

CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGY

2025 – 2030

Table of Contents

Acronyms	i
Forward.....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Acknowledgment	iv
Background	1
Introduction	2
The Citizens' Engagement Strategy and AGA-APSA Governance Platform	2
Centering the Citizens' Engagement Strategy on the African Governance Platform.....	3
Understanding the Citizen Engagement Strategy.....	3
The Citizens' Engagement Strategy Objective.....	4
Guiding Principles	5
The African Governance Platform and Citizens' Engagement Strategy.....	7
Strategy Pillars	7
Pillar 1: Youth Engagement Strategy	7
Pillar 2: Women's Engagement Strategy	9
Pillar 3: Civil Society Strategy.....	10
Pillar 4: Knowledge Management Strategy.....	11
Engagement Modalities	13
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework & Data Source.....	13

Acronyms

ACDEG	African Charter for Democracy Elections and Governance
AGA	African Governance Architecture
AGP	Africa Governance Platform
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and People Rights
APRM	Africa Peer Review Mechanism
APSA	Africa Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
CES	Citizens' Engagement Strategy
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSS	Civil Society Strategy
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
REC	Regional Economic Communities
YES	Youth Engagement Strategy
YPSF	Youth Peace and Security Fund
WES	Women's Engagement Strategy

Foreword



H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye

Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security

African Union Commission

Citizen engagement is a strategic priority for the African Union. In pursuit of this vision, it is my fervent belief that the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) has demonstrated unwavering commitment to fostering inclusive governance, peace, and security, in line with the AU Constitutive Act and Agenda 2063.

Recognizing the critical importance of African citizens' active participation in governance, peace, and security processes, the African Governance Architecture and African Peace and Security Architecture (AGA-APSA) Platform has launched this Citizens Engagement Strategy (CES). The launch took place on the margins of the AU Summit in February 2025, during the Statutory Political Meetings of the AGA-APSA Platform.

This comprehensive strategy builds upon the foundational Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) (2016–2020) and Women's Engagement Strategy (WES) (2017–2020), while integrating the newly developed Civil Society Strategy. It represents a unified framework to institutionalize citizen participation across all sectors of governance and peacebuilding.

The CES is the outcome of extensive evaluations of past strategies and broad-based stakeholder consultations, which included democratic governance experts, youth and women leaders, practitioners, and members of the AGA-APSA Platform. The Citizens Engagement is a flagship initiative of the AGA-APSA Platform and it aims to mainstream citizen voices, particularly those of youth, women, and civil society, in decision-making at local, national, regional, and continental levels.

At its core, the CES is a bold commitment to empowering African citizens to shape their own destinies through transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance processes. By harnessing public consultations, collaborative platforms, and digital tools, the strategy ensures that the voices of our people our most valuable asset inform the policies and programs that affect their lives.

Central to this strategy addressing structural barriers to participation, including shrinking civic spaces and socio-cultural constraints, while leveraging intergenerational dialogue and technology to strengthen community engagement. By harmonizing the efforts of AGA-APSA Platform members, the CES reinforces synergy, elevates citizen engagement as a priority, and promotes coordinated actions that generate tangible impact at the grassroots level.

The CES is also a clarion call to all AGA-APSA stakeholders to scale up investment in citizen-focused initiatives and embed meaningful participation in all aspects of governance, peace, and security programming.

I extend my deepest gratitude to all who contributed to this milestone and invite all partners to embrace the CES as a transformative tool for building a more inclusive, resilient, and citizen-centred African Union.

Preface



Hon. Wilson Almeida Adão

Chairperson, AGA-APSA Platform at the Political Level Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Right and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)

As Chairperson of the African Governance Architecture—African Peace and Security Architecture (AGA-APSA) Platform from 2023 to 2025, I am deeply honoured to present the Citizens Engagement Strategy (CES), a transformative blueprint for steering Africa’s governance landscape amid a rapidly evolving global context.

Our continent today stands at a pivotal crossroads. A dynamic and youthful population, a growing digital revolution, and rich natural resources define Africa’s immense potential. Yet, these opportunities are often accompanied by the challenges of protracted conflicts, forced displacement, and fragile governance institutions. These realities do not deter us; they embolden us to reimagine our future and reaffirm our collective aspiration for a peaceful, democratic, and inclusive Africa, as articulated in the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

At the core of the CES is a commitment to strategic and inclusive participation. It seeks to empower citizens, especially youth, women, and civil society, to shape political, social, and electoral processes meaningfully. The Strategy reflects the very essence of the AGA-APSA Platform: to promote citizen participation in member initiatives that advance good governance, deepen democratic practices, and support the consolidation of sustainable peace across the continent.

Through this Strategy, we affirm that every voice matters in building transparent, accountable, and resilient democratic systems. By integrating citizens into the work of the Platform, we weave a rich tapestry of civic engagement that brings to life the vision of “The Africa We Want.”

I am proud to note that the CES embodies the collective commitment of the African Union Commission, AU Organs, Institutions, Departments, Regional Economic Communities, Regional Mechanisms, and strategic partners who form the AGA-APSA Platform. Their active participation and thoughtful contributions have shaped this document into a fit-for-purpose strategy, formally adopted during the Statutory Political Meeting of the AGA-APSA Platform, held on the margins of the February 2025 AU Heads of State and Government Summit.

I extend sincere appreciation to all who contributed to the review and development of this milestone strategy. I also call upon all members of the AGA-APSA Platform to embrace, strengthen, and implement the CES to nurture it, improve it, and use it as a compass in our collective journey toward participatory, inclusive, and resilient governance across Africa.

Acknowledgments

We express our sincere appreciation to the experts, organizations, networks, and partners whose invaluable contributions ensured that the Citizens Engagement Strategy was developed to the highest standard.

We also extend special thanks to the following individuals who played a critical role in the review and validation of the Strategy

- Ms. Lindiwe Khumalo, Former Chairperson of the AGA-APSA Platform and the Former Executive Secretary of (ACHPR)
- Ms. Elmi Mohamed Ilwad, Ag. Head of Youth Division, Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate WGYD, AUC
- Ms. Doreen Apollos, Information and Communication Directorate (ICD), AUC
- Dr. Ayalew Getachew, Ag. Executive Secretary of African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)
- Mr. Lennon Monyae, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)
- Mr. Bob Kalanzi, African Union Development Agency (AUDA) – NEPAD Agency NEPAD
- Mr. Bright Sefah, The African Union Economic, Social and Cultural Council ECOSOC
- Mr. Adrien Ndayisaba, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
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- Ms. Tessa Dooms, Expert
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- Ms. Tawiah Esther Mamley, Executive Director, Gender Centre for Empowering Development (GenCED)
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- Amb. Salah Hammad, Ag. Head, AGA-APSA Secretariat, PAPS, AUC
- Ms. Makda Mikre Tessema, Senior Democracy and Governance Expert, PAPS, AUC
- Ms. Hagar Azzooz, Project Officer, PAPS, AUC
- Ms. Mahlet Mulugeta, PAPS, AUC

Background

There is increasing acknowledgement of the need for African citizens' participation in governance, peace, and security processes to guarantee sustainable progress. Overtime, African citizens, youth, and women have shown the desire and potential to contribute meaningfully to democratic governance and sustainable peace. Considering the above, the participation of citizens, the primary beneficiaries of democratic initiatives, becomes necessary.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union, particularly Article 3 (g) and 4 (c), seeks to promote citizen engagement and popular participation in democratic and governance practices in its Member States. To advance this goal, the African Union Commission (AUC) has designed and developed various normative and policy frameworks to enhance citizen engagement, which is at the centre of African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 that focuses on people driven development.

The Africa Governance Architecture (AGA-APSA) secretariat and the coordinating hub for the African Governance Platform (AGP), has taken the lead in developing strategies to inform and mainstream citizen engagement in democratic governance in member countries.

With the unprecedented onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the key lessons has been the importance of engaging citizens, especially in emergency responses and devising appropriate approaches to resolving the crisis. We can learn much from the pandemic response, the role that citizens played in mitigating personal and national loss and more importantly, the engagement between citizens and state in rallying for a response to benefit nations.

Key lessons of inclusiveness between state, citizens and institutions can be learnt from both the crisis response and the modalities of rights, governance and democracy being applied. Some key lessons deriving from the COVID-19 response give foundation in understanding citizen engagement such as increase in understanding social cohesion, adapting roles and responsibilities on both the citizen and government sides, collaboration between institutions for synergised response and increased capabilities.



Introduction

The AGA-APSA Secretariat and the AGP Members held a Review meeting in Nairobi, Kenya on 22-27 August 2022 for three key existing strategies, namely the Youth Engagement Strategy (YES -2016-2020), the Women Engagement Strategy (WES – 2017-2020), and the Knowledge Management Strategy (2015-2018) to assess progress, challenges and map ways forward for the development of an additional civil society strategy and an encompassing citizens' engagement strategy that would pull together these supporting strategies.

Recommendations to incorporate the three existing strategies were put forward to support and inform the development of the Citizens Engagement Strategy.

