African Civil Society Education Groups:

In Search for A Place in Implementing the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA)

RESEARCH REPORT
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GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR
EDUCATION
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ACRONYMS

AAU	Association of African Universities
ACA	African Curriculum Association
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AfECN	African Early Childhood Network
AFTRA	Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities
ANCEFA	Africa Network Campaign on Education for All
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
CEWS	Continental Early Warning System
CIEFFA	The African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EAC	East African Community
EALA	East African Legislative Assembly
EACSOF	East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum
EATUC	The East African Trade Union Confederation
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Commission of West African States
ECOSOC	Economic Social and Cultural Council
ECOSOCC	Economic Social and Cultural Council of the AU
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EI	Education International
ESTI	Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (AU Directorate)
EU	European Union
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FOCCISA	Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GEM	Global Education Monitoring Report
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IICBA	The International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA)

IPED	Pan-African Institute of Education for Development
LEG	Local Education Group
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSI	Multistakeholder Initiative
NEC	National Education Coalition
NEPAD	The New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSA	Non-State Actors
PSC	Peace and Security Council
RACA	The Report of Annual Continental Activities
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
RMs	Regional Mechanisms
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SADC-CNGO	Southern Africa Development Community – Council of NGOs
SAPSN	Southern African People's Solidarity Network
SATUCC	Southern African Trade Union Coordination Council
SDG4	Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Educations)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNC	SADC National Committees
SO	Strategic Objective
STC	Specialized Technical Committee
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WACSOF	West African Civil Society Forum
WACSI	West Africa Civil Society Institute
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WFP	World Food Program

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African Union (AU) launched its Continental Education Strategy (CESA) in 2016, as the education component of the Africa We Want vision, stressing that CESA's twelve strategic objectives constitute a domestication of the global SDG4 agenda while articulating additional African priorities, which respond to the continent's long-term development needs.

CESA's launch envisioned implementation processes which would see the African regional bodies (such as ECOWAS and SADC) play an important role in driving the adoption and further elaboration of CESA strategies at the regional and national levels.   The CESA strategy document recognized the role of civil society (and other non-state actors) in developing and implementing CESA. It mentioned two pan-African civil society networks by name, ANCEFA and FAWE. It also assumed that regional economic communities (RECs) and national governments would see to it that civil society is part of the CESA governance and implementation structures.   CESA itself called for the establishment of an alliance of all stakeholders in its twelfth strategic objective.

The operationalization of CESA since 2016 has not matched the high-level of political support that governments and civil society alike express towards it as the articulation of a genuinely African vision for the continent's educational needs.   CESA remains largely unknown at the national level, without a visible presence in national education sector plans. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) appear to be disconnected from many CESA processes and their policy efforts in the education sphere make very few references to CESA.   With few exceptions, civil society education groups across Africa are unaware of CESA and cannot identify meaningful ways of engaging with it at the national level. In contrast, governments and civil society monitor the implementation of SDG4 goals and consider reporting on progress in the realization of the SDG4 goals a priority.   Politically valued but operationally neglected, CESA's diffusion into the regional and national education policy realms remains very weak overall.

CESA's most visible operational components are the twelve CESA clusters, thematic working groups which seek to maximize the engagement and contributions of different education stakeholders in promoting and implementing CESA's objectives. The clusters cover themes such as teacher development, TVET, curriculum, peace education, school feeding, and ICT in education. The twelve clusters are at various stages of their development and are not all equally inclusive or active.   There does not seem to be a deliberate effort to reach out to civil society for their participation in the clusters. Expanding the membership of each cluster is largely left to the chair(s) and coordinator(s) of the clusters who do not all share an understanding of civil society as an essential education stakeholder representing citizen voices and -as the case is in Africa- as an important actor in the national education landscape, as evidenced by their participation and leadership roles in the local education groups, the national education sector coordination and dialogue platforms.   As a consequence of the low levels of civil society participation in CESA clusters, important potential connections between the continental and national levels are missed, as well as potential gains from the knowledge and expertise that civil society groups can contribute to CESA processes and policies. Deficits in information, awareness, participation, and governance, can clearly be seen in the CESA clusters, and are expressive of the same deficits that characterize CESA as a whole.

Some recent developments give cause to optimism regarding overcoming those deficits in CESA. The AU and UNESCO, as the two agencies responsible for CESA and SDG4, have worked together to agree on joint benchmarks and common indicators for both frameworks. The first Continental Report, which was published by the AU and UNESCO in February 2023, is the first time that reporting on CESA's implementation

has systematically been done.   The agreed indicators for both frameworks allow seeing CESA and SDG4 as complementary and not separate and relieves governments of the burdens of separate reporting on each. This convergence was not a result of SDG4 negating CESA, or vice versa, but of expanding the SDG4 indicators so that they cover CESA objectives which the SDG4 lacks or does not include as strongly.

Moreover, in the aftermath of the pandemic and its damaging effects on education in Africa, there is a collective will, expressed by African leaders at the Transforming Education Summit in 2022, to strengthen the continent's education systems and to improve their inclusiveness and resilience. The African Union's declaration of education as the thematic priority for the continent in 2024 will include taking stock of CESA and evaluating its architecture, implementation, and governance. This presents a significant opportunity to revitalize CESA, elevate its visibility, and underscore its importance in advancing national education goals. Subjecting the actual governance and architecture of CESA to critical review is a crucial part of the next phase of its development.   For civil society, more inclusive and representative governance structures are needed for CESA to truly become the educational articulation of the Africa We Want vision.   The report identifies the absence of "the alliance of all education stakeholders", which the CESA strategy document called for, as the major governance deficit that needs to be urgently addressed.

African civil society education groups are eager to engage with CESA, to shape its development, and to help in giving it increasingly more substantive presence at the regional and national levels.   The research report is an expression of this interest and seeks to identify concrete and practical measures by the AU, RECs, national governments, civil society, and supportive funders, which would lead to expanding the meaningful participation of civil society in the governance of CESA and in its processes at all levels, from the continental down to the national.

The report's recommendations to enable meaningful civil society participation in CESA are the following:

1. *Address the issue of shrinking civic space:*

   - Inclusive participation at the regional and continental levels requires addressing shrinking civic space at the national level

   - The AU, RECs and national governments should provide adequate legal, political, and social spaces for CSOs to operate freely. Enabling national legal and administrative frameworks are necessary.

   - Evidence from different parts of the world and from different institutional settings show that the legal obligation to consult CSOs is conducive for civil society's ability to influence policy.

2. *Establish CESA's Governance Structure:*

   - The Governance Structure of CESA, the Alliance of All Stakeholders, should finally be established

   - AU should work collaboratively with the RECs so that they buy into the same principles and reflect on existing engagement modalities between their education arms and civil society.

- AU should open participation in CESA clusters to interested and qualified civil society organizations.

- Open joint CESA-SDG coordination and knowledge production mechanisms, such as the Continental Report, for civil society participation.

