOCC Online Platform: online registration portal hosted on the ECOSOCC website allowing CSOs to register and join thematic expert rosters based on their area of expertise

- 1.5.3** ECOSOCC National Chapters: established as a platform to quickly and effectively CSOs in AU member states for the purposes of engagement with the African Union.

- 1.5.4** ECOSOCC Sectoral Cluster Committees: working groups categorized by area of specialization where CSOs are able to develop technical and policy advisory content for submission to the African Union organs, member states and other stakeholders.

- 1.5.5** ECOSOCC also works with regional civil society platforms that indirectly replicate RECs but from a CSO point view, including the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF), the East African Civil Society Forum (EACSOF) and the SADC Council of NGOs

3 AU CSO Frameworks | ECOSOCC (auecosocc.org)



02.

CHAPTER TWO:

Architecture For CSO
Engagement With RECs/RMs

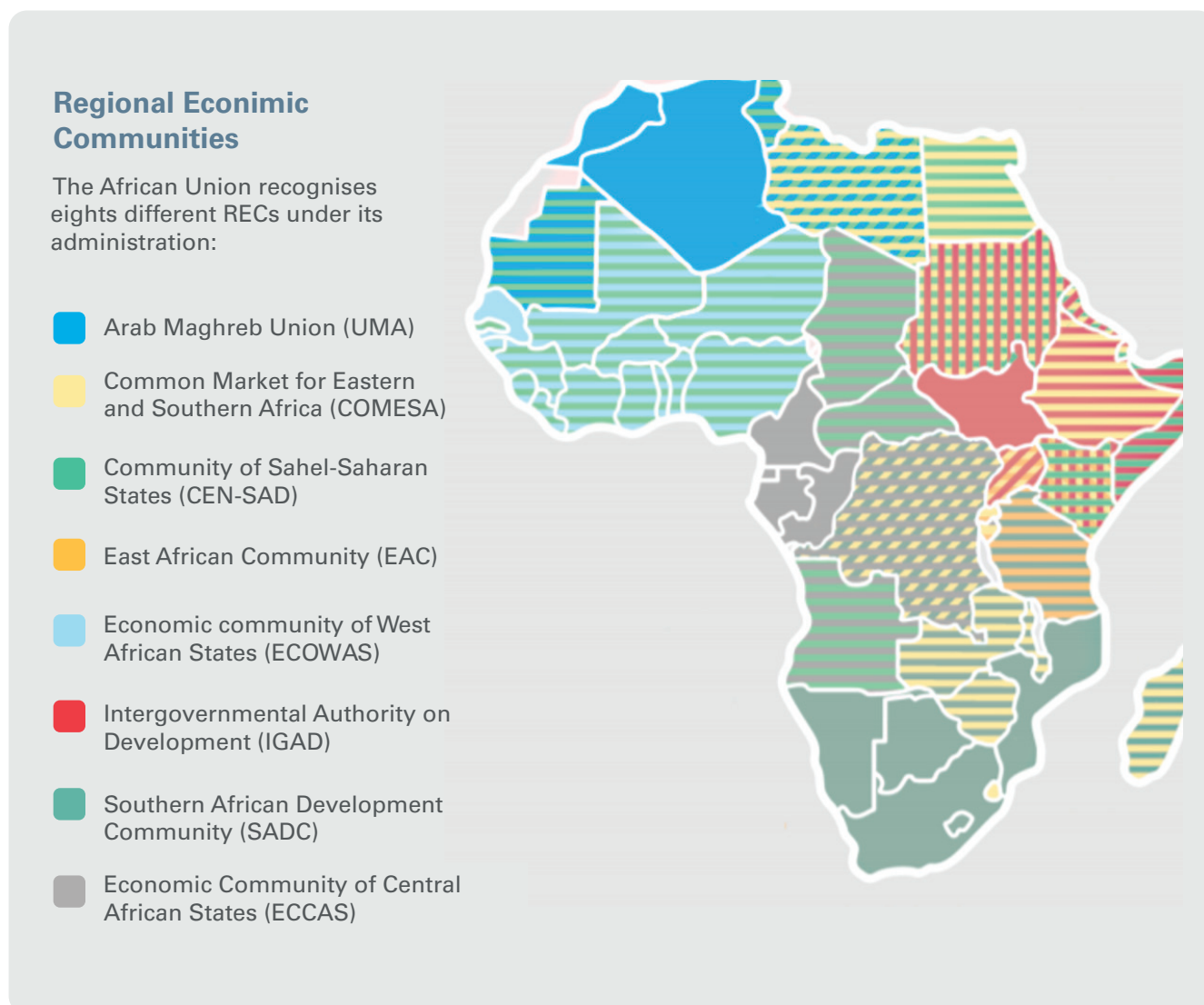
CHAPTER TWO

2.1. What Are RECs/RMs?

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) provide regional priorities into the development of continental frameworks and translate these continental frameworks into concrete regional and continental programmes in close collaboration with Member States. ECOSOCC works with RECs/RMs to complement their Civil Society agenda in their respective regions by facilitating the setting up and operationalizing regional desks to coordinate citizen participation in regional and continental arena. Table 1 presents the 8 RECs recognized by the AU.

The eight RECs are recognized as the building blocks of the African Union.

Figure 2: Country Representation RECs/RMs recognized by the African Union



Source: ECDPM, 2018⁴

⁴ <https://www.pacci.org/regional-economic-communities/> (Accessed 20 November 2022).

Table 2: Country Representation and Focus Areas of RECs/RMs Recognized by the African Union

REC	Member States	Objectives	Frequency
Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) www.maghrebarabe.org	Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, * Tunisia	Promote trade and economic cooperation	Infrastructure, Security, food safety
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) www.comesa.int	Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attain trade and economic cooperation • Promote peace and security in the region 	Trade and investment, trade liberalisation and facilitation, Agriculture and food, Private Sector Support, infrastructure, Women In business, Peace and security, multilateral negotiations, Monetary Harmonisation
Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) www.cen-sad.org	Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen peace, security, and stability • Achieve global economic and social development 	Agriculture, industry, energy, trade liberalisation, transport and communication, education, security
East African Community (EAC) www.eac.int	Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attain socio-economic cooperation, development, and integration • Maintain peace and security • Attain political federation 	Peace and security, Agriculture, energy cooperation, natural resources cooperation, tourism, trade liberalisation, industrial development, transport and communications, science, and technology
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) www.ecowas.int	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve social political interactions, economic cooperation, integration and shared development 	Agriculture, Economic and Monetary Affairs, Education and Training, Health and Social affairs, Energy, Environment, Trade, food Security, Defence and Security, humanitarian interventions, ICT, Infrastructure, Rural Development, Telecommunications, Trade, Transport, and water

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) www.igad.org	Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attain regional economic cooperation and integration • Promote regional security and political dialogue • Promote trade and social economic development and cooperation 	Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and Humanitarian Affairs; Infrastructure development (Transport and Communications); Food Security and Environment Protection
Southern African Development Community (SADC) www.sadc.int	Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation and integration in the socio-economic arena, as well as political development 	Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment, Infrastructure and Services, Social and Human Development

Source: AU Audit Review

2.2. Structure Of RECs: Organs And Institutions

2.2.1 Policy and Legislative Framework

RECs/RMs are established by treaties ratified by member states within a region. RECs/RMs are responsible for the planning, coordination, and monitoring of the integration or regionalization process. Table 3 presents a summary of the treaties establishing the RECs/RMs.