The development of this AGA-APSA Citizens Engagement Strategy is informed by AGA's stated objectives:

- ◆ Enhance popular participation and citizen engagement in attainment of democracy, governance and respect for human and peoples' right", and in doing so the secretariat of AGA has the function to "oversee the development and implementation of comprehensive strategies to ensure the mainstreaming of women, youth and civil society participation and representation in the decision-making processes of the African Governance Platform Members".
- ◆ Foster dialogue and share comparable lessons on trends, challenges, opportunities, and prospects for improving governance and democracy among Member States

- ◆ Generate, manage, and disseminate knowledge on African shared values agenda, good governance, and democracy in Africa.
- ◆ Facilitate joint engagement and deepen synergy with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in strategic interventions: preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and post-conflict, reconstruction, and development in Africa.

Therefore, the Citizen Engagement Strategy is the conduit for engaging and involving citizenry to better understand and be part of the decision-making processes related to the African Union.

The YES, WES and CSS provide entry points to segments of citizens engagement for the African Governance Platform. Key to the strategy is the element of "voice", advocacy and capacity building for the citizenry and community, local, national, regional, and continental levels. The supporting strategies to this CES have aligned strategic priorities that address citizens at all these levels.

The Citizen Engagement Strategy and AGA-APSA Platform

The AGA-APSA secretariat which is the coordinating body for the AGA-APSA Platform. A core responsibility of this platform is to harness, coordinate, synergise and capitalise on the comparative advantages of its members to 'connect, empower and build capacities of African peoples in promoting and protecting human rights, strengthening good governance, and consolidating democracy. Additionally, it facilitates harmonisation of instruments, information flows and dialogue promoting mutual complementarity, coordination, and concerted action on democratic governance issues.

Centering the Citizen Engagement Strategy on the AGA-APSA Platform

The AGA-APSA Platform offers for the Members a flexible and dynamic meeting point that facilitates information flows, exchanges, and dialogue; and promotes synergies, mutual complementarity, close coordination, collaboration, and concerted action on democratic governance issues. Both the strategic objectives and functions of the Platform foster the space required for engagement, interaction, and capability of multiple players, including mechanisms for harmonisation, learning and coordination.

The AGA-APSA Platform shall inter alia:

- ◆ Under the coordination of the Commission, serve as the evaluation mechanism for the implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance as provided in Articles 44, 45 and 49 of the Charter and as elaborated in the Guidelines for State Parties' Reports as set out in Annex 1B;
- ◆ Undertake, in addition to the responsibilities highlighted in paragraph (a) above, programmes aimed at facilitating harmonisation of instruments and coordination of initiatives in governance and democracy;
- ◆ Convene the annual high-level dialogue aimed at sharing experiences and best practices towards the promotion of good governance, strengthening democracy and respect for human and peoples' rights, including advocacy for the domestication and implementation of as well as compliance to AU Shared Values by African Union Member States;

- ◆ Enhance greater engagement and participation of African citizens, including women and youth and civil society in Platform Members' initiatives and programmes aimed at promoting good governance and consolidating democracy in Africa.

Understanding the Citizen Engagement Strategy

Citizen's engagement connotes a participatory approach to governance. The idea that policy outcomes reflect the needs and preferences of citizens, as beneficiaries, requires their engagement in processes of governance decision-making processes.

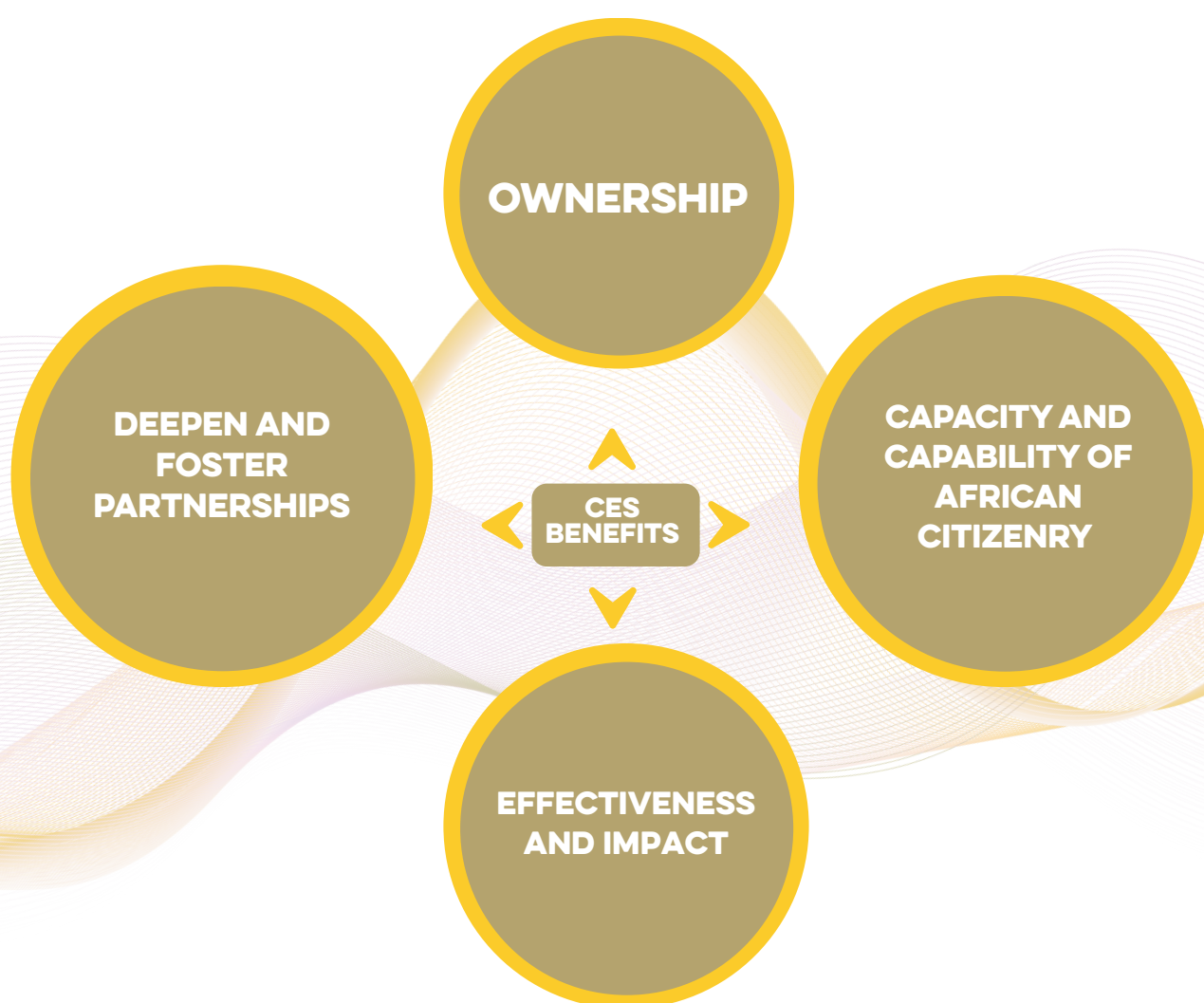
Engagement is a process by which voice is the most desirable outcome. Citizen's engagement is premised on the notion that everyone has a right to be involved in decisions that impact on their lives. Representative democracy requires a deliberative process in which citizens have the opportunity to be informed and provide their views on issues that affect their lives.

Thus, citizens or public engagement involves a process and diverse - activities that aim at meaningfully and constructively bringing in community members, rights holders, and stakeholders to inform decisions for planning, policies, programs, and services that affect their lives and well-being. Citizen's engagement in the governance process has transparency, inclusion, and accountability values.

Objective

The objective of the citizen engagement strategy is to strengthen participation of African citizenry in the decision-making processes related to the African Union. In particular, enhancing the participation of youth, women, and civil society in the promotion of good governance and democracy in Africa.

The citizen engagement strategy is envisaged to bring the following benefits



Ownership:

It is important that the engagement strategy be a flexible mechanism for guiding engagement of citizenry through the Platform and its members. Through dialogue and interaction and better understanding of policies by citizenry, the civil space will be more viable and engaging in terms of citizen demand and dialogue especially at national level.

Effectiveness and impact:

Partnerships established through the supporting strategies of youth women and civil society can strengthen learning, sharing of experiences and policy dialogue through the various skills and focus of partners and members.

Capacity and capability of African citizenry:

Through citizenry engagement capacities may be built to better understand policies which can lead to demand of citizenry for better implementation and accountability at national levels.

Deepen and foster partnerships:

Partnership building is good for leveraging skills and capacities and knowledge for platform members and their respective networks, especially in relation to knowledge and learning and resource mobilisation.

Guiding principles:

The following present the guiding principles for this CES:

Interaction

That engages, debates, and fosters synergies, learning and capacity for citizenry

Investment

Engagement requires commitment of human and institutional resources

Respect

For the platform and networks: supporting the AGP with the principle of mutual respect for members and their respective networks to foster effective networking and learning

Connection

Citizen engagement is connecting people, building capacities and networking

12TH HD | HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE

CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION
3 OCTOBER 2023

GENDER PRE-FORUM
4 OCTOBER 2023

HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE
5 - 6 OCTOBER 2023



HD
HIGH LEVEL
DIALOGUE

AGA
Africa Governance Architecture



HD
HIGH LEVEL
DIALOGUE



AGA
Africa Governance Architecture



HD
HIGH LEVEL
DIALOGUE

AGA
Africa Governance Architecture



AGA
Africa Governance Architecture



The AGA-APSA Platform and Citizen Engagement Strategy

Four key strategies, namely Women's Engagement Strategy, Youth Engagement Strategy, Civil Society Strategy and Knowledge Management Strategy have been developed to support the Citizen Engagement Strategy. All strategies are within the 2023-2027 timeline and each strategy outlines specific objectives or mechanisms and strategic priorities for engagement.

