The Civil Society Guide to Regional Economic Communities in Africa

Chitiga, Rudy, Odhiambo, Morris

Published by African Minds


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Revitalized regional integration offers the most credible strategy for tackling Africa’s development challenges because of the many weaknesses that overwhelm the limited capacities and resources of individual countries. Collective efforts with dynamic political commitment to integration can help to overcome the daunting challenges.


As regional integration gains momentum, there is growing interest among civil society and citizens to participate in the processes and programmes of regional economic communities (RECs). The constitutive treaties of RECs provide for citizens’ participation, but the accessibility of REC treaties and protocols remains a challenge. Decision-making remains state-centric despite growing citizen and civil society interest in regional integration.

The Civil Society Guide to Regional Economic Communities aims to assist citizens and civil society in engaging with the policies and programmes of three RECs in Africa:

- The East African Community (EAC);
- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The following are discussed for each REC:

- History and legal framework;
- Organs and institutions;
- The decision-making process;
- Budgeting and finances;
- Relationship with the African Union;
- Engagement with civil society; and
- Current debates within each REC.

The Civil Society Guide to Regional Economic Communities also contains a sampling of the experiences of non-governmental organisations that have interacted with these RECs.