Table 3: RECs/RMs Policy and Legislative Framework

Regional Economic Communities (RECs)	Legal and Policy Framework
Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)	Article 3 of the Treaty provides that the Union's provides for promotion of diplomatic ties and dialogue between Member States while safeguarding their independence, mechanisms for Member States' industrial, commercial, and social development including through common sectoral programmes, and measures to support Islamic values and the safeguarding of the National Arabic identity through mechanisms such as cultural exchange, research, and education programmes.
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)	Common Market envisaged in the PTA was created in 1993 under the COMESA Treaty.
Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)	Article 1 of the CEN-SAD Treaty established the Community and provides the aims and objectives of the REC
Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)	The ECCAS Treaty was signed in October 1983. ECCAS ceased activities between 1992 and 1998 but was revitalized by a Heads of State and Government decision at the 1998 Summit in Libreville.

East African Community (EAC)	The EACTreaty provides for cooperation among the partner states in political, economic, social, and cultural spheres.
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	The ECOWASTreaty provides for cooperation in political, judicial, and legal affairs, regional security, and immigration.
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)	IGAD was established IN 1996 and aims to promote joint development strategies; harmonize Member States’ policies; achieve regional food security; initiate sustainable development of natural resources; promote peace and stability in the sub-region; and mobilize resources for the implementation of programmes within the framework of sub- regional cooperation.
Southern African Development Community (SADC)	The SADCTreaty aims at achieving common approaches and policies through protocols in areas of cooperation.

2.2.2 RECs/RMs Governance Structures

The RECs/RMs have developed distinct roles and structures to support their respective operations. The RECs/RMs are increasingly involved in coordinating AU member states’ interests in broader areas such as peace and security, development, and governance through the established governance structures.

— 2.2.2.1 The Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)

- i. Council of the Presidency, which is the supreme and only decision-making organ. Decisions are taken unanimously.
- ii. Council of the Prime Ministers, which coordinates policy.
- iii. Council of Foreign Ministers, which prepares Presidency sessions and examines Follow-up Committee proposals.
- iv. Follow-up Committee, a national officials-level committee tasked with implementing UMA decisions.
- v. Four Special Ministerial Committees, which deal with thematic areas.
- vi. General Secretariat, which is the executive for the Union and Consultative Council.
- vii. A consultative council, which is composed of legislative representatives from each country and tasked with sharing opinions and recommendations on draft Council of the Presidency decisions.

— 2.2.2.2 Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

- i. The Authority of Heads of State and Government is the supreme policy organ of COMESA and comprises of the Heads of State and Government of the Member States. It is responsible for general policy and direction and control of the performance of the executive functions of the common market and the achievement of its aims and objectives.
- ii. The Council of Ministers comprises of Ministers appointed by respective member governments. The council monitors COMESA activities. It recommends policy direction and development and reports to the Authority.
- iii. The Court of Justice comprising of seven judges, ensures the proper interpretation and application of the provisions of the COMESA Treaty and adjudicates any disputes that may arise among the Member States regarding the interpretation and application of provisions.

- iv. The Committee of Governors of Central Banks manages the COMESA Clearing House and ensures implementation of monetary and financial cooperation programs.
- v. The Intergovernmental Committee: This is a multi-disciplinary body that comprises of Permanent Secretaries' from the Member States. It is responsible for the development and management of programs and action-plans in all sectors of cooperation, with exception of the financial and monetary sector.
- vi. The Secretariat: This provides technical support and advisory services to the Member States in the implementation of the Treaty.

— 2.2.2.3 Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)

- i. Executive Council, which meets at ministerial level to implement Conference decisions.
- ii. Special Ministerial Councils, which deal with thematic issues.
- iii. General Secretariat, which is the Community's executive body.
- iv. Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ESCC), which follows Executive Council directives.
- v. Sahel-Saharan Investment and Trade Bank.

— 2.2.2.4 Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

- i. The Conference of Heads of State and Government, which is the supreme body of ECCAS;
- ii. The Council of Ministers;
- iii. The Court of Justice;
- iv. The General Secretariat which is the executive organ of the Community;
- v. The Advisory Commission;
- vi. Specialized Technical Committees.

— 2.2.2.5 EAC, ECOWAS and SADC

These RECs have similar structures as follows:

- i. An Authority of Heads of State and Government – the top political and decision-making organ – chaired on a rotational basis by the head of the “host” member state (supplemented in the case of SADC by the Troika, composed of the current and immediate past and future chairs);
- ii. Council of Ministers to advise the Authority of Heads of State and Government
- iii. A Secretariat or Commission to administer integration and cooperation programmes and every day running of the REC;
- iv. A regional court;
- v. A parliamentary body – only the EAC Parliament enjoys legislative powers. ECOWAS and SADC bodies are consultative or advisory.

Box 3: SADC Cluster Committees:



Ministers responsible for Trade, Industry, Finance, and Investment;

Ministers responsible for Infrastructure and Services;

Ministers responsible for Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment;

Ministers responsible for Social and Human Development and Special Programmes (HIV and AIDS; education, labour; employment and gender);

Ministers responsible for Politics, Defense, and Security;

Ministers responsible for Legal Affairs and Judicial matters.

ECOWAS and SADC have national focal points to enhance relations with member states and implementation of policies at national level. Both the EAC and ECOWAS have established frameworks to facilitate civil society participation with criteria for granting observer status; observer status is, however, excluded in respect of the Summit of Heads of State and Government.

The Sectoral and Cluster Ministerial Committees consist of ministers from each Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member State. These committees are directly responsible for overseeing the activities of the core areas of integration, monitoring, and controlling the implementation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan in their area of competence, as well as providing policy advice to the Council.

— 2.2.2.6 Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

- i. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government. This is the supreme policy making and regulatory organ of the IGAD. It determines the objectives, guidelines, and programmes for IGAD and meets once a year. A Chairperson is elected from the Member States in rotation.
- ii. The Council of Ministers is composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and one other Focal Minister designated by each member state. The Council formulates policy, approves the work programme and annual budget of the Secretariat during its biannual sessions.
- iii. The Committee of Ambassadors is comprised of IGAD Member States' Ambassadors or Plenipotentiaries accredited to the country of IGAD Headquarters. It convenes as often as the need arises to advise and guide the Executive Secretary.
- iv. The Secretariat is headed by an Executive Secretary appointed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government for a term of four years, renewable once. The Secretariat assists Member States in formulating regional projects in the priority areas, facilitates the coordination and harmonisation of development policies, mobilises resources to implement regional projects and programmes approved by the Council and reinforces national infrastructures necessary for implementing regional projects and policies.

2.2.3 Decision-making structures and processes

This section provides information on the process of decision-making and the structures to support practical engagement with RECs. REC organs hold periodic meetings, which enable them to make decisions. More often, decisions of a higher-level structure are binding on lower-level organs and institutions. Table 4 provides a summary of key meetings. REC Protocols focus on specific areas of cooperation and different platforms are available for CSO engagement highlighted in sub-section 2.4. Some of RECs'/RM's key decision-making tools and their legal effect are summarized in Table 5.