Strategy Pillars

PILLAR ONE:

Youth Engagement Strategy



Globally, youth engagement is regarded as an essential element that builds strong societies at a local, national, and regional level.¹ The African Youth Charter emphasises that: "youth are partners, assets and a prerequisite for sustainable development and for the peace and prosperity of Africa with a unique contribution to make to the present and to future development."²

This need for having youth engaged is equally rooted in the understanding that young people should not be mere recipients of development but rather active participants of the processes.³ Beyond the above, youth engagement establishes the platforms for an intergenerational transfer of skills from the older to younger generations. Although often overlooked, there is a vital need for the youth to learn from the older generations and likewise the older from the youth and, through intergenerational spaces the traditional barriers of access are dismantled.

The revised Youth Engagement Strategy (YES), 2023-2027, builds on the first YES strategy that was developed in 2016, and it envisions priorities that will have easily implementable steps and measurable outcomes to achieve success for youth engagement.

The majority of Africa today is occupied by the youth under 25 years constituting an estimated 60% of the total population.⁴ The young people experience barriers that limit their effective participation and contribution to civic and political processes. Because of these limitations, this demography presents both an opportunity and a risk for the continent. The risk is seen in that a significant proportion of this demographic does not have the access to opportunities to develop themselves to their optimal potential thereby exposing them to delinquency and other adverse behaviours.⁵

Gyampo and Anyidoho (2019) highlight that when young people are excluded from meaningful political participation, they are left vulnerable and easily conscripted as foot soldiers on behalf of others for trivial fees.⁶ Although this is not the case for all, this lack of utility for their potential is an opportunity that those with destructive intent have used.

Politically, Honwana (2012) highlights that "what may appear to be apathy and depoliticization represents a conscious move away from traditional arenas of party politics towards other forms of engagement with society and the global world."⁷ Gumede (2022) acknowledges the same and further states that the youth through their interactions with power, should work with other role-players including civil society and institutions to build resilient democracies.

Considering the above, African youth have agency and energy for development. Also, young people are driving innovative solutions aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability mechanisms; improving state-citizen relations and engagement; as well as deepening the culture of peace and democracy in Africa.

The challenge however remains the sporadic nature of these interventions and their seeming disconnection from regional norms, policies, and standards.⁸ The youth see governance through their unique lens and that informs their interactions with the systems of power. What needs to be done is to have a coordinated approach towards this interface with governance, utilising their abilities, platforms, and perspectives to build sustainable youth engagement.

Strategic Objectives



- 1 Provide a guiding framework for Africa's youth engagement in the AU Shared Values Agenda.
- 2 Facilitate mainstreaming of youth in the democratic governance initiatives of the African Governance Platform Members and AU Member States.
- 3 Enhance the capacity of youth-led and oriented organisations as well as networks to facilitate meaningful engagement of youth in democratic governance initiatives at national, regional, and continental levels.
- 4 Institutionalise intra and inter-generational platforms for engagement of youths in democratic governance policy formulation and decision-making platforms at regional and continental levels.

- 5 Facilitate youth contributions to evidence-based research and policy development on democratic governance in Africa.

Strategic Priorities



- 1 Increased awareness among youths about African Shared Values (norms and standards) on democratic governance
- 2 Enhanced institutional capacity for the mainstreaming and engagement of youth in democratic governance initiatives by African Governance Platform Members and AU Member States
- 3 Improved capacity of youth-led and oriented organisations to effectively facilitate youth engagement and participation in democratic governance processes at national, regional, and continental levels.
- 4 Strengthened platforms for inter-regional and inter-continental dialogue, exchanges and peer learning on youth specific trends, challenges and prospects for improved governance and democracy in Africa
- 5 Increased youth generated and focused knowledge on democratic governance in Africa.

PILLAR TWO:**Women's Engagement Strategy**

The challenges women are facing in governance on the continent include: a lack of implementation of normative frameworks that provide an enabling political space for women to actively participate in democratic governance, a lack of capacity at different levels in implementing normative frameworks, capacity gaps among women groups and networks to engage effectively at all levels of governance structures, unequal access to and ownership of economic, political, social and cultural resources/opportunities, limited access to key resources like land, education, good health, training and employment, limited financing for gender equality and women's empowerment programmes as well as patriarchy and socially constructed gender roles which systematically accord low value and status to women amongst others.⁹

Strategic Objectives

- 1 Enhance the capacity of AU Organs, Institutions and RECs to engage women in programmes and initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic governance.

- 2 Facilitate women engagement towards building a democratic and peaceful society.
- 3 Cultivate and improve the values of democratic governance at different levels, especially among women.
- 4 Encourage research and sharing of comparable lessons and knowledge on the trends, challenges, and opportunities for women engagement in democratic governance processes.
- 5 Create a platform for dialogue to facilitate communication, sharing of lessons learned among AGP Members, African women, women networks and CSOs, as well as supporting efforts aimed at building good governance and entrenching democracy in AU Member States; and
- 6 Improve the inclusion of African women and their voice into high level AU discussion on democratic governance trends in Africa

Strategic Priorities

- 1 Strengthened coordination and collaboration through structured consultations with AGP and relevant networks
- 2 Support capacity building for women's rights groups and other key stakeholders on meaningful representation and participation of women in democratic governance.
- 3 Identify and support Role Models and Mentorship for Aspiring Women Leaders
- 4 Create a Platform for Dialogue and capacity building

5

Produce women specific knowledge and data on good governance and democracy in Africa generated, managed, and disseminated by women.

PILLAR THREE:

Civil Society Strategy



Over the past five decades the organisational profile of civil society in Africa has changed significantly. A particular feature of the civil society landscape in Africa has been the dominance of formal civil society structures as against the informal mass mobilisation forms.

The elements of the civil society sector have grown and expanded to cover service delivery, policy advocacy, research, technical and capacity building, and watchdog groups.

The transformation and growth of the civil society sector in Africa have also witnessed various typologies such as networks/coalitions, policy research think-tanks, professional member associations, community-based organisations/grassroot organisations, ethnic/locally based organisations, faith-based organisations, NGOs, and to a degree the media and private sector have sometimes been looped into the sector.

The civil society sector has also witnessed developments of expert communities, focusing on themes, such as democracy and governance, health education, women and youth empowerment, girls and children rights, sanitation, environment, among many others.

Despite the growth and transformation of the civil society landscape in Africa, the sector faces many, recurrent and new challenges. These include financial insecurity, weak or inadequate technical expertise, organisational weaknesses, and the perennial political legitimacy questions. Of particular concern in recent times is the shrinking civic space for civil society to operate.

The shrinking civic space manifests in both formal governmental legal restrictions and subtle repression. The Afrobarometer surveys, carried out in 34 countries between 2016 and 2018, indicated an increasing perception among African citizens that civic and political space is shrinking due to government restrictions. Other forms of civil society corporatization, weak social movements, economic crises and growing poverty, youth unemployment, which often undermines mobilization for participation, health pandemic as well as violence and terrorism.

While civil society in Africa continues to face challenges and constraints, it remains a relevant and critical pathway of deepening democratic governance and peacebuilding processes. Because civil society is about the associational life of people, it has generally been noted as one of the best routes to democracy and governance. As a result of its associational organised and independent nature, civil society can mobilise against government tyranny and make demands on governments. Civil society provides networks and social capital for civic engagement which contributes to ownership and sustainability of efforts. Across the globe civil society is recognized as a necessary building block for inclusive citizens' participation in the democratic and development processes.

By virtue of the nature of civil society, it provides instruments for partnerships, mobilisation, content generation, reach to wider citizenry, and a chain for feedback loop. Therefore, despite the challenges it faces, civil society is a defining arena to facilitate participation of citizens in a democratic and governance processes. Civil society has a pivotal role and contributions to this guiding principle.

One of the guiding principles of AGA-APSA is effective participation of African peoples in strengthening and democratic governance in member states and continental affairs. Civil society is an essential conduit for the AGA-APSA as well as the Africa Governance Platform members to constructively engage citizens towards the realisation of AGA-APSA objectives, in particular the enhancement of popular participation and citizen engagement in the fulfilment of democracy, governance, and respect for human rights aspirations. The civil society strategy is one of the components of a comprehensive citizens' engagement strategy.

Strategic Objectives



- 1 Formulate key priority areas and/or directions for civil society engagement for AGA-APSA platform members¹⁰
- 2 Develop approaches to facilitate and institutionalise regular and inclusive engagements of the civil society sector and AGA-APSA on democratic governance and African shared values.
- 3 Provide frameworks for AGA-APSA and its AGP Members to engage citizens through African civil society¹¹
- 4 Enhance AGA-APSA and platform members' capacity to promote civil society engagement through coordination and complementarity of actions and approaches.

