ECOSOCC

Economic Social & Cultural Council

ECOSOCC KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Dissemination of Policy Advisories and Knowledge Products

An Organ of the
African Union

ecosocc.au.int

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
APSA	Africa Peace and Security Architecture
APRM	Africa Peer Review Mechanism
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel- Saharan States
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
NHRIs	National Human Rights Institutions
PRC	Permanent Representative Committee
PSC	Peace and Security Council
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RMs	Regional Mechanisms
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UMA	Arab Maghreb Union

1. INTRODUCTION

Dissemination can be defined as deliberate efforts to transfer knowledge to a wider constituency with the aim to enable African civil society to use the manual in their advocacy work on the continent. This dissemination strategy stems from the ambition to make sure that the knowledge products which ECOSOCC has developed and will develop around governance and human rights become living documents which will inform discourse through the operations of ECOSOCC membership.

The effectiveness of this strategy will depend on the innovation and succinctness of the target audience, and the information channel. The strategy endeavours to get the proper fit among the innovation, information channel, purpose, and target audience. The strategy identifies various media that can be used to ensure effectiveness. It also appreciates the fact that no one media channel may be sufficient to effectively disseminate therefore outlines a plethora of alternatives in targeting civil society on the African continent. It is hoped that the use of the manual when disseminated widely to African civil society, will enhance the knowledge and capacity of CSOs in undertaking their functions in different spheres of operations.
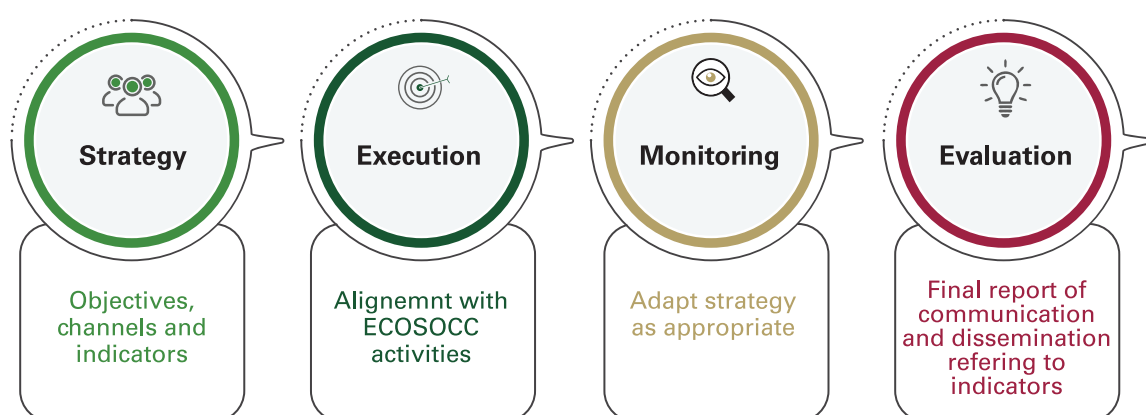
It is important to note that this dissemination strategy is a living document that will be reviewed and updated throughout the duration of ECOSOCC's mandate in building the capacity of CSOs in the areas of democracy, governance, and human rights. The planned dissemination activities may therefore change according to dynamism of the context, experiences and lessons learned.

This Dissemination Strategy Plan will outline the proposed interventions earmarked to make the operational manual a living document. It outlines the procedures and key actions ensuring they are implemented and followed. In addition, the Dissemination Strategy lists tools which can be utilized and target groups to be reached. Dissemination activities outlined in this strategy help to further build the ECOSOCC constituency and ensure that the use of the manual is sustained continuously. This strategy can also be used for the other knowledge products which ECOSOCC will develop in future.

1.1 Scope Of The Dissemination Strategy

The dissemination strategy defines the key objectives, identifies target audiences, elaborates on the tools and channels that best suit the needs of these groups, and defines the approximate timelines and responsibilities for the planned actions. Finally, the document outlines monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for assessing the impact and success of the strategy and planned actions. The dissemination strategy process can be visualised in four stages:

Figure 1: Knowledge products dissemination process

Strategy	Execution	Monitoring	Evaluation
Objectives, channels and indicators	Alignemnt with ECOSOCC activities	Adapt strategy as appropriate	Final report of communication and dissemination refering to indicators