Table 4: Key Consultative Meetings by REC Organs and Frequency

REC	Consultative Meetings	Organ	Frequency
Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)	Annual Summit	Council of the Presidency	Once per Year
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)	Annual Summit	COMESA Heads of State and Government	Once per Year
Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)	Annual Summit	Heads of State and Government	Once per Year
East African Community (EAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Summit Extraordinary Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authority of Heads of State and Government Authority of Heads of State and Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once a year Upon request of Member State
Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)	Annual Conference	The Council	Once a Year
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Summit Extraordinary Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authority of Heads of State and Government Authority of Heads of State and Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once a year Upon request
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Summit Extraordinary Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assembly Summit The Committee of Ambassadors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once a year As need arises
Southern African Development Community (SADC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Summit Extraordinary Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authority of Heads of State and Government The Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once per year Twice a year

Table 5: Decision-making tools and their legal effect

Decision-making Organ	Type of instrument	Role of decision-making organ	Legal effect – binding nature of decision
Authority of Heads of State and Government	Protocols	Must be approved by the Summit. Approval is achieved by consensus.	Binding on partner states and all EAC organs after ratification by all partner states. However, if a protocol is adopted but has not been ratified, it becomes a source of soft law (not binding but highly persuasive); for example, the Environment Protocol and the Kiswahili Commission Protocol have not been ratified by Tanzania.
	Directives	Summit may issue directives however, most “department” directives tend to be issued by the Council of Ministers.	Binding
	Regulations	Can issue; however, these are the preserve of the Council of Ministers.	Can be binding, though the binding status of regulations are contentious.
	Decisions	Approves decisions from the Council of Ministers.	Are considered Binding.
	Declarations	Preserve of the Summit. Used to direct the Secretariat to perform some functions.	Are lowest in the “hierarchy of laws”. Do not have any binding force but are highly persuasive (soft law).
	Resolutions	Tend to be directed at the partner states. Also made at the Assembly. Usually tend to have some sort of implementation in practice.	Binding.
	Policies	Provide clarification as to how certain instruments should be implemented or how particular pieces of the EAC legislation should be enforced.	They are not binding and have no legal force.

Council of Ministers	Protocols	Verifies Protocols and agrees on forwarding to the Summit. Decisions by consensus. There is a Protocol on decision making by the Council, passed in the early 2000s that provides for when there is a conflict in provisions.	Binding.
	Directives	Directives issued by the Council of Ministers are of the same nature as those passed by the Summit. In practice, the Council of Ministers has used delegated powers to issue directives.	Binding.
	Regulations	Has power to issue regulations.	These are somewhat contentious. A decision by the East African Court of Justice ruled those regulations were binding. However, an alternative school of thought believes regulations must be ratified by partner states. The consensus in the European Union (EU) is that both regulations and directives are binding on EU partner states.
	Decisions	Passes decisions on, for example, regional instruments	Are considered Binding.
	Resolutions	Passes resolutions directed at the Secretariat as a follow-up mechanism.	Binding.
	Policies.	It is the main policy organ on matters such as peace and security, human resources management, etc.	They are not binding and have no legal force.

2.2.4 Cross-membership and coordination amongst RECs/RMs

The Protocol on Relations between the RECs and the AU provides a coordination framework between the African Economic Community (AEC)⁵ and the RECs/RMs. The framework is two-fold:

- i. **Committee on Coordination** comprises the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Chief Executives of the RECs/RMs, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Chief Executives of the AU financial institutions. Under article 8 of the Protocol, the Committee must meet at least twice a year. It is chaired by the Chairperson of the AU Commission. Committee decisions are taken by consensus or, when consensus cannot be reached, by a simple majority of the members present and voting. Committee decisions are forwarded to the Executive Council as policy recommendations. Committee members may be accompanied to meetings by experts and advisers.
- ii. **Committee of Secretariat Officials:** comprises AU Commission senior officials responsible for community affairs, as well as UNECA and AfDB senior officials. The Committee meets at least twice a year, prior to Committee on Coordination meetings, and is chaired by the AU Commission. Committee decisions are reached by consensus or, when consensus is lacking, by simple majority vote (article 9).

Box 4: Committee on Coordination

 Committee of Secretariat Officials	 Committee on Coordination
The Committee prepares technical reports for consideration by the Committee on Coordination (article 9 of the Protocol).	Provides policy advice and oversight of implementation of the Protocol (article 7). Coordinating and monitoring progress made by the RECs in meeting the regional integration goal stages detailed in article 6 of the Abuja Treaty.

2.2.5 Overlapping mandates

11 out of 55 African nations hold membership with only one of the RECs, while 35 are members of two official RECs, seven are members of three RECs, and one (Kenya) is a member of four or more RECs. For countries, membership in more than one REC means having to pay annual contributions to multiple regional blocs and attending multiple regional meetings every year.

All RECs have ambitious and wide-ranging objectives that reflect the desire to accommodate interests across members and accelerate industrial development

It may also mean agreeing to implement different regional policies and programs that may, at times, contradict each other. The extent to which countries calculate the costs (political and economic) and benefits of holding membership with multiple RECs is unclear. COMESA however has excellent working relations, both formally and informally, with all these regional organizations. Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with EAC, IGAD and IOC such that these organizations have agreed to adopt and implement the COMESA trade liberalization and facilitation programme. COMESA and SADC have also set up a Joint Task Force to harmonize their programmes; and under the Tripartite Arrangement, COMESA, EAC and SADC have embarked on the implementation of programmes in Climate Change mitigation, infrastructure development and trade, among others.”

⁵ Established under the Abuja Treaty (1991).

2.2.6 Key REC/RMs Programmes

Each of the eight (8) RECs/RMs implement different programmes, some of which are captured below:

— 2.2.6.1 Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

- i. Infrastructure Development
- ii. Agriculture, Industry & Private Sector Development
- iii. Trade & Customs Services
- iv. Gender & Social Affairs

— 2.2.6.2 East African Community (EAC)

- i. Liberalization of Civil Aviation activities for regional carriers
- ii. Establishment and Operationalization of the EAC Unified Flight Information Region (UFIR)
- iii. Implementation of the Search and Rescue Agreement
- iv. Implementation of the Recommendations of the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) Pilot Study
- v. Regional Airport Projects
- vi. East African Aviation Training Organizations Rehabilitation Project

— 2.2.6.3 Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

- i. Peace and security
- ii. Common market
- iii. Environment and Natural Resources
- iv. Land use Planning and Infrastructure
- v. Gender and Human Development

— 2.2.6.4 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

- i. Quality Management Training
- ii. Youth Development
- iii. Drug Control
- iv. Sports Development
- v. Child Development
- vi. Civil Society
- vii. Gender Development
- viii. Employment
- ix. Business Incubator for African Women Entrepreneurs Empowerment (Biawe)

— 2.2.6.5 Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

- i. IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability initiative
- ii. Migration
- iii. Health
- iv. IGAD Security sector Program
- v. Land Governance

— 2.2.6.6 Southern African Development Community (SADC)

- i. Industrial Development and Market Integration
- ii. Infrastructure Development in support of Regional Integration
- iii. Social and Human Capital Development

2.3. CSO ACCREDITATION

ECOSOCC has been tasked by African Union member states to develop a harmonized Accreditation Mechanism for CSOs. The mechanism is meant to grant consultative status or observer status to civil society organizations wishing to work with African Union organs and institutions.

2.3.1 Accreditation Application

The accreditation application process goes through two phases. First, the application is reviewed by the designated accreditation officer before the escalation to the Head of the AU ECOSOCC Secretariat or a person who has been delegated such responsibilities. Decisions on the applications are to be taken and communicated to the applicant CSO within eight weeks from the date of the application.

Specifically, a CSO must submit an application to the Secretariat which includes:

a.	A letter addressed to the Accreditation Officer detailing the objectives and activities of the CSO.
b.	Proof of formal registration as a CSO issued by the relevant authority in the Member State in which the CSO is based, or a justification as to why formal registration is not possible.
c.	The signed and authenticated constitutive document of the CSO.
d.	The most recent strategic plan of the CSO.
e.	A signed declaration committing to the Code of Conduct for African Civil Society Organisations.
f.	A list of all board and / or executive members of the CSO.
g.	The most recent annual activity report of the CSO.
h.	Proof that the CSO has been operating for more than one year.
i.	The most recent audited financial statements or financial reports indicating the source of all financial contributions and funding of the CSO.
j.	Contact information, including a physical and e-mail address, for the focal point designated by the CSO for the receipt of communications from the Secretariat.