Strategic Priorities



- 1 Strengthened coordination between AGA-APSA and Civil Society (CS) to bridge knowledge gap
- 2 Enhanced capacity of civil society knowledge and practices of AU work
- 3 Mainstreamed youth and women engagements as part of civil society engagement
- 4 Strengthened platforms and improved capacity of civil society to effectively facilitate citizens' participation in democratic governance processes at national and community levels
- 5 Generated research from civil society to inform AGA-APSA and AU work

PILLAR FOUR:

Knowledge Management Strategy



AGA-APSA recognizes that knowledge is both a key output that it delivers to its stakeholders, as well as a key resource that it needs to deliver its objectives. Drawing from declaration 7 of the AU Assembly of Heads of States as highlighted in Assembly/AU/Decl.1 (XVI), AGA is responsible for facilitating efforts directed at enhancing the participation of African Research Institutes, civil society, and media in promoting Shared Values as part of wider efforts directed at securing African ownership.

This responsibility provides inspiration to one of the key objectives of the African Governance Platform - generate, manage, and disseminate knowledge on good governance and democracy in Africa, including AU shared values. This objective is key to influencing AGA-APSA work and policymaking of its Platform Members.

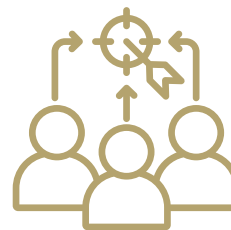
The AGA-APSA Knowledge Management Strategy (herein referred to as the Strategy) provides a guiding framework, which reinforces the three basic AGA-APSA needs in terms of delivering on its objective as highlighted herein above.

AGA-APSA UNDERSTANDING OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

To AGA-APSA, Knowledge Management means using the resource “knowledge” to improve the way the African Governance Platform (AGP) does business and to achieve greater impact in its expected outcomes. Around the world, there has been an increase in knowledge on democratic governance and human rights issues.

In Africa largely due to deliberate efforts towards building and managing an African body of knowledge on its democratic governance and human rights achievements, challenges, trends, and prospects, such a body of knowledge has been growing. To address management of this growing body of knowledge, AGA-APSA seeks to “create, distil, share and use know how”¹² to influence policy and foster effective implementation of AU Shared values through evidence-based research and data generation.

Strategic Objectives



- 1 Strengthen the capacity of AGP Members to play more pivotal roles in providing policy advice and support to AU Policy Organs
- 2 Build strategic partnerships and alliances with think tanks, research, and academic institutions on the continent with the AGA-APSA Secretariat to enhance evidence-based policymaking at the regional and continental levels.
- 3 Enhance the AGA-APSA Knowledge environment by proactively facilitating and rewarding knowledge creation, transfer and use among AGP Members.
- 4 Improve the capturing of knowledge through the creation of AGA-APSA Knowledge Management repositories; and
- 5 Promote knowledge generation, and exchange as well as continuous learning to enhance evidence-based policy analysis and policy making at the regional and continental levels.
- 6 Leverage on cutting edge communication tools to improve the work of the African Governance Platform Members

Mechanisms for Knowledge Management

- 1 Knowledge Generation: AGA-APSA knowledge products will be based on an assessment of needs and demand for the product among the targeted audiences to ensure its relevance, effectiveness, usefulness, and value.

2

Knowledge Curation: AGA-APSA shall consolidate various existing databases on democratic governance from think tanks, research institutes, academic institutions, civil society organisations, and media houses, among others to provide a pool of knowledge on various governance issues.

3

Knowledge Dissemination: facilitate sharing of information and findings from joint studies, reviews, assessments on various components and programs of the AGP Members within networks.

Citizen Engagement Modalities:

The strategy shall apply five key engagement modalities, of which apply to the supporting strategies of the citizen engagement strategy.

Dialogue and consultation:

Understanding that citizen engagement is highly contextual and also in line with national governing systems, designing fora for (i) policy dialogue, (ii) governance debate and (iii) best practice sharing, will form an entry point for engagement.

Advocacy:

The different campaigns, to leverage participation of citizens through creating awareness of the key AU instruments at National, Regional, and continental levels.

Digital and media platforms:

Digital and media platforms provide an opportunity for: (i) synergizing conversations, (ii) creating collaborating narratives and (iii) developing and operating platforms for engagement beyond traditional platforms

Data generation

The deliberate effort by the African Union to engage and educate African citizens and in so doing, cultivate a sense of ownership of the African Union by the primary stakeholder, the citizens in the Member States - In particular and in light of national contextualization, it is important to popularise the instruments ratified by respective governments, thereby influencing the policy environment at national levels

Feedback mechanism:

The feedback mechanism supports transparency, access to information and allows for continual conversations and supports accountability for platform members and respective networks. The feedback mechanism also forms a foundational pillar for continued monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework

AGA-APSA recognises that strategies should not be static but should change and adapt to the current realities of the continent. Therefore, AGA-APSA will work and collaborate with the AGP Members and networks to conduct regular review of the MEL framework to make appropriate adjustments to the implementation and assessment of impact of the CES.

The monitoring and evaluation of the CES will be situated in the overall AGA-APSA MEL framework. The MEL frameworks as developed in the 4 pillars (YES, WES, CSS, and KM) of the CES will be guiding indicators for the CES MEL, which is anchored in the five engagement modalities: dialogue and consultations, advocacy, digital and media platforms, data generation and feedback mechanisms. However, to support a substantive MEL the AGA-APSA Secretariat will need to take deliberate steps and considerations in actualising the strategy. These steps will include:

- ◆ Needs assessment - identifying the human, financial, technical, and institutional capacity needs on how the strategy will be incorporated and synergised by AGP members and respective networks into on-going work and thus allowing for better prioritisation informing actions to be undertaken
- ◆ Identify entry points of convergence for citizen engagement at continental, regional and national levels to mitigate overlap and duplication in implementation and identify clear need for engagement, including existing capacities, skills, knowledge, and lessons learned.
- ◆ Supporting co-creation on AGP platform - Identify roles and responsibilities between the AGP members and their networks
- ◆ Identifying partnerships that enhance engagement for AGP members and networks
- ◆ Outreach and communication

Data Source

In addition, the data sources for the engagement modalities will be constituted from the 4 supporting pillars of CES. Within each of the supporting strategies, a performance indicator monitoring framework will be developed.





Table of Contents

Introduction.....	17
Background to Y.E.S 2016-2020.....	18
Rationale/Why Y.E.S?.....	19
Objectives of the Youth Engagement Strategy:	19
Situational Analysis: (State of youth).....	20
Y.E.S Opportunity	21
The Revised Y.E.S	21
Strategic Direction.....	21
Implementation plan.....	24

Introduction

Globally, youth engagement is regarded as an essential element that builds strong societies at a local, national, and regional level.¹³ The African Youth Charter emphasises that: “youth are partners, assets and a prerequisite for sustainable development and for the peace and prosperity of Africa with a unique contribution to make to the present and to future development.”¹⁴ This need for having youth engaged is equally rooted in the understanding that young people should not be mere recipients of development but rather active participants of the processes.¹⁵

Beyond the above, youth engagement establishes the platforms for an intergenerational transfer of skills from the older to younger generations.

Although often overlooked, there is a vital need for the youth to learn from the older generations and likewise the older from the youth and, through intergenerational spaces the traditional barriers of access are dismantled.

The revised Youth Engagement Strategy (YES), 2023-2027, builds on the first YES strategy that was developed in 2016, and it envisions priorities that will have easily implementable steps and measurable outcomes to achieve success for youth engagement.



Background to Y.E.S 2016-2020

The Youth Engagement Strategy (YES 2016-2020) was developed as a response to the identified challenge of poor youth participation particularly in the governance processes in Africa. It was observed that the demographic strength of Africa's young people and their increased interest in the socio-economic and political governance of the continent provides an opportunity to strengthen democratic governance processes and institutions and to achieve this, a structured and coordinated engagement approach was required.¹⁶

In designing YES 2016-2020, an essential foundational pillar was to ensure that greater access for young people to effectively engage and participate in politics and governance was created, particularly that which leads to realising the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

The full implementation of the previous strategy was however hindered by challenges that included: a lack of allocation of specific responsibility among platform members, inhibitive socio-cultural practices, the limited financial and human resource allocation and, the impact of the global pandemic which combined, led to a limited uptake and adoption of programme activities.

Additionally, it was observed that the contributing factors that were limiting the full participation of youth in governance processes were due to the gaps between policies and their implementation.¹⁷ In addition to the gaps, it was noted that part of the failure to implement was attributable to a language barrier of translating policy to action.

From this foundation, the revised YES will have a deliberate focus on the implementation, allocation of responsibilities and risk management. Ultimately, the Youth Engagement Strategy component will serve as a building block for the larger Citizen Engagement Strategy.



Rationale/Why Y.E.S?

The development of Y.E.S was informed by key African Union charters and protocols including the following:

1. African Charter on Human and people rights (ACHPR) 1981:

(a). Article 13 – “Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law”

2. African Youth Charter 2006:

(a). Article 10 (1) “Every young person shall have the right to social, economic, political and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity and in equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind.

(b). Article 3 (d) States Parties shall Provide access to information and education and training for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities, to be schooled in democratic processes, citizenship, decision-making, governance, and leadership such that they develop the technical skills and confidence to participate in these processes.

(c). Article 11 “Every young person shall have the right to participate in all spheres of society.” Also “CONVINCED that Africa’s greatest resource is its youthful population and that through their active and full participation, Africans can surmount the difficulties that lie ahead.

3. African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance (ACDEG):

(a). Article 31- State Parties shall promote participation of social groups with special needs, including the Youth and people with disabilities, in the governance process.