1.2   Purpose of the Dissemination Strategy

This Dissemination Strategy helps to make the ECOSOCC Policy Advocacy Operational Manual a living document that is readily accessible to the ECOSOCC constituency and stakeholders. The strategy provides practical guidance on possible modalities that can be used in making sure that the manual reaches its targeted audiences and goes further to guide training programs and mentorship of civil society organisations on the continent. At the core of this strategy is the ambition to ensure that the operational manual becomes a viable conduit for equipping CSOs with relevant technical skills for effective policy engagement and advocacy that will produce results in the areas of democracy, governance, and human rights with the aspiration of achieving inclusive development.
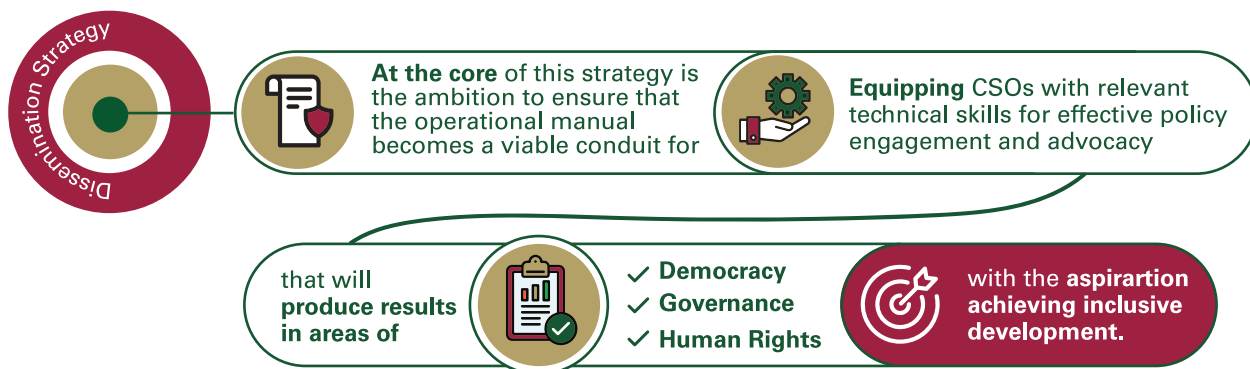

1.3   Objectives Of The Strategy

The dissemination strategies outlined in this document have the following specific objectives:

1.3.1	Support the implementation and fulfilment of ECOSOCC mandate as provided for by Articles 5 and 22 of the AU Constitutive Act.
1.3.2	Facilitate the management of information flow between ECOSOCC secretariat and its different civil society constituencies and vice versa.
1.3.3	Foster increased awareness of ECOSOCC and its activities, outcomes and relevance across a range of current and future users of knowledge products.
1.3.4	Support the visibility of ECOSOCC and its communications towards the CSOs on the continent.
1.3.5	Foster continuous engagement between ECOSOCC secretariat and its stakeholders to ensure the knowledge products developed continue to be relevant and applicable.
1.3.6	Assist ECOSOCC and its constituency in communicating joint strategic visions and actions to the national level CSOs.

1.4   Target Audience

The dissemination strategy will target the different types of CSOs involved in policy advocacy work on the continent and the diaspora. The strategy will leverage on ECOSOCC structures to reach out to the CSOs in the five regions of the continent. It is acknowledged that these CSOs are not homogeneous therefore the approaches and platforms to reach to them will be differentiated as such.
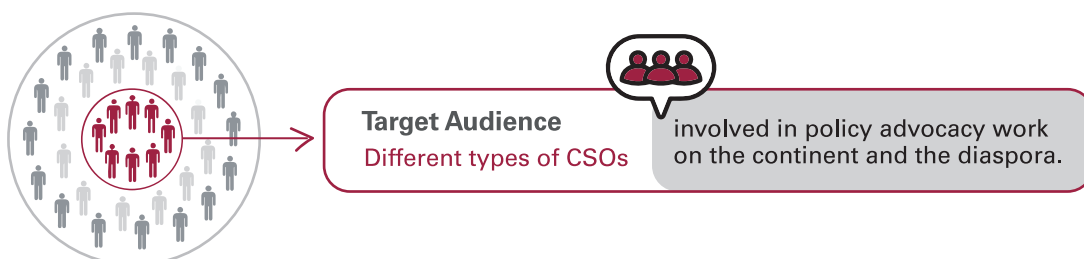
1.5 Guiding Questions