Where the application for Consultative Status is declined, the application will be reviewed by a review committee comprising of the Head of the Secretariat, a representative from the office of the legal counsel, and an independent representative of civil society, where necessary.

2.3.2 Criteria for Accreditation

To be granted consultative status, a CSO must demonstrate that:

a.	The nature and scope of its activities are relevant to the work of the Union.
b.	The objective and activities of the CSO are in consonance with advancing the spirit, objectives, and principles of the Constitutive Act and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.
c.	The CSO has appropriate mechanisms for internal accountability, such as an established board and/or executive and processes for board and/or executive members to be removed from office.

2.3.3 Accreditation Process

On receipt of the application for accreditation, the accreditation officer is mandated to do the following:

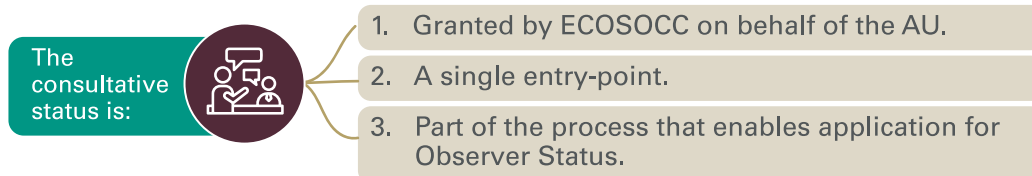
a.	Review the application for completeness and conformity with the criteria for accreditation and within four (4) weeks of receipt of the application: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. refer the application with a recommendation for approval or refusal of consultative status to the Head of Secretariat; orii. in the event that an application is incomplete, advise the applicant CSO to provide further information as may be necessary.
b.	On receipt of the referral by the Accreditation Officer, the Head of Secretariat, or a duly appointed representative, shall, within four (4) weeks of receipt of the referral: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. grant consultative status to the applicant CSO and issue a Certificate of Accreditation, detailing the CSO's accreditation status; ori. refuse to grant consultative status to the applicant CSO and issue detailed written reasons for the refusal; orii. in the event that an application is deemed to be incomplete, refer the application back to the Accreditation Officer with written instructions for the applicant CSO.

2.4. Accreditation Status and Privileges

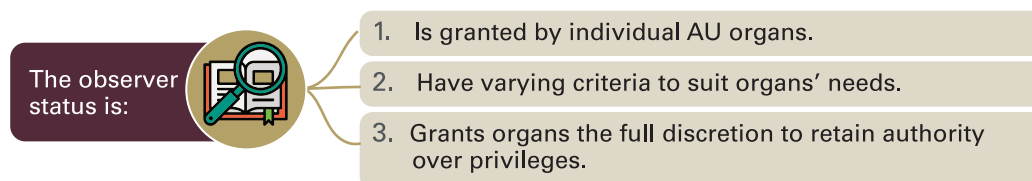
The Harmonised Mechanism allows for the grant of consultative status, which is the first step for CSOs seeking to engage with the AU. Obtaining consultative status entitles a CSO to apply for observer status with individual AU organs. The granting of consultative status through the Harmonised Framework is a "lowest common denominator" requirement that serves as a prerequisite for engaging with AU organs but does not require any AU organ or institution to engage with any specific CSO or group of CSOs.

The Harmonised Mechanism establishes two distinct levels of status within the AU system:

- a. **Consultative status** is the first step for a CSO seeking to engage with the AU, and it is conditional on adhering to the African Civil Society Organizations Code of Conduct. It also qualifies a CSO to apply for observer status with an AU organ. AU organs that do not implement their own processes for observer status may choose to rely on consultative status granted through the Harmonised Mechanism to grant CSOs with consultative status certain privileges and responsibilities. In this case, a CSO may be permitted to attend AU organ meetings and receive associated documentation, to meet official government delegations and representatives during events or side-events, and to make written or oral statements.



b. Observer status is granted solely at the discretion of and by a specific AU organ to CSOs that have already obtained consultative status and may confer a variety of additional privileges and responsibilities in accordance with that organ's procedures. This may include, for example, the right to attend organ meetings and receive associated documentation, as well as the right to make written or oral statements when requested to do so by the meeting's Presiding Officer.



2.5. Monitoring And Evaluation

A CSO with consultative status must submit to the Secretariat a report every two (2) years that details the CSO's activities during the reporting period and demonstrates its continued compliance with the accreditation criteria. If there is reasonable cause to believe that the accreditation criteria are not being met, the Secretariat may request additional reports during the reporting period.

2.6. Suspension And Withdrawal of Status

A CSO may have its consultative status suspended for a year if there is:

- a. Provided false or misleading information in its application for consultative status.
- b. No longer complies with the criteria for accreditation.
- c. Provided false or misleading information in a report to the Secretariat.
- d. Failed to act in consonance with advancing the spirit, objectives, and principles of the Constitutive Act and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.
- e. Violated the Code of Conduct for African Civil Society Organisations.

A CSO may voluntarily request withdrawal of its consultative status through written communication to the Secretariat.



03.

CHAPTER THREE:

Mechanisms For CSO
Engagement With RECs/RMs

CHAPTER THREE

In their founding Treaties, all RECs/RMs acknowledge the crucial role of civil society in helping achieve their economic, social, and political integration objectives. They have committed themselves to involving civil society in decision-making and the integration process. More or less formal interfaces between the RECs and civil society have been set up in the form of the East African Civil Society Organisations Forum (EACSOFF), the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) and the SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SADC-CNGO).⁶ Civil society facilitates in bringing about effective, accountable, and participatory institutions and governance based on transparent laws and rules, effective public policy and services, strengthening the role of the state in development, enhancing the legitimacy of institutions and building public trust.

3.1. Entry Points for CSO Engagement with RECs/RMs

All RECs have in principle put in place modalities for involving civil society groupings in their programmes. The entry points for CSO engagement with RECs include the following:

3.1.1 National focal points: National focal points for the RECs/RMs are important entry points. Each country has an office that is responsible for engaging with RECs/RMs. In some of the cases, this office will be in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3.1.2 Relevant office within the REC/RM secretariat: All the RECs/RMs have secretariats. Depending on the issue which the CSO will be dealing with, it is important to establish rapport with relevant members of the secretariat for insight which may assist in CSO advocacy efforts.⁷ In some cases, members of secretariats are gatekeepers of the agenda therefore winning them over can be beneficial.

3.1.3 REC/RM CSO Forum: For each REC/RM, there is usually a CSO forum that galvanizes engagement. More often, this umbrella CSO body has a standing slot at the Council of Ministers' meetings or summit. CSOs may seek to make submissions in these Forums.

3.1.4 Obtaining observer status: Some of the RECs/RMs insist on dealing with CSOs that have observer status only. It therefore becomes imperative for the CSO to get observer status so that there may be opportunity to get recognition and opportunity to contribute to conversations.

3.1.5 Signing memoranda of understanding with the REC Secretariats: For recognition and credibility as a partner of the REC/RM, it is often important to sign an MOU of cooperation with the REC/RM.