4. Agenda 2063:

(a). Aspiration 6- An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children. (Goal 18 Engaged and empowered youth and children) NB The AGA YES is a complementary document to the “Agenda 2063, the Africa we want, first 10-year implementation plan” Touching on youth related issues within the document

5. African Youth Decade Plan of Action (DPoA) 2009 – 2018. Specifically, The African Youth Decade, 2009-2018 Plan of Action (DPoA) is a framework for multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional engagement of all stakeholders towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the African Youth Charter.

Objectives of the Youth Engagement Strategy:

The specific objectives of the AGA-YES are to:¹⁸

1. Provide a guiding framework for Africa’s youth engagement in the AU Shared Values Agenda.
2. Facilitate mainstreaming of youth in the democratic governance initiatives of the African Governance Platform Members and AU Member States.
3. Enhance the capacity of youth-led and oriented organisations as well as networks to facilitate meaningful engagement of youth in democratic governance initiatives at national, regional, and continental levels.

4. Institutionalise intra and inter-generational platforms for engagement of youths in democratic governance policy formulation and decision-making platforms at regional and continental levels.

5. Facilitate youth contributions to evidence-based research and policy development on democratic governance in Africa.

Situational Analysis: (State of youth)



The majority of Africa today is occupied by the youth under 25 years constituting an estimated 60% of the total population.¹⁹ The young people experience barriers that limit their effective participation and contribution to civic and political processes.

Because of these limitations, this demography presents both an opportunity and a risk for the continent. The risk is seen in that a significant proportion of this demographic does not have the access to opportunities to develop themselves to their optimal potential thereby exposing them to delinquency and other adverse behaviours.²⁰

Gyampo and Anyidoho (2019) highlight that when young people are excluded from meaningful political participation, they are left vulnerable and easily conscripted as foot soldiers on behalf of others for trivial fees.²¹ Although this is not the case for all, this lack of utility for their potential is an opportunity that those with destructive intent have used.

Politically, Honwana (2012) highlights that “what may appear to be apathy and depoliticization represents a conscious move away from traditional arenas of party politics towards other forms of engagement with society and the global world.”²² Gumede (2022) acknowledges the same and further states that the youth through their interactions with power, should work with other role-players including civil society and institutions to build resilient democracies.

Considering the above, African youth have agency and energy for development. Also, young people are driving innovative solutions aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability mechanisms; improving state-citizen relations and engagement; as well as deepening the culture of peace and democracy in Africa. The challenge however remains the sporadic nature of these interventions and their seeming disconnection from regional norms, policies, and standards.²³ The youth see governance through their unique lens and that informs their interactions with the systems of power. What needs to be done is to have a coordinated approach towards this interface with governance, utilising their abilities, platforms, and perspectives to build sustainable youth engagement.

Y.E.S Opportunity

Through this engagement strategy, young people will be positioned to be contributors, initiators and implementers of the processes that directly and indirectly affect them within the governance processes.²⁴ Taking lessons from the #NotTooYoungToRun movement in Nigeria, when young people participate, there is an increased awareness of socio-political issues and a resultant increased participation in fora such as campaigns rallies, town Hall meetings and digital and social platforms by young people.

Through the YES opportunity, young people will utilise their unique position of being digital natives to design and implement tools of connectivity conceptualising a borderless continent, sharing best practices, and networking. Governance processes will cease to be relegated to other generations but will become co-creative leading to policy that is reflective of history, demographics, and aspirations.

The Revised Y.E.S

The revised Y.E.S is underpinned by the following indicators²⁵

1. Ensuring inclusivity of vulnerable and marginalised youth groups, people with disabilities (PWDS), rural urban youth, grassroots youth
2. The Intergenerational dialogue has enabled the opening of spaces for a more diversified African youth participation
3. Scaling up youth engagements through replicating success, and devising models of engagement such as the youth innovation challenge (bridging the gap between learning and innovation)
4. The need to actively work with local networks (National Youth Councils, etc) to domesticate, continental, and regional activities for greater AU programme reach.
5. The need to develop more capacity development materials for use at national level to increase the local capacity of the youth

Strategic Direction

To effectively implement and sustain the strategy, the African Governance Platform members are essential to its realisation. In addition to platform members, key role players and stakeholders include: the Regional Economic Communities (REC's),²⁶ African Union member states, National Youth Councils, and the youth of the continent.

Strategic direction 1:

Increased awareness among youths about African Shared Values (norms and standards) on democratic governance

Activity 1:

Knowledge Xchange/ Learning exhibitions

Context:

Conduct regional exhibitions where different African Union organs highlight their unique thematic areas and the opportunities that are there for young people. The exhibitions will be a popularising platform.

Key role-players:

African Union organs, African Union member states, REC's, National Youth Councils,

Strategic direction 2:

Enhanced institutional capacity for the mainstreaming and engagement of youth in democratic governance initiatives by African Governance Platform Members and AU Member States

Activity 1:

Youth Focal Point/person

Context:

Establish a dedicated youth focal point/person among the different African Union Organs and RECs to ensure that youth programme activities are incorporated into the different thematic areas of the organs. This will ensure that youth engagement and participation is a continued formal activity. The Youth focal point will equally have a fundraising function where they will be tasked with soliciting funding for youth focused activities thus guaranteeing that the programme activities can be sustained.

Key role-players:

African Union Organs, REC's, African Union Member states, Funding (donor) partners, philanthropic organisations.

Activity 2:

Monitoring and Evaluation desk

Context:

To ensure that programme activities are being conducted effectively with the requisite adjustments, African Union organs should have a dedicated youth M&E desk that works hand in glove with the youth focal point/person.

This M&E desk should also be present at regional and national level to ensure effective programme implementation.

Key role-players:

African Union organs, African Union Member States, National Youth Councils, REC's

Strategic direction 3:

Improved capacity of youth-led and oriented organisations to effectively facilitate youth engagement and participation in democratic governance processes at national, regional, and continental levels.

Activity 1:

Thematic National Youth Directory (Mapping)

Context:

Having a detailed, updated contact list of registered youth led organisations will enable easier access of the organisations by the National, regional, or continental organs, facilitating access to available resources, competitions, and opportunities for collaboration with youth from other regions.

Key role-players:

Primarily National Youth Councils, African Union Member states, REC's, African Union Youth Any other Africa Union organisations.

Activity 2:

Consolidated Youth Activity Calendar

Context:

Developing a consolidated youth calendar enables youth to plan and prioritise activities in advance for budgetary and other logistical arrangements. The calendar should be created in consultation with national, regional, and continental stakeholders to avoid duplication of activities and to garner programme support.

Key role-players:

National youth councils, African Union organs

Activity 3:

Rural and urban integration

Context:

Ensure that there is a strong collaboration between rural and urban youth organisations to facilitate skills sharing for personal and community development. This will also ensure that no youth are left behind as these linkages will connect the rural youth to the urban cosmopolitan.

Key role-players:

National youth councils, African Union Member States

Strategic direction 4:

Strengthened platforms for inter-regional and inter-continental dialogue, exchanges and peer learning on youth specific trends, challenges and prospects for improved governance and democracy in Africa

Activity 1:

High level dialogue youth pre-forum

Context:

This is an ongoing activity that brings together African youth who will discuss and present the state of African youth in context with the theme or the plight of the year. Having Kukaa Pamoja as a lower-level platform will enable the HLD youth forum to be more robust, having greater regional perspectives.

Key role-players:

Primarily AGA-APSA, and any other African Union organs

Activity 2:

Kukaa Pamoja regional level (Swahili phrase meaning “sit together”)

Context:

Physical platforms where open discussions are convened at a regional level on a 3 monthly basis in the lead up to the annual High Level-Dialogue. These platforms will highlight: African shared values, best practices, challenges, and available democracy tools for increased awareness of democratic principles. Running lateral to the physical is the digital platform, designed, managed, and used by youth to increase their communication and build stronger networks for collaboration on similar areas of work.

Key role-players:

Primarily REC's, National Youth Councils, Civil Society groups and any other AU organ.

Strategic direction 5:

Increased youth generated and focused knowledge on democratic governance in Africa.

Activity 1:

Youth quarterlies (Online website)

Context:

These are youth focused publications that will provide an accurate perspective of the state of African Youth by African Youth.

Key role-players:

African Youth, Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), AGA-APSA, National youth councils, African Union Organs

Activity 2:

#DGTrends

Context:

The hashtag is already in use and has become synonymous with governance and young people. There is a need to amplify its reach through incorporating governance influencers who will be able to boost digital engagement and knowledge about governance processes.

Key role-players:

African Union youth, National Youth Councils, Youth influencers, African Union organs.

Activity 3:

Governance hackathons

Context:

Hackathons provide the opportunity to bring together a host of skills from different sectors including, economics, health, governance, and sport among others, to design interventions for a chosen sector. Considering that young people have these skills, they can use hackathons to innovate on inclusive, or futuristic governance.

Governance hackathons will be a complementary activity to the “Youth Innovation challenge” which scales up ideas that have been deployed while a hackathon conceptualises and prototypes ideas in a marathon process.

Key role-players:

AGA-APSA, African Union organs, African Union member states, REC's, National Youth Councils.