3. *Increase coordination between civil society groups, pooling of resources and collective demands for participation:*

- Civil Society Groups, including INGOs working in Africa, should increase their coordination, pooling of knowledge resources, and collective demands for more and meaningful participation

- Regional umbrella organizations with official status (EACSOF, SADC-CNGO, and WACSOF) should work with education groups in their regions to establish civil society education clusters.

- Umbrella organisations should facilitate and support the engagement of national and thematic CSOs, not crowd them out of those spaces.

- Funders should include the support of coordination platforms between education groups in their priorities.

4. *Facilitate civil society's full participation in the 2024 Year of Education in Africa:*

- Civil society and teacher organizations should be part of the regional and national task forces to shape and support country-level action plans for the Year of Education.

- Remove barriers to civil society participation in AU- and REC- high-level Summits and meetings.

- Provide role and space for civil society, as panelists and speakers in the planned conferences, as contributors to studies, and as participants.

- AU should consider setting up a special Civil Society Fund to support civil society participation and engagement.   Funders should also play their part in enabling civil society participation in the Year of Education.

Chapter 1 | Introduction

This report was commissioned by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to understand how the African Union (AU) and its Regional Economic Communities (RECs) engage with the theme of education, and to identify what spaces and opportunities exist for civil society education groups in Africa to interact with those bodies in the service of more equitable and democratic public education systems on the continent.

The timing for the research could not have been more appropriate. The AU has declared Education to be the thematic priority for 2024. This means, first of all, high-level political support and heightened visibility for promoting Africa's education goals, articulated in the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), a domestication of the global SDG4 agenda. Building up to the Year of Education will involve many important activities and events, including the mid-term evaluation of CESA and several conferences looking at issues such as financing for education, foundational learning, and gender and education.

Earlier this year, the efforts of the AU and of UNESCO to bring the CESA and SDG4 agendas into closer alignment resulted in joint benchmarking and the production of the first Continental Report on Education in Africa, which had equity at the core of its approach.

The bridging of CESA and SDG4 is significant because it could end what appears to be an inconsistency on the part of national governments in Africa: the political embrace and support of CESA as the expression of the African vision for education, without reflecting this in their national education plans and without monitoring or reporting on how they are implementing its goals, while regularly reporting on their progress in achieving the global SDG4 goals. The joint benchmarking and the agreements reached on joint indicators, as well as expanding data collection to cover the CESA indicators that have no corresponding indicators in the SDG4 framework, allow for more concrete engagement by national governments and national-level actors with CESA.

There is a strongly expressed will across the continent to strengthen the resilience of education systems and their readiness to deal with future shocks (TES 2022, AUC 2023). The pandemic revealed structural weaknesses and deepened pre-existing inequalities. The transition from in-class to on-line teaching and learning passed by millions of children who have no access to electricity, mobile phones, or the internet. The incurred learning losses were costly in a continent which, for all the progress made over the past decades, still has 50 million out-of-school children[1]. Recovery from the pandemic's scarring disruptions and making progress toward achieving the SDG4 and the ambitious CESA goals are huge challenges which require increased investment in education and upgrading education systems. Promises made during the pandemic to build-back-better and to increase investments in education are facing the reality of a burgeoning debt crisis that can be far reaching in the damage it inflicts on social sectors such as education, in addition to rising cost-of-living and the fallout of the war in the Ukraine.

Civil society education groups in Africa see themselves as actors who share some responsibility to utilize those opportunities and to address those challenges. The report will hopefully help them better understand the institutional landscape of the polycentric or multi-level governance that represents the AU edifice, with its various extensions and appendages. Education groups at the national level will want to know how regional and continental education frameworks influence and impact education planning and policymaking at the national level. Some of the evidence from the SADC region points in the direction of regional bodies making important decisions that impact on the national level. Our interviews and the extensive review we conducted of official AU and REC documents available online also show that regional education decision-making is neither transparent nor consultative, with non-state actors, such as civil society, largely excluded from deliberations and without a recognized and officially sanctioned role. It is more difficult, on the other hand, to see the lines connecting the continental level education policy space of CESA to the regional and national levels. As the CESA framework, although ratified by national governments, has not resulted in accountability frameworks that SDG4 reporting and monitoring allow, the question how CESA impact on national policymaking is not easy to answer.

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1   According to the World Bank, "In Sub-Saharan Africa, the learning losses came on top of shockingly low pre-COVID-19 learning levels, deepening concerns about the future of the region's children". The figure of 50 million comes from the UNICEF-AU's Transforming Education in Africa (2022)

First research of its kind

This -as far as we could establish- is the first research conducted on civil society engagement with the AU and its regional bodies around the theme of education. The AU adopted CESA as the education component of its Vision 2063 for "the Africa We Want". For this important component of the African continental vision to have increased legitimacy and ownership, and for raising the prospects of the education strategy's implementation, the participation of key education stakeholders, including civil society, in shaping, refining, monitoring and contributing to the implementation of CESA are an integral part to democratizing the continental and regional integration processes. The AU of the people, regionalism from below, are all inconceivable without the active participation and support of civil society and groups representing citizens, particularly marginalized segments of Africa's population. The research should be seen in this broader context of building an Africa of the African peoples.

GCE saw the gap in the research and sought to address it, motivated by the desire of the African national education coalitions to seek effective ways to make use of continental and regional frameworks to advance national education goals in their countries. For the researcher, this lack of previous research on the AU, civil society and education, meant freedom from what Harold Bloom described as the "anxiety of influence"[2]. But it also meant a dearth of written information and analysis, which has posed a huge challenge. Assembling and compiling the most basic information on topics such as the CESA clusters proved to be a painstaking task and, eventually, a mission not fully completed. At a time when a lot of information is posted online, particularly on the websites of inter-governmental organizations, the lack of information on CESA was particularly striking. Despite the very clear aim of the research being identifying ways for civil society to more effectively engage with CESA, AU officials, and others in institutions affiliated with the AU and active in CESA clusters, were not always responsive to requests for information.

State of the Research on Civil Society and Regionalisms in Africa

Research on civil society interactions with continental and regional governance structures in Africa has been limited but is growing. A few edited volumes cover both the AU and RECs (Adar, Finizio and Meyer 2018). Millstein's brief report Regionalising Civil Societies in Africa (2015), a summary of a workshop held under the same title, provides a useful overview of the theoretical and political issues related to regionalisms in Africa and how different civil societies (in the plural) deal with them. Godsäter (2015)'s study on SADC, rather than simply focusing on the marginalization of civil society, examines the circumstances under which CSOs are granted space in regional policymaking. It concludes that, "in light of CSOs' material and economic weakness[es], one of the key factors determining their advocacy success on the regional level is production of knowledge and strategic use of communication tools" (p. 100). This conclusion places emphasis on comparative advantages of civil society as experts in particular fields, as a key factor in determining their ability to create space for themselves and to gain increasing recognition by the intergovernmental bodies such as REC and the AU. The example of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) can be given here of the kind of expertise that RECs seek and which, consequently, gave WANEP privileged access to regional spaces and processes. In the education field, FAWE and AfECN could be classified as such organizations with expert knowledge that is needed by the regional bodies. Godsäter's conclusion is reiterated by Hulse et. al. (2018): "Collecting, coordinating and generating knowledge, and then channelling it into governance institutions seems to be a mode of civil society participation that is relatively accepted by SADC, particularly when it is sector-specific and focussed on engaging specific SADC units. Therefore, it may be easier to achieve meaningful influence on regional policies through a very specific sectoral approach rather than a broad-based approach" (pp. 37-38).