3.1.6 Engaging with Judiciary organs of the RECs: For strategic litigation purposes, it may be important to take cases of regional judiciary courts as another route of seeking recourse on rights violations. This element however comes with a caveat where more often, one has to exhaust local remedies before bringing a case to a regional court such as the East African Court of Justice as an avenue for advocacy, particularly on extension of the jurisdiction of the Court to human rights. In EAC, there is also the East Africa Court of Justice which has jurisdiction to hear and determine, among other issues: disputes on the interpretation and application of the Treaty, and disputes between the Partner States regarding the Treaty.

⁶ Open Society Foundations (2015). The Civil Society Guide to REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES in Africa. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16gYvfmBQm2CGo9NGCZLt2n1qmqXQIEUU/edit#> (Accessed 17 November 2022).

⁷ Ibid.

CASE STUDY:

The East African Community & CSOs



The EAC has established a Department of Gender, Community Development, and Civil Society to be the liaison with CSOs. The department works under the Directorate of Social Sectors. It also falls directly under the Deputy Secretary-General for Productive and Social Services, who in turn reports to the Secretary-General. As the focal point for civil society, the department has suffered from a lack of capacity to handle the many requests for civil society participation in the EAC.

The EAC Consultative Dialogue Framework for Civil Society and Private Sector provides for national and regional dialogues through the national ministries in charge of the EAC (national dialogue) and the EAC Secretariat (regional dialogue). The Framework recognizes EACSO as the platform for civil society participation and the East Africa Business Council for private sector organizations. At end of each year, the Secretary-General's Forum for Civil Society and Private Sector brings together the different stakeholders to a meeting that makes resolutions on issues of importance to the stakeholders. These resolutions are then passed on to the Council of Ministers.

Source: Open Society Foundation (2015).

3.1.7 Regional Parliamentary Forums: some of the RECs/RMs have their own regional parliamentary forum such as the East Africa Legislative Assembly and the SADC Parliamentary Forum. This is a crucial entry point for CSOs in the activities of the RECs as it is made up of legislative representatives from the countries which make up the REC/RM. One successful example is the SADC Parliamentary Forum which promulgated a SADC Model Law on Ending Child Marriages. The Model law has been used as an instrument for advocacy and some of the countries in the region have transplanted provisions of this model law into their national legislations. For engagement with the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) individuals or organizations wishing to influence policy direction in the affairs of the community can do so through sponsoring of private members bills, provided for in rule 64 of the EALA and article 59 of the East Africa Treaty.

3.2. Tips for CSOs on Engaging with RECs/RMS Organs

Below is Table 7 identifying some tips to consider when engaging with policy organs of RECs/RMs. These tips may not be exhaustive but offer some recommendations to help CSOs achieve results in their advocacy work with RECs/RMs.

Table 6: Summary of key modalities for CSO engagement with RECs/RMs

Decision-making Organ	Type of instrument	Role of decision-making organ	Tips for CSO Engagement
Authority of Heads of State and Government	Protocols	Must be approved by the Summit. Approval is achieved by consensus.	Engagement at this level is quite limited since the Summit agenda is a function of technical deliberations that take place at lower levels. For CSOs, investing in champion head of state who will include your issue in the deliberations is crucial. Furnish your champion with all the necessary information.
	Directives	Summit may issue directives however, most "department" directives tend to be issued by the Council of Ministers.	
	Regulations	Can issue; however, these are the preserve of the Council of Ministers.	

	Decisions	Approves decisions from the Council of Ministers.	
	Declarations	Preserve of the Summit. Used to direct the Secretariat to perform some functions.	
	Resolutions	Tend to be directed at the partner states. Also made at the Assembly. Usually tend to have some sort of implementation in practice.	
	Policies	Provide clarification as to how certain instruments should be implemented or how particular pieces of the EAC legislation should be enforced.	
Council of Ministers	Protocols	Verifies Protocols and agrees on forwarding to the Summit. Decisions by consensus. There is a Protocol on decision making by the Council, passed in the early 2000s that provides for when there is a conflict in provisions.	This space has several restrictions for CSOs to influence content. Should opportunity be availed for CSOs representatives to take the floor, the interventions need to be succinct, with clear asks which demonstrate the benefit for the member states. The interventions should not have more than three recommendations, which means you have to crystalize your desired outcomes. Caution: you may not get all you ask for but celebrate what you do get.
	Directives	Directives issued by the Council of Ministers are of the same nature as those passed by the Summit. In practice, the Council of Ministers has used delegated powers to issue directives.	
	Regulations	Has power to issue regulations.	
	Decisions	Passes decisions on, for example, regional instruments	
	Resolutions	Passes resolutions directed at the Secretariat as a follow-up mechanism.	
	Policies.	It is the main policy organ on matters such as peace and security, human resources management, etc.	
Technical Working Groups	Drafts of the Protocols, directives, regulations, decisions, resolutions, and policies for consideration by the Council of Ministers and subsequently the Summit	It reviews and considers documents, the language, scope of content in the documents to be adopted by the Council of Ministers and Summit. The representation is mainly from technical officials of the governments and other invited partners such as CSOs and the academy.	In the hierarchy of decision making by RECs/RMs, the technical working group meeting made up of technical government representatives and other recognised experts. This is the platform which you must be represented to influence the content of the decisions which will be adopted by the Council of Ministers and the Summit.

REC/RM Secretariat	Draft agenda for organs' engagement Issuance of invitations to the relevant participants	Facilitate the sessions logistically and substantive content. Proposes agenda items and responsible for language of the texts to be considered by the policy organs.	You should invest in establishing stronger collaboration with members of the secretariat. Institutionalizing this engagement through an MOU is prudent. The secretariat has a role to play in terms of invitations to meetings and suggesting agenda items. If you miss this level of engagement, it may be difficult to influence at the higher levels of the REC/RM.
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Table 7: Some of the Key Platforms for CSO Engagement by RECs/RMs

REC	Key Platforms for CSO Engagement
Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)	UMA has not been able to achieve much progress. The Union's state of inactivity and inefficiency can be owed to economic and political tensions between member states; one of these relates to tensions between Morocco and Algeria over the status of Western Sahara.
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-Parliamentary Forum • Online Civil Society platform (https://gps.comesa.int/) • Private Sector/ Civil Society Desk (PS-CSD) that was established in April 2004 at the Secretariat. • Peace and Security programme- Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).
Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)	Like UMA, facing challenges because of regional conflicts.
East African Community (EAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Protocol Establishing the Network of Parliamentarians of ECCAS • The Standing Orders of the Central Africa Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC) • Standing Orders of the Central African Multinational Force (FOMAC)
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) • The West African Civil Society Forum, (WACSOF)-WACSOF thematic Groups have commissioned studies in their respective thematic areas aimed at broadening the knowledge base of civil society and enhancing their participation in the ECOWAS integration programme. • West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP) • The Foundation for security and Development in Africa (FOSDA) • The West African Women's Association (WAWA) • The West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) • The Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) • Forum of Associations Recognized by ECOWAS (FARE) which was created by ECOWAS to bridge the gap between civil society organizations and the regional economic community
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Assembly of Heads of State and Government • The Council of Ministers • The Committee of Ambassadors as well as the Secretariat • The IGAD Gender desk • IGAD-CSO Forum

Southern African Development Community (SADC)

- SADC-Council of Non-Governmental Organizations (SADC-CNGO) which was formed 'to facilitate sustainable, constructive, and effective NGOs' engagement
- SADC Summit of heads of State and Government.
- The Troika (comprising, the current chair, the out-going and the in- coming).
- The Council of Ministers (comprising mainly of foreign affairs ministers)
- Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.
- Integrated Committees of Ministers.
- The SADC National Committees.