In the development of this dissemination strategy, several questions have been addressed concerning the policy advocacy manual:

1.5.1	To whom does ECOSOCC want to share the policy advocacy manual and other knowledge products?
1.5.2	What dissemination strategies can be used to meet the heterogeneity of the ECOSOCC constituency?
1.5.3	What does the utilization of the policy advocacy manual look like for each of the target audiences? Or what are the outcomes that ECOSOCC seeks to achieve out of the dissemination process of the knowledge products?
1.5.4	What communication methods will be used to disseminate the policy manual and the other knowledge products?
1.5.5	How will ECOSOCC measure success? What kind of indicators or assessment measures can be used?
1.5.6	How will ECOSOCC evaluate the dissemination and utilization of the policy advocacy manual?
1.5.7	What resources are required (human, financial resources) to implement the strategy? Who is responsible for the implementation of the dissemination strategy?

2. DISSEMINATION CRITICAL TENETS

The following elements are critical for the successful implementation of this dissemination strategy:

2.1 Alignment with the mission and vision of ECOSOCC

This dissemination strategy is in consonance with the principle that it must be aligned with the mission and vision of the organization and should be an integral component of the business strategy to ensure that it receives the same priority as other strategic objectives of the organization. This would ensure that knowledge and information dissemination is mainstreamed instead of being treated as an ad-hoc activity.

2.2 Focus on needs and priorities of the various CSO typologies

This strategy recognises that knowledge and information to be disseminated should have explicit benefits for the different CSOs on the continent who are members of ECOSOCC. The focus therefore is on the identified knowledge gaps of some of the CSOs on the continent.

2.3 Selection of appropriate knowledge and information dissemination channels

The dissemination channels identified within the strategy dovetail with the needs and interests of the different typologies of CSOs. As such, a wide variety of communication channels have been identified to reach the different groups of CSOs.

2.4 Financing of knowledge dissemination activities

Lack of financial resources has been cited as one of the reasons for poor dissemination of knowledge products. It is therefore imperative that ECOSOCC allocates resources to implement the strategies that have been identified in this strategy. This means that adequate budgets will need to be allocated to this component to ensure that it is not neglected or perceived to be an add-on activity.

2.5 Quality assurance

The strategy places premium on quality assurance as a key tenet in ensuring that the different CSO groups are provided with good quality and reliable information.

2.6 Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of knowledge dissemination activities

Throughout the dissemination of the knowledge products, there will be need for monitoring and evaluation of the impact of knowledge. This will be done at two levels namely, assessment of the effectiveness of the dissemination process and the second level will be focusing on assessing the impact of the new knowledge on the work of the CSOs. Again, it means that monitoring and evaluation will need to be budgeted for.

3. LEVERAGING THE ECOSOCC PLATFORMS FOR DISSEMINATION

The dissemination strategy will rely on ECOSOCC statutory structures and platforms in reaching out to its constituencies. 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.

3.1 The General Assembly

This 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 2004: articles 3 & 4).

3.2 The Standing Committee

This is the principal coordinating organ of ECOSOCC. Its members have a two-year term of office (AU 2004: article 10). The Standing Committee is elected by the General Assembly and is composed of eighteen (18) members as follows:

i. The Presiding Officer and the other members of the Bureau.

ii. The Chairpersons of ten (10) Sectoral Cluster Committees.

iii. Two (2) representatives of the Commission.

This Committee is responsible for coordinating the work of ECOSOCC. It also follows up on the implementation of the Code of Ethics and Conduct developed for CSOs affiliated to or working with the AU.

3.3 The Sectoral Cluster Committees

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

Table 1: ECOSOCC Cluster Committees

Cross - Cutting	Economic Affairs	Human Resources, Science and Technology
• HIV/AIDS, International Cooperation etc Programmes	• Economic Integration • Monetary and Financial Affairs • Private Sector Development	• Education & ICT • Human Resources • Science and Technology
Infrastructure and Energy	**Peace and Security**	**Political Affairs**
• Human Rights & Rule of Law • Democratic and Constitutional Rule • Good Governance • Electoral Institutions	• Conflict Management • Peace Building • Prevention and Combating Terrorism • Drug & arms trafficking • Security reforms	• Human Rights & Rule of Law • Democratic and Constitutional Rule • Good Governance • Electoral Institutions • Humanitarian Affairs
Rural Economy and Agriculture	**Social Affairs and Health**	**Trade and Industry**
• Rural Economy • Agriculture and Food Security • Environment; • Water and Natural Resources • Desertification	• Health • Children & Youth • Drug Control • Population & Migration • Labour and Employment • Family & Elderly • The Physically Challenged • Sports & Culture • Social Integration	• Trade • Industry • Handicrafts • Customs and Immigration Matters
Women and Gender		
• Women and Girls • Gender Mainstreaming		

3.4 The Credentials Committee

This is another platform made up of 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).