Implementation plan

The overall implementation of AGA-YES will be coordinated by the AGA- APSA Secretariat in line with the CES guiding principles. The YES (2023-2027) is a building block of the citizens' engagement strategy (CES) which works in complementarity with the CES but can also function as an independent pillars. An implementation plan shall be developed with the AGA-APSA Sec and the Platform members.





WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025-2030

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 27

Rationale for developing WES..... 28

Key Legislations that support WES..... 28

State of Women29

Key role-players in the implementation of the WES:29

Strategic Priorities:30

Implementation.....32

Introduction

The participation and engagement of women in governance processes in Africa is important more so as it is estimated that over 50% of the African population are women. Based on this and the aspirations of Agenda 2063, women are a critical cornerstone for realising the AU vision of a united, integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa. Furthermore, having women engaged allows this crucial segment of the population to be emancipated from the socio-cultural limitations that have traditionally been a barrier towards their participation. Nwankwor (2022) highlights that there are unwritten, informal rules within the society that string together expectations from culture, religion, and social structures to exert powerful constraints on women's political agency.²⁷

Despite the above, Africa remains lagging on having tangible representation of women in positions and structures of social and political influence.

Nwankwor (2022) further stresses that gender disparity has endured despite vast policies and legislation at global national and regional levels, which are designed to boost women participation and representation.²⁸

Former President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, highlighted the Inter Parliamentary Union statistics of women representation in parliament showing that only two subregions constitute the 24% parliamentary seats occupied by women in Africa while the other three are more that 10% points behind.²⁹

Noting the above, it becomes imperative to have a women's engagement strategy that directly responds to the implementation challenge of the various women and gender sensitive policies that are available.

Despite the recognition of the principle of non-discrimination, the practical erasure of toxic customary laws that impede the development of women remains a desire thus necessitating the need for a women's engagement strategy.



Rationale for developing WES

It has been seen that the policies for women empowerment and inclusion are present but what needs to be done is alignment of the protocols and declarations into practice. From this, there is a need to mobilise political will for the full ratification of all women related instruments. There is equally a need to strengthen the capacity of women led civic groups and societies and to empower women's networks and platforms thereby ensuring that the fora that bring together women are effective.

In building this effort to effective participation and engagement of women the following is key to achieving success:

- ◆ Accelerating ratification, domestication and implementation of existing legal frameworks, protocols and instruments that relate to women.
- ◆ Ensuring development and implementation of national strategies that allow women, and girls to equitably contribute their quota to effective democratic governance, peace building and sustainable development.
- ◆ Increasing women's capacity to participate in decision making and leadership through education, skill, and development training.
- ◆ To create strategic opportunities and build the capacity of women to meaningfully engage in the attainment of improved democratic governance and respect for human and peoples' rights at the national, regional, and continental levels.
- ◆ Establishing mechanisms to give priority to policies and programmes designed to curb the marginalisation of women.
- ◆ Strengthening citizens' associations and women groups/leagues/CSO's

This strategy aims to provide a guideline for sustainable engagement of women in governance processes ensuring that there is a coordinated effort by African Governance Platform members and the broader civil society.

Key Legislation that support WES

1. Maputo Protocol - Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
2. SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, adopted in 2008 (Article 12-13)
3. ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in 2015, Specifically Article 11.1
"Member States shall institute affirmative action to ensure effective gender equality in decision-making positions in public and private sectors"
4. Treaty of the Establishment of the East African Community (1999), specifically Article 121.A "promote the empowerment and effective integration and participation of women at all levels of socio-economic development especially in decision-making;"
5. 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
6. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security

Key outcomes of the AGA-APSA Women's Engagement Strategy review:

- ◆ The need to reframe the perception of women, locating them within the broader human rights framework - but more importantly as citizens.
- ◆ The need for strategic partnerships and alliances to scaleup and measure impact of the WES

- ◆ The need for new conversations and embracing narratives on the framing of gender i.e., right people, right language, right partnership, with emphasis on young women.
- ◆ Intergenerational dialogues that ensure transfer of knowledge for the empowerment of women.

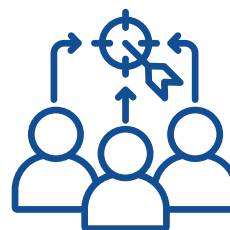
State of Women

The challenges women are facing in governance on the continent include: a lack of implementation of normative frameworks that provide an enabling political space for women to actively participate in democratic governance, a lack of capacity at different levels in implementing normative frameworks, capacity gaps among women groups and networks to engage effectively at all levels of governance structures, unequal access to and ownership of economic, political, social and cultural resources/opportunities, limited access to key resources like land, education, good health, training and employment, limited financing for gender equality and women's empowerment programmes as well as patriarchy and socially constructed gender roles which systematically accord low value and status to women amongst others.³⁰

Key role-players in the implementation of the WES:

The following are essential role-players that are important to realising the success of the WES: African Governance Platform Members including REC's and AU Organs Government Ministries, Commissions & agencies for women, women in cabinet, parliament, civil service, and political parties; the media; and innovation hubs at the national, regional, and continental levels.

Strategic Objectives



- 1 Enhance the capacity of AU Organs, Institutions and RECs to engage women in programmes and initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic governance.
- 2 Facilitate women engagement towards building a democratic and peaceful society.
- 3 Cultivate and improve the values of democratic governance at different levels, especially among women.
- 4 Encourage research and sharing of comparable lessons and knowledge on the trends, challenges, and opportunities for women engagement in democratic governance processes.
- 5 Create a platform for dialogue to facilitate communication, sharing of lessons learned among AGP Members, African women, women networks and CSOs, as well as supporting efforts aimed at building good governance and entrenching democracy in AU Member States; and
- 6 Improve the inclusion of African women and their voice into high level AU discussion on democratic governance trends in Africa.

Strategic Priorities



Strategic Priority 1:

Strengthened coordination and collaboration through structured consultations with AGP and relevant networks.

Objectives:

- ◆ To Enhance women's agency and voice in the implementation of policy pronouncements on democratic governance and peacebuilding at the regional, national, and local levels through a co-development process.

Key Actions:

- ◆ Establishing gender coordination committees for collaboration and partnership between AGP members with women at the regional, national, and local levels.
- ◆ Periodic consultations to review areas of women's participation or representation in democratic governance and peacebuilding, lessons learned and possible areas of collaboration.
- ◆ Convene regional meetings to accelerate the ratification and domestication of AU Shared Value and Instruments

Strategic Priority 2:

Support capacity building for women's rights groups and other key stakeholders on meaningful representation and participation of women in democratic governance.

Objectives:

- ◆ To enhance the capacity of AGP members and women-led organisations on appropriate women's engagement knowledge and skills.
- ◆ To share lessons on challenges arising from specific trends that have been created and institutionalised for engagement of women in governance and democracy among AGP Members.

Key Actions:

- ◆ Build capacities of AGA Platform Members; Women's rights groups and other key stakeholders through hosting gender advocates and experts at the AGP
- ◆ Enhance the capacity of women leaders to become active players in Conflict Prevention and Peace Building processes especially in countries emerging from conflict for instance in mediation, political dialogue, Disarmament Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) and Security Sector Reforms (SSR).
- ◆ Train and strengthen the capacity of women in media, private sector, and civil society organisations on positive gender representation on various platforms.

The suggested implementation organs are:

- ◆ AGA Women Advisory Panel.
- ◆ Transformative Leadership Programme - Linkages with Strategic Partners.
- ◆ Women in Parliament – Pan African Parliament.



Strategic Priority 3:

Identify and support Role Models and Mentorship for Aspiring Women Leaders

Objectives:

- ◆ "Women Leaders Caravan" - a drive that profiles women role models at a national level and gives them a platform to tour and mentor young women leaders.

Key Actions:

- ◆ Develop a structured mentorship programme and intergenerational dialogue platforms specifically for women in civil and political leadership.

Strategic Priority 4:

Create a Platform for Dialogue and capacity building

Objectives:

- ◆ To facilitate communication, networking, experience sharing and lesson learning between women from different backgrounds i.e., from the village, from towns, academia, entrepreneurs, politics etc to set the agenda for women by women. This platform will contribute the Agenda for the Annual Gender pre-forum

Key Actions:

- ◆ National and regional conventions, Annual Gender Pre-forum, National, Regional and Continental Caucuses.

Strategic Priority 5:

Produce women specific knowledge and data on good governance and democracy in Africa generated, managed, and disseminated by women.

Objectives:

- ◆ To promote the generation of women specific knowledge through action research and documentation of best practices.

Key Actions:

- ◆ Establish a database of women focused policy practitioners and experts on gender including equality advocates. Produce bi-annually or quarterly briefs that are easy to understand which track progress of activities that are being undertaken to empower women.
- ◆ Women Participation Journal (Association of African Women Researchers)

Implementation plan

The overall implementation of AGA-APSA WES will be coordinated by the AGA- APSA Secretariat in line with the CES guiding principles. The WES (2023-2027) is a building block of the citizens' engagement strategy (CES) which works in complementarity with the CES but can also function as an independent pillar.