Table 8: CSO Engagement Opportunities as Provided for in REC Strategic Plans

REC	Is Strategic Plan Available?	Key Opportunities for Engaging CSOs
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Strategic Plan 2016-2020 • https://www.comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COMESA-MTSP-2016-2020.pdf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate in implementation of COMESA programmes • Awareness creation/whistle blowing/citizens watchman • Oversight and lobbying
East African Community (EAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.eac.int/documents/category/strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the democratisation process and in advocacy support for all good causes of the Community • Effective feedback reporting mechanisms, especially at the level of national parliaments, civil society, the media, as well as grassroots levels • Strategy for meeting CSO's needs: • Building adequate and effective capacity within the EAC, strengthening delivery and accountability, as well as enhancing effective communication, information dissemination and networking.
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan (2020-2024) 	
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://igad.int/documents/8-igad-rs-framework-final-v11/file (vol 1) • https://igad.int/documents/6-igad-rs-implementationplan-final-v6/file (vol 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IGAD/civil society and non-governmental organizations Forum which was established to involve civil society appropriately in the policy formulation and strategic planning discussions, and the planning, designing and implementation of IGAD strategies, programmes, and processes. • Programme areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied Research and Civil Society Organisations Support Program (ARCSO) • Governance, Democracy, Rule of Law, and Human Rights

Southern African Development Community (SADC)

- https://www.sadc.int/files/5113/6785/2592/SADC_RISDP_Summary_en.pdf
- https://www.sadc.int/files/4716/1434/6113/RISDP_2020-2030_F.pdf

- Structured engagement with civil society, especially youth and women, in conflict prevention, management, and resolution of disputes in the region
- Advocacy and Outreach: key assumption is that SADC civil society will participate heavily in bringing about the outcomes targeted by RISDP 2020–2030.
- Resource mobilization- ensuring allocations are fair and proportional to the needs including mobilization at national and regional levels, from the private sector and civil society.
- Regional level platforms organized by SADC secretariat

3.3. REC/RM-CSO Forums

Table 9: REC-CSO Forums



Name of Forum	Areas of Engagement
IGAD-CSO Forum	Serves as a mechanism to involve civil society and citizens in the policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring of IGAD processes. This would include working closely with the IGAD Secretariat; collaboration between CSOs and IGAD; popularising IGAD; and sharing experiences across the region
West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF)	This is the umbrella network of civil society organisations from the 15 Countries of ECOWAS. WACSOF builds capacity, advocates, mobilises, engages in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. WACSOF offers opportunities for CSOs to stay informed and engaged on programs and issues emerging out of ECOWAS.
The West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP)	WANEP focuses on capacity strengthening and influencing policy discourse and advocacy through evidenced-based research on key thematic areas of peacebuilding in partnership with major partners and relevant stakeholders on peacebuilding components. WANEP also strengthening the capacity of network members to position them for efficient delivery of organisational goals
SADC Council of NGOs	The Council has recognition of SADC. It also has a standing slot to make submissions during SADC policy organs meetings. It collates inputs from different CSO groupings and coalitions.
The West African Women's Association (WAWA)	WAWA provides monitoring tools aimed at strengthening accountability and promoting a progressive gender-perspective in preventing conflict and creating peace at the local, national, and international levels.
The East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum	The East African Civil Society Organizations' Forum, (EACSOF), was founded in 2007 as an autonomous umbrella body of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, (CSOs), in East Africa. Since its founding, EACSOF has been working to strengthen the institutionalization of the relationship between East African CSOs and the Community, (EAC). It also works to build a critical mass of knowledgeable and empowered civil society in the East African region, in order to foster their confidence and capacity in articulating grassroots needs and interests in the East African Integration Process

The Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET)

This has five technical commissions that work in the areas of fund-raising, resource mobilisation, finance, programming, and communications

The Forum of Associations Recognized by ECOWAS (FARE)

FARE was created by ECOWAS to bridge the gap between civil society organizations and the regional economic community.

3.4. RECs/RMs National Chapters

3.4.1 EAC:

EACSO National Chapters aid the process of deepening civil society participation in the EAC integration process. The EACSO National Chapters work through thematic clusters to take a lead in gathering sub-national and grassroots perspectives, which are consolidated at national level through a National CSO Conference.

3.4.2 ECOWAS:

Article 2 of Regulation C/REG.24/11/10 empowers each member state to create a National Unit to be responsible for coordinating and monitoring ECOWAS activities in that state. A typical National Unit should have seven staff members and be headed by a National Head of Unit with the rank of a director.

3.4.3 SADC Mechanisms

SADC National Committees and SADC National Contact (SNC) or Focal Points coordinate activity at the level of the individual member states. The SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SADC-CNGO) was formed in 1998 by CSOs and the SADC Secretariat to facilitate meaningful engagement of the people of the region with the SADC Secretariat at the regional level, and with the member states at national level through national NGO umbrella bodies.

3.5. Online CSO Engagement Platforms

The COMESA Civil Society Platform is a knowledge sharing and accreditation mechanism. In addition, the EACSO e-Learning Academy provides capacity building and Creating awareness about the EAC integration process and is a key online initiative that EACSO has undertaken to popularize EAC Structures and Processes. The EACSO Citizen Empowerment programme focuses on strengthening the civic confidence and competency of East Africa citizens to know their rights and obligations to organise in effective CSOs that eventually form national platforms through which they would be able to assert those rights in the EAC integration processes.

For its part, the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) operates an online directory for promoting and connecting CSOs within West Africa. However, the number of CSOs registered on, updating and utilising information on the website is significantly low compared to those working across the region.

3.6. Possible Ways Of Collaboration

3.6.1 Building Alliances

Joining with others in an advocacy alliance can make CSOs' combined voice louder and more authoritative.

3.6.1.1	Sharing knowledge can result in a stronger analysis and body of evidence in support of the advocacy.
3.6.1.2	Sharing resources can enable more to be done.
3.6.1.3	Alliance members can engage with and mobilise different channels of influence so that decision-makers are hearing the same messages from multiple sources.

3.6.1.4	Some members will have greater legitimacy in the eyes of policy-makers.
3.6.1.5	A joint policy position makes it harder for policy-makers to play one CSO off against another and protects civil societies from being singled out and criticised or victimised.
3.6.1.6	Sharing of expertise promotes learning among the members of the alliance, which can also facilitate peer support and encouragement.

3.6.2 Collaboration for Advocacy

3.6.2.1	Working with an existing project partners to do some joint advocacy.
3.6.2.2	Partnering with a new CSO specifically to do joint advocacy.
3.6.2.3	Joining an existing network or alliance to do advocacy.
3.6.2.4	Forming an advocacy alliance.

3.6.3 Tips for establishing a networks

3.6.3.1	Be clear about your purpose: Develop membership criteria and mechanisms for including new members and sustainability. Resolve what the network/alliance or coalition will and will not do. Invite potential members to determine as a group the alliance's purpose, scope, and priorities. Decide how it will make decisions.
3.6.3.2	To make things more manageable, appoint a small steering committee, for example of five people, representative of the whole group. The steering committee can facilitate advocacy planning and strategy decisions. Ensure communication and consultation among members, resolve problems, and conduct outreach. The steering committee must be answerable to the group.
3.6.3.3	Develop a code of conduct to ensure mutual respect and responsibility. If this is followed, member organisations can more easily be held accountable without finger-pointing and resentment. Remember that each member will have different strengths. Ensure that rules or collaboration acknowledge diversity in capacity and resources.
3.6.3.4	State clearly what you have in common and what you don't. A coalition's goals must be clear, so that organisations fully comprehend their commitment when they join. At the same time, coalition members must openly acknowledge differing interests. By recognizing these differences, coalition leaders can promote trust and respect among the members, without sacrificing common values and vision.
3.6.3.5	Let the membership and the issue suggest the coalition's structure and style. Coalitions can be formal or informal, tightly organised, or loose and decentralised. The type of coalition chosen will depend on the kind of issue as well as the styles of the people and organisations involved. Coalitions evolve naturally and should not be forced to fit into any one style.
3.6.3.6	Make fair, clear agreements, and stick to them. Coalition tasks and responsibilities should be clearly defined and assignments equitably apportioned. Everyone should know their role and what they need to do. If members are falling down on the job, they should be supported promptly. Meetings should allow opportunities for members to report on their progress.