This Committee is composed of the following:

i.   One (1) CSO representative from each of the five (5) regions.

ii.   One (1) CSO representative of African Diaspora.

iii.   One (1) nominated representative for special interest groups such as vulnerable groups, the aged, the physically challenged and people living with HIV/AIDS; and

iv.   Two (2) representatives of the Commission.

The Credentials Committee is responsible for examining the credentials of members of ECOSOCC and of their representatives.

3.5 National chapters

The Executive Council Decision EX/CL/Dec. 869 (XXVI) of January 2015 calls on ECOSOCC to facilitate the establishment of national ECOSOCC Chapters as a framework for accountability of elected members, as well as a conduit for disseminating information and mobilising support for AU programmes and activities, in close collaboration with Member States. These National Chapters are composed of different social and professional groups of the Member States of the African Union.

Membership to these structures include the following:

i.	Social groups such as those representing women, children, the youth, the elderly and people with disability and special needs.
ii.	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, workers, employers, industry, and agriculture as well as other private sector interest groups.
iii.	Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and voluntary organizations.
iv.	Cultural organizations.

3.6 The Secretariat

The dissemination strategy envisages the ECOSOCC secretariat as the engine behind the implementation of initiatives suggested in this document. The key opportunities for engaging CSOs through the secretariat include regional desks (yet to be activated), diaspora and national chapters. The Chapter meetings are currently running virtually.[1]
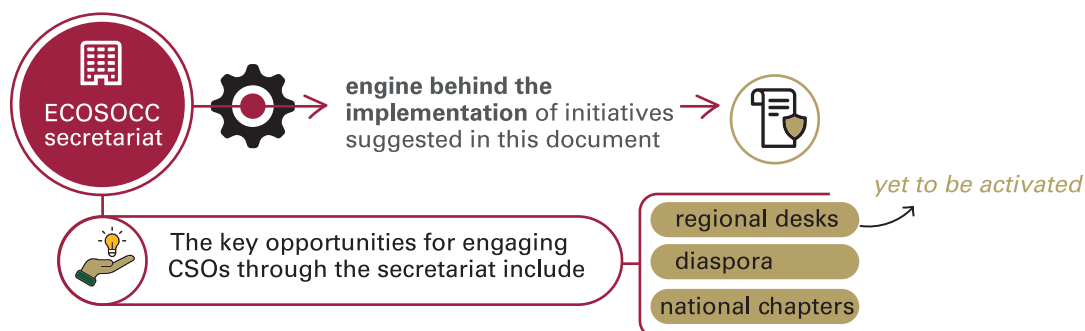
4. DISSEMINATION CHANNELS AND TOOLS

It is vital to note that ECOSOCC constituencies are not monolithic. As such the heterogenous nature of them requires that there be differentiation of tools and approaches in reach to them. Therefore, the methods used for dissemination and communication by the ECOSOCC will depend on the target audience being addressed.

The appropriate tools and channels will be selected for each dissemination activity individually depending on the information being conveyed, the target audiences and their perceived capabilities.

4.1 Communities of epistemic practice

As has been mentioned in the previous section of this strategy, ECOSOCC is already structured along cluster committees. These will be key in disseminating knowledge products to CSOs on the continent and diaspora. Of note, the sector cluster on political affairs and the peace and security cluster are both central to the operationalization of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG).

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1 Virtual Meeting | ECOSOCC (auecosocc.org)

4.2 Increasing social media following

ECOSOCC will use social media as a key element of its outreach and community building strategy. social media offers great opportunities since its content can be re-shared by the constituency and wider community, resulting in wider dissemination. There will be a deliberate process of ensuring that ECOSOCC leverages on existing social media accounts, instead of opening new ones.