Hulse et. al (2018) is an example of research on civil society engagement with RECs. It uses social network analysis to map the networks of two comparable policy sectors (gender and labour) and investigates the role the quality and characteristics of regional civil society networks (GenderLinks and SATUCC in this case) play in the type of civil society engagement in regional governance in the SADC region and in achieving policy gains. The study is useful for its methodological approaches and the conclusions it draws regarding formal and informal access to SADC of civil society networks, as well as examining the benefits and disadvantages of centralized civil society networks as compared to dense and consensus-based member organizations.

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2   "Anxiety of influence" refers to the psychological struggle of aspiring authors to overcome the anxiety posed by the influence of their literary antecedents, a theory of poetry developed by Bloom in his 1973 book with the same title.

Godsäter and Söderbaum (2017) is another example which looks at civil society participation in policymaking around HIV/AIDS, also in SADC.   The analysis, according to the authors, "critically examines the conventional view that the involvement of civil society organizations in regional social policy contributes to participatory processes and reduces the democratic deficit of regional intergovernmental organizations".   Their conclusion is that "SADC member states, and to some extent also the SADC Secretariat, limit and even undermine civil society involvement in decision making and policy formulation. By implication, civil society's main role lies in service delivery and legitimating state-steered regional social policy at the expense of deeper, more genuinely participatory processes".   This is a conclusion that posits the value of civil society to regional bodies in terms of their contributions to service delivery (filling gaps in government provisions of such services) and in providing legitimacy to regional policies without meaningfully contributing to shaping them.   It's a cautionary tale of the risks of de-politicization and co-optation that civil society faces in its quest to play a role in regional policymaking.

Remaining with SADC, Zajonts and Leyens (2015a) seek to answer the question whether civil society can be transformers from below. This is an important question, particularly considering the conclusions of Godsäter and Söderbaum.   Their empirical case study, which focuses on four regional civil society organisations[3], notes those organisations' weaknesses (capacity constraints, financial dependence, lack of representativeness), but arrives at an important conclusion regarding the cumulative long-term effects of the regionalisation processes within civil society that they represent. The example of the four organizations shows that "regionalism is anything but a 'states only' domain. Civil society regionalisation constitutes a crucial feature of the southern African region. Increasing regional communication, interaction and activity within civil society, facilitated by, inter alia, the four organisations (...) has contributed to a rise in 'regionness'. The promotion of regional solidarity, the furtherance of regional agendas and the provision of regional platforms for exchange are necessary precursors for the development of a 'regional society'" (p.18).

This is a conclusion that sees the value of civil society organization at the regional level, despite all the challenges and difficulties, particularly in developing a regional identity and a civil society vision of regional integration that serves the peoples of the different parts of the African continent. Zajontz and Leyens's overall conclusion is that "Regional civil society as a force for transformation is constrained and must overcome some serious challenges, yet it remains a possibility" (ibid.).   This "possibility" is pertinent to the role that civil society education groups in Africa can play in people-driven regionalisms at the AU and the REC levels.

Tshimpaka, Mshimbi and Mayo's 2021 important book, Regional Economic Communities and Integration in Southern Africa provides a detailed examination of civil society networks as builders of an alternative regionalism in the SADC region. The book advances analysis of civil society networks in terms of their functional types and categories: watchdog civil society as transformist counterforce (the authors consider the Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN)[4] a "striking example" of this type that "challenges SADC as a state-driven organisation which uses neoliberal dogmas" p. 101); service delivery civil society as partner to and legitimator of SADC; mobiliser civil society as partner, manipulator and counterforce; knowledge production civil society as reformist; and issue-framing and agenda-setting civil society as transformist and counterforce. At the end of detailed descriptions and analysis of the different civil society networks working on regionalism in the region, the book concludes that "SADC should consider non-state actors, not only as service delivery or monitoring and evaluating agents, but more so as important evidence-based knowledge brokers, contributors and stakeholders with equal rights, by allowing them access at all stages of the decision-making processes in the formation of the region" (p.252).

With SADC being the focus of relatively a higher share of research, the piece by Reinold (2019) is a rare example of comparative research which looks at civil society participation in EAC, ECOWAS and SADC. Its starting premise is that of the three RECs, ECOWAS is the most advanced in terms of its openness to civil society participation. The article identifies three factors to explain this: support from member states, allies in ECOWAS's bureaucracy, and characteristics of civil society in the region.   For the last factor, Reinold considers resources at the disposal of civil society organizations, their mandate, and the particular issue-areas they work on, with those working in contentious areas such as human rights and democracy facing the most difficulty in participation.   One of the values of Reinolds' analysis is that it highlights the role REC bureaucracies play in facilitating or hindering formal and informal access of civil society to regional spaces, an often-under-researched area. Trondal, Tieku and Gänzle (2023) take this up from the angle of the degree of independence and executive authority of AU and ECOWAS bureaucracies.

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3   The four are: the Council of NGOs of the Southern African Development Community (SADC-CNGO), the Southern African Trade Union Co-ordination Council (SATUCC), the Economic Justice Network (EJN) of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa (FOCCISA), and the Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN).

4   SAPSN convenes an annual SADC People's Summit. The 2023 Summit was held in Angola under the theme of Justice-Inclusion-Participation. As SAPSN explains, this particular choice "underscores the concern with growing repression, authoritarianism and shrinking civic space in the Region" and. "recalls the desire for the voices and aspirations of poor and marginalised groups to be centred within regional political, social, economic, and cultural processes as a matter of justice".

Two other works to mention here are Aeby's comparative study (2021), which looks at civil society participation in peacemaking and mediation support in the AU, ECOWAS and SADC in the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and Mbaya (2023)'s monograph on civil society participation in the same sector, which is of general relevance for its insights into the roles of civil society in general and the challenges it faces when dealing with AU institutions. In her conclusions, the first recommendation Mbaya makes to the AU is to "re-commit to enabling CSO participation", explaining that "CSOs can only engage with the AU and its member states if it is allowed access. As elementary as this may appear, there is a need to revisit assumptions about the AU's openness to CSO participation by interrogating the obstacles to accessing the most critical AU spaces, particularly those of political significance. CSOs should be concentrating on honing their input rather than on a struggle to gain access" (p.35).   The monograph is valuable for the recommendations it makes to civil society organizations, including "perseverance", "consistent delivery of high-quality technical output", improving coordination of advocacy and increased mobilization of citizen voices (p.38).

None of the studies mentioned look at civil society in the education sector but provide important methodological insights and approaches that our research has benefited from.