3.7. Good Practice In Engaging RECs/RMs:

3.7.1 Investing time and effort in networking

Formal and informal networking for effective CSO participation engagements.

3.7.2 Leveraging Collaboration

Collaboration increases CSO chances of achieving impact given limited capacity for RECs to engage CSOs on one-one basis.


3.7.3 Research and Learning

CSOs to ensure that they are well informed before and during their engagements with RECs.

3.7.4 Innovation

CSOs to interpret their mandates as broadly and effectively as possible and to innovate in their own approaches to engage RECs.

Table 10: Practical approaches to resolving barriers and challenges to effective CSO Engagement with RECs

Barriers inhibiting engagement include:	Challenges that CSOs face are not limited to the following:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low REC visibility. Poor publicity and information surrounding REC's programmes and processes. 2. Exclusion or minimal engagement of CSOs in the conception, formulation, and finalisation of programmes due to political and bureaucratic leadership of some REC member states. 3. Lengthy and bureaucratic REC procedures for formalizing relationships that could often be affected by budget cycles which cause a lot of delays in initiation of projects. 4. Challenging internal governance problems including lack of regional presence and recruitment and retention problems when it comes to membership. Without enough representation some RECs have experienced sustainability problems. 5. Failure by some governments to respect the agreed guidelines, such as submission of written progress reports to meetings with civil society. This leads to difficulties CSOs face in holding their governments to account and to maintaining effective channels of communication with policy-makers. 6. Staff shortages. RECs e.g., the case of ECOW-AS' Civil Society Unit face staff shortages. 7. Lack of a framework for coordinated mechanisms to enhance coordination beyond continental, regional. There are currently no clear documents or frameworks that clearly spell out CSO organs that work with RECS. There is therefore a lot of working in Silos that has affected the pace of the continent's working/growth. 	 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity needs. CSOs have insufficient resources and knowledge to the extent required to effectively engage RECs. This has led to selective involvement of CSOs by RECs. 2. Lack of networking or forging of strategic alliances and linkages to achieve common objectives among CSOs themselves. This is attributed primarily to rivalry between CSOs struggling for limited funding resources, lack of vision and foresight and personal antipathy between leaders. 3. Lack of knowledge on how RECs operate and how they are structured. This impacts on CSOs' ability to engage and intervene effectively. There is a need for capacity building of CSOs to broaden their knowledge of how RECs operate including the enabling policy and institutional frameworks for each region. 4. Internal weaknesses within CSOs. Some CSOs are faced with duplication of efforts which at times lead to competition over territorial and thematic focus. Funding. In some regions, CSOs and RECs compete for funding from the same donors raising questions of agenda setting and ownership. There is a need to focus on how RECs can generate resources for self-sustainability. 5. Lack of initiative. Majority of CSOs wait for RECs to invite them to events, processes or already established spaces rather than create their own spaces.

Practical Approaches and entry points towards resolving existing challenges have been identified as:

1. Ensure that REC member states abide by the objectives as set out in their treaties.
2. Propagate the mandate and the principles of the RECs by enshrining them in civil society constituting instruments and activities.
3. Develop structured advocacy and outreach programmes especially on regional integration.
4. Invest in diplomacy training to enhance strategic discussions and negotiations with governments or handling government issues.
5. Build awareness on government protocols to gain government and hence REC "buy-in" on advocacy issues and technical inputs to REC processes and interventions.
6. Seek accreditation.
7. Leverage research and learning platforms to build capacity on issues of interest and opportunities within Recs for engagement.
8. Enhance collaboration with RECs and leverage each other's expertise for enhanced impact. This includes joint planning and reviews on implementation of key REC activities.
9. Sensitize actors on relevant community projects and programmes.



04.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Advocacy Engagement With
RECs/RMs

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1. What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy can be defined as a deliberate process, based on demonstrated evidence, to directly and indirectly influence decision makers, stakeholders, and relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to the fulfilment of desired outcomes.⁸ It can also be defined as the process by which people and organisations use a variety of tactics to influence policy.

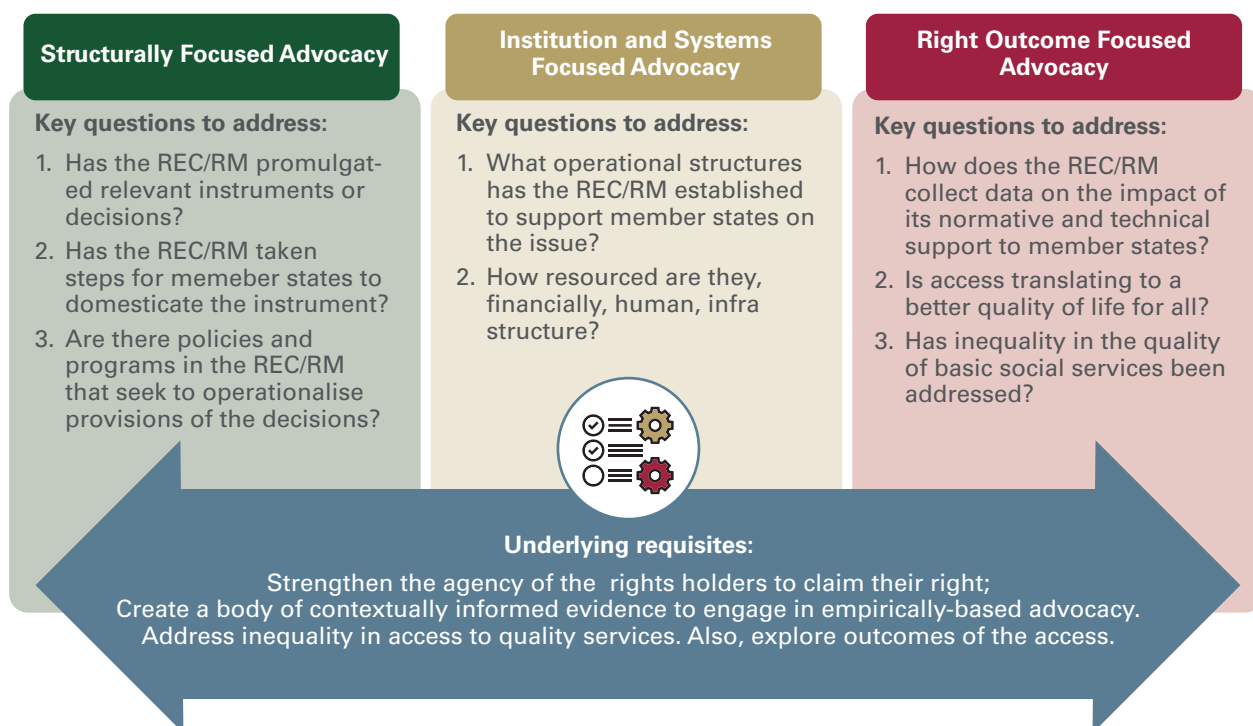
4.2. Transformative Advocacy

This kind of advocacy can be defined as progress-oriented change that places emphasis on rights holders' agency, using local resources and recognizing that the legitimacy of the outcome is underpinned by inclusivity of the disparate groups of the population.⁹ At the core of this kind of advocacy is the quest for dignity for citizens in a given context. The ambition is also to challenge unequal power relations and dismantle structures that perpetuate exclusion of certain groups of the population in development processes, starting with the family and all the way to the global level. The power structures are socioeconomic and political processes that establish hierarchical power relations, stratifying societies based on inter alia, class, religion, region of origin, occupational status, level of education and gender. Efforts must address existing inequalities in access to basic social services through equity-oriented advocacy.