There will be need to ensure that all social media channels be equipped with embedded analytics tools to monitor the success of the shared content. Social media audience will also be improved, based on the following key elements:

i. Leverage more on the partner professional connections, mainly using LinkedIn and Twitter (X).

ii. Invite key experts, who will bring more visibility because of their reputation.

iii. Pursue even more synergies with sister projects.

iv. Clearly define a specific responsible per calendar week, thus spreading the communication campaign workload across the entire consortium.

4.3 Twitter (X)

Twitter will be mainly used to provide brief real-time updates and news and to promote event activities. The platform facilitates for fast dissemination, and regular presence on social media. Twitter will also be used to comment on policy developments and advances. ECOSOCC will need to develop consistent hashtags on themes for dissemination. Twitter is especially good at reaching experts and other decision makers in the areas that ECOSOCC works on.

4.4 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a well-established social network aimed at professionals. The platform is used mainly for networking purposes. It can also be used for sharing new studies and tools which can be beneficial to the professionals who follow ECOSOCC. The policy tools of ECOSOCC will be shared on linked in for ease of access.

4.5 Facebook

Facebook can be said to be the largest social network, which, although designed for personal use by individuals, has become an important platform which ECOSOCC can use to reach out to its constituency in disseminating policy tools. The account will need to continuously be monitored to make sure that it will not be overtaken by other users who could take advantage of it to raise their own agendas.

4.6 YouTube Channel

A YouTube channel is a repository of videos which can be accessed easily. ECOSOCC needs therefore to develop quality video content that is packaged into small capsules of at most fifteen minutes that will be posted on the YouTube channel.

4.7 SlideShare

This online platform is for PowerPoint presentations which ECOSOCC would have presented amongst its partners. Having PowerPoint presentations accessible online is one way of ensuring that capacity building tools become more accessible to the constituency of ECOSOCC. The slides may be posted with intellectual property rights and copyright to make sure that citations are done appropriately. SlideShare allows for all ECOSOCC presentations to be found in one place. The platform enables expedience in sharing the presentations and track their analytics.

4.8 Training Programs

Takayama (1986) says that conferences and conference proceedings are more timely means of information transfer than publications. These can be a significant dissemination strategy of policy advocacy tools. These include actual training programs which ECOSOCC will conceptualize and roll out to its constituencies. The trainings can take the form of face-to-face meetings or online training where the participants will pace themselves to completion.

4.9 Webinar series

Since ECOSOCC is building its brand to be a development think tank on the continent, the use of webinar series will foster a culture of debate, intellectual engagement as well as generation of new knowledge. The outcomes of the webinars will be published into policy briefs or monologues which will be placed in aa repository for member states and other stakeholders to use when engaging with that specific subject. Further, whenever participating to a webinar, participants will be encouraged to produce dissemination material, such as Twitter posts or news, from the event.

4.10 Digital materials

A range of digital materials that reflects the ECOSOCC identity will be produced. The content of these resources will be tailored to specific audiences and/or the type of dissemination activity, for example, conference, or webinars. These dissemination materials will also be updated at regular intervals to include the latest information on progress and achievements. Besides promoting the brand of ECOSOCC, special attention will be paid to ensuring that the digital tools communicate substantive content as well.

4.11 Newsletters

News will be published on the ECOSOCC website. News could be related to upcoming events, trainings, events the members would have participated in, progress on events and opportunities. The newsletter will be shared on various platforms and social media channels. The aim of news pieces is to arouse and maintain interest in the work of ECOSOCC and its constituency. In the spirit of conserving the environment, it will be ideal not to have printed copies of the newsletters since their shelf life is limited.

4.12 Blog posts

The wide community around ECOSOCC is an excellent source for blog posts. The organ will publish a post in every two weeks which makes a total of around 25 blog posts a year. The responsibility for writing posts will be divided among ECOSOCC sectors and members. This ensures that the time and other resources related to blog writing are not only on one shoulder. A common guideline for the blog will be developed and shared to writers. A schedule for writers will be agreed at the beginning of the year so that each contributor will have ample time to prepare. The topics of the blog posts will be decided by the sectors, especially on addressing emerging issues within the thematic focus of the cluster.

5. MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The dissemination strategy is a living document that will be updated regularly. To monitor the impact and reach of the dissemination processes, mechanisms for feedback on the Strategy will be set up.