New and Alternative Regionalisms

With its focus on the role of civil society education groups in African integration through the AU and the RECs, this research belongs to the new or alternative regionalism strand, as opposed to the traditional, state- and market-centric approaches.

New regionalism, as Fioramonti writes, "became conceptualised as an impetus to governance through civil society associations, strengthened by the capacity of non-state actors to deliver and drive policy in a way that is more attuned with the needs of the communities, compared to state-led development strategies" (in Tshimpaka et. al 2021, p. vii).

Within the new regionalism approach, the assumption is that state- and technocratic forces (AU bureaucrats for example) are not the sole actors who shape the formal institutional side of regional organizations. Civil society groups and networks are seen as crucial and active agents in the development of those bodies. Key questions that we ask, following this approach, are: to what extent can civil society inform and influence regional governance? is civil society itself regionalising? and to what extent can regional civil societies challenge market-led regional integration and promote more people-centred regionalism? As the report will show, the answers to those questions are not always straightforward. The regionalization of civil society, for example, in the sense of the AU and the RECs creating ECOSOCC and regional umbrella organizations, was top down, leading to the questioning of the independence of those created civil society umbrellas.   At the same time, one of this report's recommendations to civil society education groups is that they should regionalize, forming their own umbrellas to target the relevant REC directly, and to raise the profile of the education sector and its concerns within the umbrella civil society body and within ECOSOCC's thematic clusters. Is this regionalism from below, as advocated by Tshimpake et. al.?

Civil Society, Participation, and Stakeholder Engagement

As this research is concerned with civil society participation in regional spaces, processes, and policymaking, it is apt to touch upon concepts such as civil society, participation, and stakeholder engagement.

One of the better and thoughtful recent definitions of civil society is provided by Scholte (2023, p.380): civil society is "a political space where associations of citizens seek, from outside political parties, to shape societal rules". This definition, according to Scholte, "emphasizes the centrality of politics to civil society", treats it "less as an organization [often equated to NGOs] and more as an arena where people congregate to deliberate, strategize, and mobilize". The reference to citizens "signifies that people enter civil society to exercise their rights and fulfill their obligations as members of a political community", while "the exclusion of political parties is specified to underline that civil society operations do not normally aspire to occupy positions of official authority" but "aim 'to shape societal rules': that is, to influence the principles, norms, laws, and standards that govern the collective lives of human beings"[5].

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5   For a concise historical overview of the development of civil society in Africa, a useful source to consult is The Legislative Environment for Civil Society In Africa: A Synthesis Report (not dated) by Bhekinkosi Moyo

Participation, in the broadest sense, signifies people's involvement in decisions that affect their lives. We use the term participation to refer to formal and informal processes where citizens and organizations representing communities, interest groups or constituencies, are involved in government- and inter-governmental spaces where decisions impacting on them are made.

Following from this, stakeholder engagement has come to signify processes associated with open and inclusive policymaking, where different constituencies have opportunities and multiple channels to access relevant information and are consulted on policy decisions. By broadening citizens' influence on decisions, stakeholder engagement delivers better policy outcomes, enhances government accountability, increases the legitimacy of governance institutions, and builds civic capacity. This is conditional on participation and engagement processes being structured and continuous, as argued, for example, by the European Economic and Social Committee (2015): "stakeholder engagement in long-term sustainable development works best if it is organised as a continuous process rather than being conducted on an ad-hoc basis or through unrelated one-off engagement exercises at different points of the policy cycle. A structured process enables stakeholders as well as governments to plan, to assemble evidence, reports and other material to make well-researched contributions at the appropriate time in the policy cycle. Standing institutional arrangements allow the capacities of civil society representatives to be strengthened over time and the trusting relationships of support and cooperation to be built up".

Applying those concepts to continental and regional governance bodies, as we do in this study, requires, first of all, a definition of what those bodies are. Here, we follow Pauwelyn et. al.'s use of governance body "as a general term for global, international, and transnational bodies and networks that, at a minimum, provide a forum and a set of procedures for drawing up rules, setting standards, articulating principles, developing policies, and making decisions to address issues that (are believed to) require coordinated or maybe even collective actions across borders" (2022: 4).

The legitimacy of those governance bodies does not only rest on the consent of states participating in them but is also derived from the participation and engagement of stakeholders beyond the state, including civil society. This more democratic and participatory form of legitimation is what we equate with regional and continental bodies in Africa that are representative of and responsive to African peoples' aspirations and needs. The research's interrogation of how open the AU and the RECs are to the participation of civil society and other stakeholders asks whether decision- making procedures and practices in those bodies encourage stakeholder participation, and whether the AU and the RECs have established various institutional opportunities for civil society to have a voice in decision-making processes.

Summarizing the literature on civil society participation in international organizations Reinold conceptualizes this to cover the whole gamut of "participation in agenda-setting, research/analysis, policy design, decision-making, implementation and evaluation" (2019, p.3). These are broad categories that help research operationalize the concept of participation and identify when and how it happens in sp. Pawelyn et. al. make an important distinction between how international organizations have formally opened up to civil society through "voice-only opportunities" such as "conducting consultations, providing notice and inviting comments online, holding public meetings, establishing advisory or expert committees, etc" and "decisional opportunities" that give civil society direct leverage and formal roles in rule- and decision-making (2022, p. 480).

In terms of civil society's impact on the global governance field, Scholte (2023, p.387) identifies five types of impact: "on

institutional evolution, agenda formation, policy decision, discourse construction, and deeper structure". This is a typology that can usefully be applied to African civil society's impacts on the AU, the RECs, and the regional mechanisms (RMs).

Our Research Questions and Methodology

The main research questions that we started with were the following:

1. *To what extent do the different pan-African bodies (AU, ECOSOCC) and regional economic communities (RECs) take up the education sector as a priority in their strategies, structures, and work plans? What are the exact forms that this engagement with education manifests itself in?*

2. *What are the existing practical linkages of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) to the different RECs? How can those linkages be strengthened and optimized? Can such linkages be seen in the operations of specific CESA clusters, rendering visible the connections between CESA, regional (education) strategies, and national strategies?*

3. *To what extent are national education coalitions aware of the opportunities (spaces of interaction, formal and informal mechanisms for participation) provided by the RECs in their regions to advance national-level education priorities and goals? What, in their view, is to be gained from engaging with RECs and AU bodies? Is there evidence backing and substantiating those expectations?*

4. *What role do pan-African civil society networks (such as ANCEFA) play, and can play, in facilitating and mediating those connections between continental strategies and regional and national ones? How do they establish bridges between actors across the spectrum? What do they need to play these roles more effectively?*

5. *What can be learned from the CESA clusters regarding their actual influence on national policymaking, their accessibility and engagement with civil society actors? In particular, what -from the CESA perspective- are the most valued contributions of civil society (e.g. knowledge production, strategic use of communication tools) and what is needed to provide more space for civil society organizations?*

6. *Given the range of institutional actors at the continental, regional and national levels, what are some of the ways to conceptualize civil society engagement with those bodies that (a) contribute to more alignment between the actors (CESA, regional body, SDG4-related bodies, and national-level actors), (b) make good use of civil society's limited resources and capacity, and (c) increases civil society's knowledge, informed policy proposals and interventions, and influence in the education sector?*

Those questions guided the research throughout.