4.3. Transformative Advocacy Conceptual Framework

Transformative advocacy at regional level covers three pertinent aspects. Firstly, it addresses the structural elements within the REC/RM. Secondly, it interrogates the institutional arrangements within the REC/RM that facilitate the enjoyment of rights by the people within the region. Lastly, it explores the extent to which the rights holders are able to access their rights, paying attention to the disparate groups of the population.

Figure 6 : Transformative human rights advocacy conceptual framework



Source: Chibwana, 2021

⁸ UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit,

⁹ Chibwana, M. (2021). Transformative Child Rights Advocacy: An Ergonomic Conceptual Framework. The International Journal of Children's Rights, 29(3), 541-562.

4.3.1 Structural advocacy

Transformative advocacy must be anchored on a commitment that a REC/RM would have made. The commitments could be through decisions, resolutions or protocols addressing the subject matter.¹⁰ It is important to ensure that the conceptualisation of the issue by the REC/RM addresses the root causes of deprivation, inequalities, and poverty, whilst facilitating development outcomes. In instances where the REC/RM has not pronounced itself, this becomes the starting point.

For advocacy initiatives that are targeting transnational issues, the advocacy will need to be targeted towards regional economic communities or regional mechanisms such as inter alia the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In such instances, the starting point will be to anchor the advocacy initiative on a resolution or decision that the institution would have made addressing the issue in question. If there is no such resolution, lobbying to having a resolution will be the starting point. Resolutions can be encapsulated in summit communiques that are produced after a summit or session.

4.3.2 Institution focused advocacy

This element interrogates the operational systems and institutions which the REC/RM would have put in place to facilitate the implementation of the decisions of its policy organs. Part of this includes allocation of budgets from member states to engender implementation.

4.3.3 Outcome focused advocacy

Having the resolutions and decisions that are entrenched on the aspiration of ensuring human dignity for all is the first step in transforming the reality of people in a region. The second indispensable step is ensuring that there are institutions that deliver on the decisions and resolutions made. At the outcome level, attention has to go to the impact of the decisions or resolutions in changing the circumstances they were intended for.

4.4. Key Advocacy Questions

1.	What is the problem and whose problem?
2.	What is the desired change and why?
3.	Who should change what?
4.	Who are the actors in the change process and what roles do they have [opinion formers, opponents, allies, sympathizers etc.]?
5.	How will the change come about?
6.	What factors will affect the change?
7.	How do we notice and keep track of the change?
8.	How can the change be made sustainable?
9.	Who will do what and when?

4.5. Step By Step Guide For Policy Advocacy

Below is a succinct step by step guide to help advocacy staff to develop an understanding of the policy and regulatory context, to make policy based programmatic recommendations. The practical step by step guide will assist CSOs that are in their embryonic stages of conducting policy advocacy with information on how to go about the processes.

¹⁰ Chibwana, M. (2021). Transformative Child Rights Advocacy: An Ergonomic Conceptual Framework. The International Journal of Children's Rights, 29(3), 541-562.

Step One:

Literature Review of Existing decisions and resolutions of the REC/RM

- a. You should take stock of the policy and legislative framework available for the issue you want to address.
- b. There is a need to analyse the policy context and its implications in practice.
- c. You need to have an appreciation of the specific policies/laws that govern the area of your interest.
- d. You have to identify where the gaps are in the current laws and possible changes that need to be effected in addressing the same gaps.

Step Two:

Assessing the Decision-Making Process

- a. You need to understand how laws and policies are formulated within the REC/RM
- b. You need to identify gaps in the existing policy frameworks
- c. It is necessary to conduct a thorough review of the REC/RM's decisions, policies and resolutions addressing your issue

Step Three:

Assessing the Regulatory Framework

- a. Identify the relevant REC/RM's institutions for implementing particular laws and policies
- b. Engage with the REC/RM secretariat offices that have a mandate in addressing the issue in question
- c. Engage with other stakeholders to form coalitions and coordinate your engagements.

Step Four:

Rights Holder involvement in REC/RM processes

- a. You need to identify the most efficacious ways of meaningfully including the rights holders in REC/RM processes.
- b. In some instances, it is necessary to build the capacity of the rights holders to understand the processes and the roles they can play throughout.
- c. Establish systematic platforms for the rights holders to participate, paying attention on dissenting voices and those left behind.

Step Five:

Conducting Policy Advocacy

- a. Develop advocacy strategies with clear change goals
- b. Map key stakeholders, internal capacity, and external potential partners
- c. Prepare budgets for the implementation of the identified strategies.
- d. Incorporate policy advocacy in work plans
- e. Develop and use relevant advocacy
- f. Develop and circulate policy briefs
- g. Highlight case studies
- h. Design and execute advocacy campaigns
- i. Engage with the circles of influence

Step Six:

Analysing the Impact of Policy on Practice

- a. Evaluate the impact of policy on your targeted constituency
- b. Identify and document good practices for possible replication
- c. Share good practices

4.6. Critical Tenets For RECs/RMs Advocacy

Good communication: It is at the core of effective advocacy. This requires attention to the message, the audience, and the means of delivery. The message needs to be clear: it should explain what is being proposed, why it is needed, and what difference it would make. It also needs to be compelling: it should be crafted to the interests and knowledge of the audience.

The means of delivery must ensure it is received and heard – whether, for example, a written proposal, face-to-face presentation, or public demonstration. It is rare that a single advocacy message will be received and acted upon. The message needs to be reinforced by repetition and through the influence of secondary audiences.

Use of media - both mainstream and social media: This is key in public advocacy initiatives, especially campaign-based approaches. Not all advocacy work uses the media, and a media-based approach carries risks as well as opportunities. The media can bring a mass audience, potentially increasing profile, and credibility, but they can also bring bad publicity and may contribute to mobilizing opposition as well as support. Using the media requires planning and skills, including building contacts, knowing the media audience, writing press releases, placing stories, being interviewed, providing visual imagery, and organizing newsworthy events.

What partnerships and alliances are most likely to assist in mobilizing broad-based support? What processes can best achieve trust, collective ownership, and effective collaboration? Should the initiative operate as an open coalition and, if so, what mechanisms are needed to enable participation and to assure accountability? Is support needed to build the advocacy capacity of partner organizations?



Building partnerships and coalitions: This is key as effective advocacy initiatives involve rigorous mobilization of public support behind the proposal. Media and the internet can also be used to recruit and mobilize broad-based public support.

Employing tactics and negotiation: Advocacy is a two-way communications process. Some advocacy work is more reactive than proactive towards policy makers or is explicitly dialogical. Policy and decision makers may respond to advocacy proposals with their own questions or alternative proposals.

Question:

Do you know the rules in your country for lobbying? Do you need to register?



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