5.1 Monitoring

To evaluate the impact of the dissemination and outreach activities outlined in this strategy, there is a need to establish regular monitoring of the various channels used for these purposes. The evaluation gives valuable information on activities and their effectiveness, which also helps to update the dissemination plan if needed. A periodic report will be collated showing the reach of dissemination platforms.

ECOSOCC will assess the success of the dissemination and communication activities based on:

Website
website traffic, number of page views, document downloads, comments received, page shared on social media, feedback.

Newsletter
number of subscribers, number of opens and clicks.

Video
Number of views.

Social Media
engagement measures (number of tweets, posts, likes, members, comments, number of followers, most popular posts, biggest influencers of the followers);

Printed material
(number of brochures, flyers and posters distributed, number of events where they were presented).

Journal Articles and other publications:
number of articles published, number of downloads.

Press releases:
number of press releases sent out.

Events organized by ECOSOCC:
number of events organized, number of participants, range of target groups.

Events attended by ECOSOCC partners or where ECOSOCC was presented:
number of events attended, number of abstracts submitted, number of short reports submitted by ECOSOCC partners.

Performance measurements with specific targets for the dissemination activities will be used as a metric to assess the effectiveness and impact of the various dissemination activities. These KPIs will also be used as a metric for identifying any modification to existing activities or additional ones that may be necessary as the project progresses. They have been built based on the experience and knowledge gathered from the previous ECOSOCC engagements.

5.2 Evaluation

An evaluation of the effectiveness of this dissemination strategy will seek to collect data on the following indicators:

i.   Number of attendees to the events in which the project will be presented.

ii.   Number of meetings with target stakeholders

iii.   Number of media reached locally and internationally and collection of press reports.

iv.   Number of visitors to the website.

v.   Number of visualisations and downloads of material on the website.

vi.   Number of subscribers to the newsletter.

vii.   Number of followers on social media.

6. DISSEMINATION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ECOSOCC Target Institution	Dissemination & Communication Channels	Cmmunication Products	Responsible Party	Indicator of success/achievement
General Assembly	At its biennial meetings, the program can dedicate a day to address substantive content on emerging issues Issue quarterly newsletters and blogs which embed substantive content to general assembly representatives	PowerPoint presentations, policy briefs and session debates Quarterly newsletters and ECOSOCC blogs	ECOSOCC secretariat, the presiding officer and sectoral cluster leads	Number of sessions held to disseminate knowledge at the General assembly Number of newsletters issued to ECOSOCC membership Number of blogs developed, addressing emerging human rights and democracy issues on the continent
Standing committee	In dispensing its mandate, the Standing Committee can integrate substantive content in its work through holding of webinar series with target CSOs	Webinar Series with power point presentations on new knowledge to targeted CSOs	ECOSOCC secretariat and the Standing Committee	Number of Webinar series conducted with subsequent web hits, retweets, likes and comments
Sectoral cluster committees	These were established as key operational mechanisms of ECOSOCC to formulate opinions and provide inputs into the policies and programs of the African Union. This will happen through newsletters, blogs, and publications.	Quarterly newsletters and ECOSOCC blogs Annual publication on each sector cluster	ECOSOCC secretariat in collaboration with sector leads	Number of blogs produced by each sector cluster Number of annual reports produced

| National chapters | The strength of ECOSOCC in terms of substantive content will be anchored on what happens in the national chapters. These will need to meet regularly to engage on emerging issues within their jurisdictions.

They should also be a platform for capacity building using developed policy tools | Regular national chapter meetings presentations National newsletters National publication on the state of human rights and governance. | National chapter secretariat in collaboration with the ECOSOCC secretariat and sectoral cluster leads | Number of national chapter platforms conducted

Number of national newsletters produced by each national cluster

Web Hits, Retweets, Likes, Comments |

7. RESOURCES REQUIREMENTS

Dissemination of knowledge products will need to be embedded into every project budget of ECOSOCC as a way of institutionalizing it. Further, there must be a deliberate process of making staff accountable by introducing it as a key performance indicator. For ECOSOCC to be the think tank which provides thought leadership, generation of quality knowledge through its structures becomes crucial. This will happen leveraging on the sector clusters' expertise. It therefore means that each cluster should have a budget allocation to meet and debate on the nature of their contribution to knowledge.

Each year, every cluster should have the ambition of producing a publication which will be reflecting on the year whilst at the same time providing insights into the proceeding year. Such processes require organization at the secretariat through appointment of a focal person for each cluster in order to coordinate their operations.