The research methodology consisted of extensive desk reviews of official documents and literature on the African Union and the regional economic communities (RECs), with a focus on education-related materials, such as documentation on CESA. Semi-structured interviews with representatives of selected national education coalition in Africa's different regions sought information and perspectives from the national point of view on regional and continental structures and frameworks. Interviews were also conducted with pan-African networks (FAWE and ANCEFA) and with Education International (EI)'s Africa Regional Office. Semi-structured interviews with key informants from the AU, RECs, UN agencies, and CESA Cluster Coordinators, sought information from those official agencies. In total, we conducted (42) interviews each of 45 – 90 minutes in length. 20 requests we made for interviews were left unanswered or were not accepted.

Limitations of the Research

There is no previous literature on African civil society education groups' engagement with AU and regional processes. This obviously constitutes a limitation in that the research is not able to benefit from the insights, perspectives and knowledge generated by previous researchers who have looked at this particular area. The Global Partnership for Education's Education Out Loud program, which supports civil society transnational advocacy work, including a number of such projects in Africa[6], will potentially generate knowledge and information in this field, but has not produced written outputs yet.

A second substantive limitation is the dearth of information on many of the CESA processes. Our attempts to reach all CESA Cluster coordinators, for example, were frustrated by the lack of responsiveness or outright refusal in some cases to share information by cluster coordinators. Out of the 12 clusters we were only able to interview the coordinators or/and chairs of 3 clusters, scouring the internet for available information on those clusters whose coordinators were uncooperative. Such information often proved to be meager, but we included it in the research so as to minimize any potential bias in the findings towards those clusters which we were able to interview. The lack of responsiveness from CESA cluster coordinators could partly be due to low levels of cluster activity. In some cases, it could be the result of preferences for direct, in-person contacts, rather than remote, e-mail exchanges with the researcher. We would also add lack of conviction in the role of civil society as a factor in some other cases.

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6   For the EOL-supported transnational projects in Africa see: https://educationoutloud.org/index.php/projects?field_project_countries=All&field_project_regions=29&field_type_of_grant=32 and https://educationoutloud.org/index.php/projects?field_project_countries=All&field_project_regions=28&field_type_of_grant=32

The third limitation is the limited interrogation in the research of how national education policymakers perceive and engage with CESA and regional educational policy frameworks. Looking into this in more depth would have required time and resources beyond what was allocated to the research assignment. Interviews with national education coalitions (NECs), a number of whom are active in their countries' local education groups, provided some information and insights on the perception of regional and continental frameworks by national-level actors, but only from a civil society perspective. To understand the connections and the disjointed relations between the different levels of educational policymaking in Africa we believe that case studies are needed, which would also weigh the relative influence of African, donor- and global-framework influences on policymaking and priority setting at the national level.

The fourth limitation is that the research did not conduct an in-depth analysis of the pan-African civil society education networks, including EI's regional Directorate representing the continent's Teachers Unions, in order to understand better their approaches to African regional integration and what this translates to in their internal organization, planning and resource allocation decisions. Those are all areas where the civil society networks' mediation of and weaving relations between the national, regional, and continental levels can be seen.

If this research contributes to generating more interest in researching civil society education groups' engagement with continental and regional bodies in Africa, some of the areas that could provide new important information and analysis, in our opinion, are: the internal dynamics of pan-African networks and member organizations and how this enables or hinders their intermediation between the different levels of policymaking on the continent; case studies on thematic networks' engagement with regional or continental education spaces (the early childhood networks are an example); comparative studies of countries which are more connected to CESA and regional education policymaking processes and those which appear to be disconnected to understand the reasons for higher or lower-levels of engagement – this can shed further light on the complex dynamics of norm and policy diffusion through the interactions between national and regional spaces, and what role civil society plays in those interactions. Detailed case studies on civil society involvement in CESA clusters, including how this helps build relations with their own Ministries of Education and develop their advocacy positions, could also contribute to understanding the relationships between policymaking spaces where civil society and national governments come together.

We hope this research is useful for African civil society education groups and for the AU and REC education-related bodies.

There are a number of good guides to the AU and its different institutions. Those interested in a deep dive into the history of the AU and its bodies and organs are advised to consult those guides, taking into account that some information may be outdated. For the purposes of this report, we will look at the structures and main organs of the AU and the other institutions only insofar as to sketch the governance of those bodies and where, in those structures, civil society education groups can engage.

African Union (2022) **African Union Handbook** 2022 available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/31829-doc-2022_AU_Hanbook_ENGLISH.pdf

(The handbook provides factual overviews and detailed information on memberships, offices, and institutions – but not on policies)

Mavenjina, Martin et. al. (n.d) **The African Union: A Guide for Human Rights Defenders in the Digital Age** (Nairobi: Media Rights Agenda and KICTANet) available at https://www.africanplatform.org/fileadmin/user_upload/AU_Guide_for_Human_Rights_Defenders_in_the_Digital_Age.pdf

Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSSA) (2020) **Mapping Study of the Conflict Prevention Capabilities of African Regional Economic Communities** available at https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789210040990/read

Open Society Foundations (2016) **The Civil Society Guide to Regional Economic Communities in Africa** available at https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/e4ae95b2-73b0-48e5-a05c-bc895bbe39df/the-civil-society-guide-to-regional-economic-communities-in-africa-20160202.pdf

Oxfam (2009) **Strengthening Popular Participation in the African Union: A Guide to AU Structures and Processes** available at https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/file_attachments/au-guide-eng.pdf

(Contains examples of civil society engagement with AU bodies and useful tips on engagement and advocacy strategies. Needs an update)

On the AU Integration Processes:

AU (2019) **African Integration Booklet** available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/37231-doc-african_integration_booklet_english_web.pdf

AU (2021) **African Integration Report** available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41587-doc-African_Integration_Report_2021_-_Final_Design.pdf

I n this chapter, we will look at the African Union (AU) and the Regional Economic Committees (RECs) which form part of the Union's overall structure. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the REC in the Northern part of the African continent[7], is not included in the research, as the focus is in on sub-Saharan Africa.

For the AU and each of the RECs, we will first briefly look at the history and mandate of the institution, followed by an outline of its set up, or structure. The institution's engagement with civil society, as provided for in its founding or subsequent documents, are followed by descriptions of actual relations between the institution and civil society. Finally, each section looks at the AU or REC's engagement with education.

Because the SADC Education Ministers hold an annual meeting, the case of SADC is treated in more depth, to understand the scope of the REC's role in the education sector and what the participation or absence of civil society means in this case.

