The Civil Society Guide to Regional Economic Communities in Africa

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Since 1963, when the African integration project was born, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have been an indispensable part of the continent’s deeper socioeconomic and political integration. More than half a century later, such regional institutions continue to evolve, keeping pace with an Africa that is transforming itself amid challenges and opportunities. RECs represent a huge potential to be the engines that drive the continent’s economic growth and development as well as being vehicles through which a sense of a continental community is fostered. It is critical therefore that citizens understand the multi-faceted and bureaucratic operations of regional institutions in order to use them to advance their collective interests.

There is therefore, growing interest among civil society and citizens to participate in the processes and programmes of RECs, and The Civil Society Guide to Regional Economic Communities aims to further 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: their history and legal frameworks; 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 sample of the experiences of non-governmental organisations that have interacted with these regional communities.