A joint implementation plan shall be developed by the Secretariat along with the AGA-APSA Secretariat





CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025- 2030

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	35
Background to a civil society strategy	36
Why a civil society strategy?.....	37
Situational Analysis of Civil Society in Africa	38
The Civil Society Strategy(CSS)	38
Overall and specific objectives of the CSS.....	39
Strategic priorities and pathways for the CSS	39
Implementation of the civil society strategy.....	41
CSS Implementation plan	41

Introduction

The civil society strategy (CSS) is one of the four strategies that encompass the overall strategy of the Africa Governance Architecture (AGA) and African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) comprehensive 'Citizen Engagement Strategy' (CES) for AGA-APSA. To provide a context of the strategy, the CSS begins with the background, including the rationale and a situational analysis of the state of civil society in Africa.

This is followed by an outline of the specific objectives of the CSS. The strategic priorities and pathways for implementing a CSS for AGA-APSA follows. The next section presents recommendations for the utilisation of AGA-APSA platform for the implementation of the CSS. The final section of the CSS presents an implementation plan, including a guide for risk analysis to inform monitoring and evaluation of the implementation.



Background to a civil society strategy

The place of civil society in Africa's democratisation and governance trajectory has been recognized overtime.³¹ Despite its contested understanding, the idea of civil society is generally understood as a domain which is separate from government or state, business, and the private sector. This intermediate sphere between the individual or family and the state is usually occupied by voluntary organisations, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs).³² The platform that civil society represents in societies enables engagement with citizens of all groups and reach. Thus, a civil society platform provides an opportunity for the realisation of African Union (AU)'s aspiration to become a people centred organisation.

The AU Agenda 2063 has set out desires toward people-driven development.³³ The African Union (AU) Constitutive Act provides for 'Citizen Engagement' and popular participation.³⁴ The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) also recognizes every citizen's right to participate freely in the Governance process of their country. The AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) requires enhanced citizens' engagement on governance and political processes. These normative and policy frameworks as established by the AU make it imperative for a civil society strategy to inform a comprehensive citizens engagement strategy for AGA-APSA.

The civil society strategy is also informed by AGA-APSA realisation of the need to complement already developed Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) and Women Engagement Strategy (WES), which recorded successes as well as challenges.³⁵ The CSS is thus one of the components that AGA-APSA intends to use to engage African civil society to reach out to citizens broadly. Although AGA-APSA and other Africa Governance Platform Members (AGP Members) have been engaging civil society in their respective thematic areas of work over the years, there has not been a strategy that guides AGP members in these engagements. This civil society strategy aims at providing a broad framework to guide AGP members to design their own specific strategies of engagement as part of the comprehensive citizens' engagement strategy (CES).



WHY A CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY?

Civil society is understood to have a potential role in contributing positively to democratisation and governance in Africa. The educational, communicative, representational, and cooperative roles³⁶ enables civil society to be a critical pathway of citizens' engagement. While civil society is often viewed as standing in adversary to the state, in practice, its cooperative functions have the

potential to advance state-society relationships. Civil society presents a space through which citizens' views and preferences are expressed and collated; it enables citizens to address collective challenges; and mobilise representation and in so doing contribute to policy discourse.

A CSS provides a framework through which AGA-APSA and its AGP members can be guided in their engagements with citizens in Africa in governance, peace, and security processes for the realisation of AU shared values.



Situational Analysis of Civil Society in Africa

Over the past five decades the organisational profile of civil society in Africa has changed significantly. A particular feature of the civil society landscape in Africa has been the dominance of formal civil society structures as against the informal mass mobilisation forms. The elements of the civil society sector have grown and expanded to cover service delivery, policy advocacy, research, technical and capacity building, and watchdog groups.

The transformation and growth of the civil society sector in Africa have also witnessed various typologies such as networks/coalitions, policy research think-tanks, professional member associations, community-based organisations/grassroot organisations, ethnic/locally based organisations, faith-based organisations, NGOs, and to a degree the media and private sector have sometimes been looped into the sector. The civil society sector has also witnessed developments of expert communities, focusing on themes, such as democracy and governance, health education, women and youth empowerment, girls and children rights, sanitation, environment, among many others.

In spite of the growth and transformation of the civil society landscape in Africa, the sector faces many, recurrent and new challenges. These include financial insecurity, weak or inadequate technical expertise, organizational weaknesses, and the perennial political legitimacy questions. Of particular concern in recent times is the shrinking civic space for civil society to operate.

The shrinking civic space manifests in both formal governmental legal restrictions and subtle repression. The Afrobarometer surveys, carried out in 34 countries between 2016 and 2018, indicated an increasing perception among African citizens that civic and political space is shrinking due to government restrictions. Other forms of civil society corporatization, weak social movements, economic crises and growing poverty, youth unemployment, which often undermines

mobilization for participation, health pandemic as well as violence and terrorism.

While civil society in Africa continues to face challenges and constraints, it remains a relevant and critical pathway of deepening democratic governance and peacebuilding processes. Because civil society is about the associational life of people, it has generally been noted as one of the best routes to democracy and governance. As a result of its associational organised and independent nature, civil society is able to mobilise against government tyranny and make demands on governments. Civil society provides networks and social capital for civic engagement which contributes to ownership and sustainability of efforts.

Across the globe civil society is recognized as a necessary building block for inclusive citizens' participation in the democratic and development processes. By virtue of the nature of civil society, it provides instruments for partnerships, mobilisation, content generation, reach to wider citizenry, and a chain for feedback loop. Therefore, despite the challenges it faces, civil society is a defining arena to facilitate participation of citizens in a democratic and governance processes. Civil society has a pivotal role and contributions to this guiding principle.

The Civil Society Strategy(CSS)

One of the guiding principles of AGA-APSA is effective participation of African peoples in strengthening and democratic governance in member states and continental affairs. Civil society is an essential conduit for the AGA-APSA as well as the Africa Governance Platform members to constructively engage citizens towards the realisation of AGA-APSA objectives, in particular the enhancement of popular participation and citizen engagement in the fulfilment of democracy, governance, and respect for human rights aspirations. The civil society strategy is one of the components of a comprehensive citizens' engagement strategy.

Overall and specific objectives of the CSS

The overall objective of the civil society strategy is to serve as a primary document for civil society engagement initiatives by AGA-APSA and its AGP Members.

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. Formulate key priority areas and/or directions for civil society engagement for AGA-APSA platform members³⁷
2. Develop approaches to facilitate and institutionalise regular and inclusive engagements of the civil society sector and AGA-APSA on democratic governance and African shared values.
3. Provide frameworks for AGA-APSA and its AGP Members to engage citizens through African civil society.³⁸
4. Enhance AGA-APSA and platform members' capacity to promote civil society engagement through coordination and complementarity of actions and approaches.

Strategic priorities and pathways for the CSS



The proposed CSS considers the opportunities and constraints in the civil society sector to outline priorities/directions and approaches for implementation. They are developed as aspirations that can contribute to shaping citizens' engagement strategy geared towards democratic governance and consolidation in Africa.

Strategic Priority 1:

Strengthened coordination between AGA-APSA and Civil Society (CS) to bridge knowledge gap

Objectives:

1. To (re)build trust between AGA-APSA and establish community of practice through regular consultations
2. To promote trust between governments of AU member countries and civil society communities
3. To collectively promote, protect and defend the civic space for citizens' engagement

Actions/pathways/approaches

1. Periodic structured consultations/meetings to review engagements, exchange of knowledge and learning as well as updating each other
2. Platforms for sub-regional (RECs) consultations with civil society developed and structured for regularity
3. Institutionalise regular communication between AGA-APSA on outcomes of AU High-Level Meetings

Strategic Priority 2:

Enhanced capacity of civil society knowledge and practices of AU work

Objectives:

1. To increase awareness among civil society about AU Charters, protocols, and African shared values (norms and standards) on democratic governance
2. To enhance capacity of civil society knowledge and to understand the work AGA-APSA and African Governance Platform Members

3. To support the propagation and advocacy for the domestication, ratification, and implementation of AU shared values in member countries by using civil society as a vehicle

Actions/pathways/approaches

1. Regular sharing of relevant information to civil society through training and communication.
2. Enhance knowledge capacity of civil society by way of facilitating civil society participation in meetings of AU and its Organs
3. Develop civil society thematic clusters as they relate to AGA-APSA, including Democracy and Elections, Human Rights and Transitional Justice, Constitutionalism and Rule of Law, Socio-Economic, Service Delivery and Urbanization, Humanitarian Assistance, and Peace and Security as well as those of platform members

Strategic Priority 3:

Mainstreamed youth and women engagements as part of civil society engagement

Objectives:

1. To develop linkages among youth and women focused civil society organisations (CSOs) and the broader civil society platforms
2. To promote coordination and maximise resources within the civil society sector implementing priorities in the youth and women engagement strategies
3. To break working in silos within the platform members by strengthening coordination and complementarity/synergy among members working on broad democratic governance and those focused on women and youth

Actions/pathways/approaches

1. Platforms of AGA-APSA and Civil Society to have modules/engagements on youth and women
2. Capacity building of civil society (not only youth and women focused) on youth and women engagement strategies

Strategic Priority 4:

Strengthened platforms and improved capacity of civil society to effectively facilitate citizens' participation in democratic governance processes at national and community levels

Objectives:

1. To leverage on civil society platforms for the mobilisation of citizens to participate in democratic processes
2. To facilitate relationships between AGA-APSA and citizens and knowledge of citizens of AU through civil society platforms
3. To promote citizen action for democracy through voice, accountability, unleashing power of local actors

Actions/pathways/approaches

1. Engage and support coalition of civil society that brings together CBOs/grassroots organisations to facilitate sharing of information, dialogue, and peer learning
2. Facilitate and build the capacity of CBOs through regular training and awareness of AU protocols, charters, and shared values.