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7   The Arab Maghreb Union is recognized by the AU as one of the eight regional economic communities (RECs). The AMU was established in 1989 but quickly fell into paralysis as a result of the Moroccan – Algerian dispute over the status of Western Sahara. The Heads of State of the AMU member states last met in 1994. See: https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/the-maghreb-regional-disintegration-and-the-risks-of-the-zero-sum-logic-132041 and https://www.arabnews.com/node/1774881

The African Union (AU)

The African Union (AU) is the continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).

The OAU was established in 1963 as "Africa's first post-independence continental institution" and "the manifestation of the pan-African vision for an Africa that was united, free and in control of its own destiny". The Charter signed by 32 Heads of independent African States articulated aspirations for a larger unity that transcends ethnic and national differences and the borders imposed by colonial powers. "The guiding philosophy was that of Pan-Africanism which centred on African socialism and promoted African unity, the communal characteristic and practices of African communities, and a drive to embrace Africa's culture and common heritage"[8].

In 1991, the Abuja Treaty signaled agreement on the establishment of an African Economic Community by the heads of state and government assembled in the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Ever since then, "regional economic collaboration has been an integral part of the African political agenda" (Hout and Saleh 2019, p.1). Another declaration, issued in Sirte in 1999, called for the establishment of an African Union to accelerate integration processes in the continent to enable Africa to play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded by negative aspects of globalization.

The African Union (AU) was officially launched in July 2002 in Durban, South Africa. The emphasis in the new Union was on increased cooperation and integration to drive Africa's growth and economic development. The guiding vision was summed up as "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena". This vision included aspirations to achieve the human rights of African people, promoting sustainable development, and progress on women's participation and gender equality.

The grand vision of the AU is contained in the Africa We Want document, known as Agenda 2063. This is the strategic framework for Africa's long term socio-economic and integrative transformation, which calls for greater collaboration and support for African-led initiatives to ensure the achievement of the aspirations of African people. The Continental Education Strategy (CESA) is the education component of Agenda 2063.

Institutional Set Up

The work of the AU is implemented through several decision-making organs: The Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Executive Council, the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), Specialized Technical Committees (STCs), the Peace and Security Council, and The African Union Commission. Two bodies within the AU structures were created to promote participation of African citizens and civil society: the Pan-African Parliament and the Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC).

Several organs constitute the judicial and legal AU system and the AU's human rights mechanisms[9]. They are all relevant for civil society education groups, particularly if justiciability and litigation become part of the strategies and tactics pursued in defending the right to education. The one organ that is of direct relevance to education groups is the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Peer Review Mechanism are also key bodies that that constitute the structure of the African Union.

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8   All quotations in this paragraph are from the text on the AU website giving the history of the Union. See: https://au.int/en/overview

9   African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR), AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL), AU Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

AFRICAN UNION STRUCTURE

ASSEMBLY	• The supreme policy and decision-making organ. Composed of all Member State Heads of State and Government.
Executive Council	• Coordinates and takes decisions on policies in areas of common interest to Member States. It is responsible to the Assembly. Composed of foreign ministers or such other ministers or authorities as are designated by the governments of Member States.
Specialised Technical Committees (STCs)	• The Specialized Technical Committees (STCs) are thematic committees on key AU projects and programs. STCs are responsible to the Executive Council. Composed of Member State ministers or senior officials.
Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC)	• The Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) is charged with preparing the work of the Executive Council. Composed of Permanent Representatives and other plenipotentiaries of Member States.
Peace & Security Coucil (PSC)	• The AU's organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. Composed of 15 elected Member States.
African Union Commission (AUC)	• The AU's secretariat. Composed of a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and six commissioners as well as staff.
Pan-African Parliament (PAP)	• Platform for people from all African states to participate in discussions and decision-making on issues facing the continent. Members are designated by the legislatures of their Member States.
Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)	• Advisory organ that provides opportunity for African civil society organizations to contribute to the AU's principles, policies and programs. Composed of social and professional groups from AU Member States.
Judicial, Human Rights & Legal Organs	• Organs are the: African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR), AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL), AU Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC).
Financial Institutions	• Proposed institutions are the: African Central Bank, African Investment Bank and the African Monetary Fund.
African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)	• Aims to foster the adoption of policies, values, standards and practices of political and economic governance that lead to political stability, accelerated economic integration, economic growth and sustainable development.
Regional Economic Communities (RECs) Regional Mechanisms (RMs)	• The RECs are regional groupings of African states that facilitate regional economic integration between members and through the wider African Economic Community (AEC). The RMs for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution are part of the overall security architecture of the Union.

AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION STRUCTURE

COMMISIONERS	DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON	CHAIRPERSON

Portfolio Departments

	Cabinet of the Deputy Chairperson	DIRECTOR - GENERAL	Cabinet of the Chairperson

| Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) | Directorates and Offices | | Directorates and Offices |

Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE)	Human Resources Management	Office of Strategic Planning & Delivery
Economic Development, Trade, Industry, Mining (ETIM)	Operations Support Services	Office of Internal Oversight
Education, Science, Technology & Innovation (ESTI)	Management of Information Systems Division	Quality Assurance and Control
Infrastructure & Energy (IE)	Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Unit	Ethics, Integrity and Standards
Political Affairs, Peace & Security (PAPS)	Finance	Office of the Secretary to the Commission
Health, Humanitarian Affairs & Social Development (HHS)	Secretariat to the Board of External Auditors	Office of the Legal Council
	Conference Management & Publications	Office of Protocol
	Office for Safety and Security Services	Partnership & Resource Mobilization
	Citizens & Diaspora	Women, Gender and Youth
	Medical & Health Services	Information & Communication
	Financial Control Unit	Peace Fund Secretariat
	F15 Secretariat & Contribution Unit	CISSA Liason Unit
	AU Staff Pension Fund Secretariat	AUDA/NEPAD Unit

Relationship between the AU and RECs

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are considered as the building blocks of African integration. There are 8 RECs recognized by the AU.

The rationale for RECs lies in the choice of a gradual integration process by African countries. The principle of subsidiarity is at the core of AU–REC relations, whereby regional structures can take the lead in situations occurring in their region or under their political jurisdiction.

As per the decision of the AU Summit in 2017, a coordination meeting should take place every year with the RECs, with the participation of the Chairpersons of the RECs, the AUC, and Regional Mechanisms (RMs). The Coordination Meeting is expected to do the following:

● Assess the status of continental integration and coordinate efforts to accelerate the integration process.

● Coordinate the implementation of a clear division of labour and effective collaboration between the Union, RECs, RMs and Member States, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantage.

● Coordinate and harmonize AU and REC policies.

● Identify areas of cooperation and establish mechanisms for regional, continental and global cooperation in each sector or subsector.

● Guide the Union and the RECs in matters pertaining to priority programs, resources needed for implementation of these programs and the impact of such programs in improving the lives of the African people.

● Review and assess the status of implementation of decisions and legal instruments pertaining to the relations among the Union, RECs and RMs.

The first AU–REC Coordination Meeting[10], held in 2019, focused on three key areas: (i) division of labor between the AU, RECs and AU member states; (ii) the first African Regional Integration Report; and (iii) the draft protocol amending the 2008 protocol on AU–REC relations.

Under the agreed division of labor, six main technical areas were discussed: policy planning and formulation; policy adoption; implementation; monitoring and information; partnerships; and joint resource mobilization. Of these areas, unsurprisingly, implementation and monitoring and evaluation are seen as the continent's weakest points. To address those weaknesses, the AU Commission (AUC) proposed the organization of annual consultations between AU organs and RECs.

The RECs should report annually to the AU–REC Coordination Meeting on the status of regional implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of continental policies, programs, and projects.

Member states are ultimately in charge of implementing continental or regional policies and programs, as well as ensuring the implementation of AU legal instruments at the national level. They should provide sound and accurate national data on the implementation of continental and regional policies, as agreed in the AU–RECs–member states coordination arrangement.

The African Integration Report, the first edition of which came out in 2021, following up on the African Regional Integration Index of 2019, both offer some detailed information on how integration is viewed and assessed.

Overall, as Nagar and Nganje write, "Africa's integration will continue to proceed at multiple levels, which means that the symbiotic relationship between the AU and the RECs will only increase in importance" (2018, p.228).

In the education field, RECs are part of the CESA implementation structure and should be playing a key role in supporting countries in their region to implement CESA objectives and goals. In practice, as we show in Chapter 3 and 4, RECs do not participate in CESA clusters and their engagement with CESA appears

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10   For subsequent AU – REC Coordination meetings, see: https://au.int/en/videos/20201022/second-mid-year-coordination-meeting-between-au-recs-and-rms (2nd meeting in 2020), (3rd meeting in 2021) and https://au.int/en/summit/coordination/4 (4th meeting in 2022). Information on the 5th meeting, scheduled for July 13-14, can be found at https://au.int/en/summit/coordination/5 One important item on the meeting's agenda is the Report on the next ten years implementation road map of Agenda 2063.

to be weak. Why this is so needs further analysis, but one possible explanation is that RECs do not see the general CESA framework addressing their priorities and opting therefore to focus on negotiating and developing joint frameworks that have immediate results for their member countries, such as harmonization of standards and qualifications in the East African Community (ECA) to facilitate the mobility of graduates and teachers.

The Coordination meetings are continuing to consider and adopt effective division of labour between the AU, RECs/RMs and Member States in the different sectors[11]. From the documentation available, it is not possible to see whether Education, Science and Technology (EST) has been one of the covered sectors.

The meeting usually also includes discussions on the AU's chosen theme for the given year. As 2024 is the Year of Education, civil society education groups are advised to seek detailed information on the preparation of next year's AU-REC Coordination meeting and to be propositional toward it, with an eye to strengthening REC engagement with the theme and utilizing openings to engage with the RECs around those issues.

Education in the AU Structures

Education, clustered together with science, technology, and innovation, forms one of the AU's Portfolio Departments, headed since 2021 by Commissioner Prof. Mohammed Belhocine from Algeria.

As part of the institutional reform of the AU, the portfolio department of Human Resources, Science, and Technology (HRST) was changed in 2021 into the Department of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (ESTI).

Before the AUC's institutional reform, HRST comprised three divisions: human resource and youth development; education; and science and technology, with slightly more than 70 staff members. Under the new organogram of the AUC, which was being implemented in 2021, ESTI's staff size was to be reduced to 44 and the number of divisions to two: education; and science, technology, and space. In addition, a principal policy officer was to be introduced to look at human capital and innovation (Engel 2022, p.70).

The policy fields covered by ESTI are administered by an array of institutions. In education, those institutions are the Pan-African University (PAU), the Pan-African Institute for Education for Development (IPED, and the African Union International Centre for Girls and Women Education in Africa (AU/ CIEFFA). In science and technology, the institutions are the African Observatory for Science, Technology and

Innovation (AOSTI), the Scientific, Technical, Research Commission (STRC), and the African Scientific, Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC). (See Annexes for more information on some of those institutions)

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11   Some progress on the question of division of labour was made in 2020 during the 2nd coordination meeting especially in the areas of trade as well as peace and security. (Engel 2022, pp.31).

Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (ESTI)

Mission Statement:

To contribute towards revitalized, quality, relevant, and harmonized education systems responsive to the needs of Africa, taking into account Africa's aspiration and capacity in terms of human and material resources; systems that produce Africans with appropriate attitudes, values, knowledge and skills to facilitate attainment of the AU vision; systems that generate applied and new knowledge and contribute towards its harnessing for meeting Africa's challenges as well as placing Africa firmly within the core of the global knowledge economy.

Mandates and Core Functions:

- Development and harmonization of education policies and programs on the continent, towards achievement of the AU vision

- Spearhead the revitalization of education systems

- Develop and Manage Continental Education Management Information Systems linked to regional and national levels providing information for local and international users

- Organize meetings of the relevant Specialized Technical Committee and other political and professional bodies to ensure collective articulation of priorities, ownership and accountability

https://au.int/en/directorates/education#

The Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST)

As presented on the AU website, the Specialized Technical Committee of ESTI works on "elaborating, adopting and monitoring implementation of the African Continental Strategy for Education (CESA) and the Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training". The STC is also assigned the task of working with Member States so that they provide education data to the planned African Observatory for Education (which did not materialize) and the African Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI), the Statue of which was finalized in 2016, but also appears not to be active.

Chapter 3 on CESA and SDG4 looks at data related challenges which have impeded the regular collection of data and monitoring of CESA implementation. Data gaps remain quite significant in the majority of AU countries.

STC-EST's mandate also requires it to establish performance indicators for and to receive reports from relevant national, regional and continental agencies and institutions; to monitor the implementation of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024); mobilize resources; and to oversee the promotion, coordination and strengthening of SDG4-related programs.

Taken together, these items assigned to the STC-EST constitute a tall order of tasks and responsibilities which the STC has had no adequate resources or capacity to fully carry out.   The window to the Committee's composition and actual work can be slightly glimpsed from the brief Communiqués it issues following its meetings12. The lack of transparency and information on the STC makes its work inaccessible to civil society groups and provides no basis for the Committee's accountability.

As the STC advises and recommends decisions to the AU Summit on matters under its mandate -education, science, and technology- its role is, no doubt, influential, which increases the need for it to be transparent about its deliberations and consultative before convening. Civil society education groups can attempt to reach the STC indirectly, through the Ministries of Education in their countries, if they are members of the STC. Why the STC should not be transparent is an unanswered question but contributes to the overall participation and governance deficits of the AU's education architecture.

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12   See for example the Communiqué dated April 2020, which listed the following as the STC-EST meeting attendees: Elioda Tuwesigye (Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Uganda and STC Chair), Itah Kandji-Murangi (Minister of Higher Education, Namibia), Muhammad Ammari Zaid (Minister of Education, Libya), Ester Anna Nghipondoka (Deputy Minister of Education, Namibia), Sarah Anyang Agbor, the HRST Commissioner, and -given that the focus of the meeting was on responses to COVID- John Nkengasong, the Director of Africa CDC, also participated. Also see the news item on the STC-ESTI virtual meeting of 2022.