Strategic Priority 5:

Generated research from civil society to inform AGA-APSA and AU work

Objectives:

1. To support the capacity of civil society to generate and develop platforms for research and feedback from citizens in Africa to inform AU deliberations
2. To use and leverage African led evidence-based data for advocacy campaigns to promote AU shared values for democratic governance

Actions/pathways/approaches

1. Establish a database of African civil society led produced research on democratic governance, peace and security, youth and women for documentation and reference
2. To promote the generation of knowledge produced by civil society and through learning from peer civil society actors advance indigenous and intergenerational knowledge and experience sharing

Implementation of the civil society strategy

Approach

The approach to implementing the CSS is informed by civil society acting as a catalyst of engaging citizens. The civil society is viewed as partners, enablers, beneficiaries, and agents of the AGA-APSA Secretariat. Through a range of approaches, including institutionalised platforms and regular consultations, strategic and coordinated partnerships, capacity building, information sharing and feedback, and knowledge and data generation, the CSS priorities will be implemented to achieve the stated objectives.

Roles and Responsibilities: AGA-APSA Platform Members

To implement the CSS successfully and effectively will involve mainly the African Governance Platform members. Each of the platform members has their civil society interlocutors in engaging on thematic AU issues. The platform members will be the leads in implementing the CSS. The APA-APSA Secretariat will serve as facilitators and promote coordination of the overall action plan for the implementation of the CSS. The convening power of AGA-APSA brings added advantage to catalyse individual and collective actions by the platform members as well as Regional Economic Communities (RECs). There will be a need to set up an advisory/steering committee made up of platform members to promote ownership, build synergies and guide and track the strategy implementation.

Guiding Principles

To achieve desired implementation approaches, certain guiding principles and frameworks are necessary to foster responsiveness, ownership and mutually rewarding outcomes. These guiding principles will facilitate relationships between civil society and AGA-APSA. The guiding principles is informed by the following indicators:

1. Co-creation of issues and setting agenda for the institutionalised platforms and consultations as part of the broad advocacy for civil society engagement
2. Establish mutual respect by avoiding top-down approach to engagement, but rather develop a symbiotic relation by identifying needs on both sides for beneficial outcomes.
3. Accountability principles enshrined in strategy implementation to hold each other accountable.
4. Clear communication platform and strategy to establish regular interactions, actions for engagements, and challenges in the strategy implementation

Risk Assessment and Monitoring and Evaluation

For any strategy to succeed, anticipated challenges and risk analysis is needed prior to start of implementation. The risk assessment provides guiding posts for potential pitfalls that may derail successful implementation. The risk assessment further provides content for a monitoring and evaluation framework to track, audit, and learn in a continuous process. There are inherent risks for the engagement of African civil society. As outlined above, the constraints and challenges as well as evidence of shrinking civic space have the potential to impact negatively on the strategy implementation. In addition, the nature of the civil society sector, being in flux, defining and identifying the target to engage, typologies of NGOs, including governmental NGOs, issues of representation, and resistance of governments of member countries may have implications on the CSS implementation. A prior risk assessment to inform implementation will be critical.

The CSS will benefit from lessons drawn from the implementation of the youth and women engagement strategies. In addition, learning from past AU/Civil Society engagements platforms will be of value to the monitoring and evaluation framework to accompany the CSS implementation. To start with, a mapping of past, present, and shifting patterns of the civil society space in democracy and governance will be essential in developing a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework to accompany the CSS. The MEL for CSS will not be isolated but linked to the youth and women engagement strategies and as well situating it within the overall AGA-APSA MEL framework. The MEL will provide indicators of milestones during the strategy implementation period, regular learning forums throughout the period of implementation to inform modifications and adjustments where required, and to make the strategy a live document



Endnotes

- ¹ Youth Engagement Strategy, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
https://ifrcgo.org/africa/docs/YOUTH/IFRC-YES_DRAFT_EN_300.pdf
- ² African Union Youth Charter
- ³ Why Africa's youth hold the key to its development potential. World Economic Forum
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/09/why-africa-youth-key-development-potential/>
- ⁴ Dube, C. African Youth: empowering the continents greatest asset. Mail and Guardian (23 June 2022).
<https://mg.co.za/africa/2022-06-23-african-youth-empowering-the-continents-greatest-asset/>
- ⁵ African Youth Decade 2009 – 2018 Plan of Action: Accelerating youth Empowerment for sustainable development
https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2021-08/African_Youth_Decade_Plan_of_Action_2009-2018.pdf
- ⁶ Gyampo, R. and Anyidoho, N. Youth politics in Africa. Oxford University Press.
<https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-716>
- ⁷ Honwana, A. (2012). The time of youth: Work, social change, and politics in Africa. Boulder, CO: Kumarian Press.
- ⁸ African Governance Architecture Youth Engagement Strategy 2016 -2020
- ⁹ Taken from that AGA Women engagement strategy 2017-2020 "Gaps and challenges on women engagement"
- ¹⁰ Informed by feedback from the reviewed workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya from August 22 to 27, 2022
- ¹¹ The CSS will be incorporated in the larger comprehensive citizen engagement strategy
- ¹² AGA-APSA aligns to the definition of Knowledge Management provided by C. Collison and G. Parcell as "capturing, creating, distilling, sharing, and using know-how. That know-how includes explicit and tacit knowledge. [...] It is not about books of wisdom and best practices, it's more about the communities that keep know-how of a topic alive by sharing what they know, building on it and adapting it to their own use. [...] Call it 'performance through learning', 'shared knowledge', or simply 'working smarter.'"
- ¹³ Youth Engagement Strategy, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
https://ifrcgo.org/africa/docs/YOUTH/IFRC-YES_DRAFT_EN_300.pdf
- ¹⁴ African Union Youth Charter
- ¹⁵ Why Africa's youth hold the key to its development potential. World Economic Forum
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/09/why-africa-youth-key-development-potential/>
- ¹⁶ Youth Engagement Strategy 2016-2020 "background and rationale"
- ¹⁷ African Governance Architecture Youth Engagement Strategy 2016-2020
- ¹⁸ The specific objectives of the Youth Engagement Strategy are adopted from the AGA-YES 2016-2020
- ¹⁹ Dube, C. African Youth: empowering the continent's greatest asset. Mail and Guardian (23 June 2022).
<https://mg.co.za/africa/2022-06-23-african-youth-empowering-the-continents-greatest-asset/>
- ²⁰ African Youth Decade 2009 – 2018 Plan of Action: Accelerating youth Empowerment for sustainable development
https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2021-08/African_Youth_Decade_Plan_of_Action_2009-2018.pdf
- ²¹ Gyampo, R. and Anyidoho, N. Youth politics in Africa. Oxford University Press.
<https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-716>
- ²² Honwana, A. (2012). The time of youth: Work, social change, and politics in Africa. Boulder, CO: Kumarian Press.
- ²³ African Governance Architecture Youth Engagement Strategy 2016 -2020
- ²⁴ ibid

²⁵ These indicators were generated during the AGA-APSA review workshop organised in Nairobi, Kenya from August 22 to 27, 2022. The workshop sought to evaluate the YES strategy within the period that it was implemented and to serve as a foundation / baseline exercise in developing a citizens engagement strategy. A Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology was used whereby different experts poured insight in a co-creative evaluation process at a stakeholder's workshop meeting in Nairobi Kenya.

²⁶ The African Union officially recognizes 8 REC names: Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)², Southern African Development Community (SADC).

²⁷ Nwankwor, C. "Priorities for advancing women's equal political leadership in the coming year" Brookings Africa in Focus <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2022/02/23/priorities-for-advancing-womens-equal-political-leadership-in-the-coming-year/>

²⁸ ibid

²⁹ H.E Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, "The art of the pivot: African women as critical problem solvers in the 21st century" African Girls and Women leading the continent in Brookings Foresight Africa 2022

⁴⁰ These were generated from the review of the draft KM strategy during the Nairobi, Kenya workshop in August 2022

³⁰ Taken from that AGA Women engagement strategy 2017-2020 "Gaps and challenges on women engagement"

³¹ "APRM Civil Society Handbook", African Peer Review Mechanism, 2021

³² "Democratic Governance and Actors' Conceptualization of "Civil Society" in Africa: State and Society Relations in Ghana from 1982-2000" by Christiana Atibi, *Voluntas* (2012), 23: 43-62

³³ Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

³⁴ Constitutive Act of the African Union, Article 3(g) and 4(c).

³⁵ A review workshop was held in Nairobi, Kenya from August 22 to 24, 2022 where the YES and WES implementation was discussed and recommendations made for revisions. In the same workshop, participants reached consensus to develop a civil society strategy alongside the revised YES and WES as well as Knowledge Management strategy to form the main pillars for a citizens' engagement strategy.

³⁶ "Promoting democracy in Ghana: exploring the democratic roles of donor sponsored non-governmental organisations " by Jelmer Kamstra and Luuk Knippenberg, *Democratisation* (2013) 21:4, 589-603

³⁷ Informed by feedback from the reviewed workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya from August 22 to 27, 2022

³⁸ The CSS will be incorporated in the larger comprehensive citizen engagement strategy



AGA-APSA

CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGY

2025 - 2030



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