Champions of Education (C10)

The AU's Education structure has a group of 10 countries representing different parts of the continent, which act as Champions for Education, Science, and Technology. Known as the C10, this is a high-level platform entrusted with advancing and overseeing the implementation of CESA and STISA, issues which they report annually to the AU Summit.

The 10 countries are: Algeria, Congo Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Namibia, Senegal (Chair of the Committee), Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia.

According to Lynette Okongo, the Director of the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN), C10 played a very important role in 2018 in adopting an integrated approach to early childhood, effectively adding it to the continental education strategy[13]. It is difficult to assess whether C10 can extend this type of positive role in promoting a previously neglected sub-sector to other areas of education. The very fact that those countries have accepted the designation of Champions of Education places responsibilities on them on leading and driving education goals, not only at the continental and regional levels, but, most of all, in their countries. The Year of Education in 2024 will provide an important window into seeing the committee's actual role and contributions in practice.

ECOSOCC

Based on the AU's stated commitment to build a people's union, and perhaps learning from how the UN and other continental unions (such as the EU[14]) institutionalize their engagement with civil society, The AU launched the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) in 2004. It was established as an "advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups of AU Member States". ECOSOCC's purpose, as defined by the AU, is to provide an opportunity for African Civil Society Organizations "to play an active role in contributing to the AU's principles, policies and programs".

An important distinction the AU made is that "the impulse is not for the African Union to organize civil society. Rather, the organizing principle of the ECOSOCC of the African Union is one in which civil society would organize themselves to work with the Organization"[15]. What this says is that ECOSOCC was not created to co-opt civil society in Africa or to impose a certain way of organizing on it, but to provide it with the means and the institutional form to organize itself, enhance coordination between its members, and increase its overall effectiveness in articulating and amplifying citizen voices vis-à-vis the AU. The extent to which this very important organizing principle has been and is being respected needs to be constantly interrogated.

Given this particular role assigned to ECOSOCC, "ironically", as Jonas and Seobo (2015, p.13) write, "as with many other continental projects, the civil society was excluded from the conception, design and direction of [the Vision 2063] agenda", which committed to ensure that African people are involved at all stages of the Agenda's lifespan[16].

ECOSOCC's functions include:

- Contributing, through advice, to the effective translation of the AU's objectives, principles and policies into concrete programs, as well as evaluating those programs
- Undertaking studies and making recommendations
- Contributing to the promotion and realisation of the AU's vision and objectives
- Contributing to the promotion of human rights, the rule of law, good governance, democratic principles, gender equality and child rights
- Promoting and supporting the efforts of institutions engaged in reviewing the future of Africa and forging pan-African values to enhance an African social model and way of life
- Fostering and consolidating partnerships between the AU and CSOs
- Assuming functions referred to it by other AU organs.

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13   Interview

14   The EU established the European Economic and Social Committee in 1958 as a consultative body and advisory assembly composed of "social partners", namely: employers, employees, and representatives of various other interests. See:

15   https://ecosocc.au.int/en/about/overview

16   Jonas and Seabo's article provides a good history of ECOSOCC, which is useful to understand the genesis of the Council and the challenges it faces.

ECOSOCC's General Assembly is its highest decision and policy making body and has a tenure of four years. Members of the Assembly may be re-elected once. It is composed of two CSOs from each African Union member State, ten CSOs operating at regional level and eight at the continental level.

The role of the General Assembly is to submit advisory opinions and reports as well as proposals on the budget and activities; approve and amend the Code of Ethics and Conduct developed for CSOs affiliated to or working with the AU; and review and make recommendations on ECOSOCC activities. The Assembly elects a Bureau composed of a presiding officer and four deputies[17]. Bureau members are elected based on equitable geographical distribution and rotation. The current Bureau's Presiding Officer is Khalid Boudali, representing North Africa[18].

The General Assembly is composed of ECOSOCC National Committees, which should include the different categories of civil society (social groups representing women, youth, and other sub-sectors of marginalized people; professional groups; NGOs, CBOs and voluntary organizations). There is no information on those committees on the ECOSOCC website.

The 4th ECOSOCC Assembly, held at the end of 2022. also elected a new 6-member Credentials Committee, which has the role of examining the credentials of ECOSOCC members and their representatives. Five members of the Committee represent Africa's regions, and a sixth member represents special interest groups. The Committee's Rules of Procedure are adopted by the General Assembly

ECOSOCC's Statues provide for Sectoral Cluster Committees that mirror those of the AU. Their role is to channel information on the different thematic subject areas to the ECOSOCC members, and to coordinate and compile inputs from civil society's side to AU policies and programs. One of those committees should be on education, science, technology and innovation. Our interviews did not show that civil society education groups in Africa were aware of the existence of such a Sectoral Cluster Committee or that they had any interactions with it.

Clusters which seem to be active are Peace and Security (given the recognition of civil society's role in this area), and Political Affairs (under which fall themes of good governance, human rights, democratic and constitutional rule, and electoral institutions). ECOSOCC's website carries recent news of an interface meeting between ECOSOCC's Peace and Security cluster with the AU and the RECs, developing a policy paper on Unconstitutional Changes of Government, building a civil society coalition for conflict prevention in Southern Africa, and developing a consolidated database of CSOs working in the fields of peace and security in Africa, all of which relate to the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

According to Mbaya (2023, pp.22-23) "some CSOs have found it challenging to engage ECOSOCC, which, in some countries, has been accused of being captured by state interests". as it requires state endorsement from organizations wanting to join it. Moyo also regards ECOSOCC's political positioning as problematic, particularly given its status as an 'invited space'[19], which raises questions about its effectiveness as a platform for conveying dissenting civil society voices, a serious concern for CSOs working on governance, democracy, and human rights.

Notwithstanding the limitations of its role to date, ECOSOCC is an institutional space for civil society to engage with the AU, provided for in AU statutes and organs. Its membership, which has been conceived as broad and representative, is assigned an official role to play in AU structures. Civil society education group in Africa should consider approaching ECOSOCC with the intention of populating and activating the ESTI sectoral cluster on education so that ECOSOCC can be a platform for increasing the quantity and quality of their engagements with the AU on education matters.

Engagement with Civil Society

The Constitutive Act of the African Union and the Abuja Treaty of 1991, which established the African Economic Community, provided for the inclusion of civil society in the programs of the AU. The key and influential institutions of the AU followed suit and included the participation of civil society in their treaties, protocols, rules of procedures, and strategic plans (Moyo 2009).

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17   Previously there were 5 deputies, with one position allocated to social and professional organisations in the African Diaspora, which has since been abolished.

18   The previous Bureau was composed of: Presiding Officer, Richard Ssewakiryanga (Uganda National NGO Forum) and Deputies Blaise Batongue (Groupement interpatronal du Cameroun (GICAM)), (National Union of Sahrawi Women) Patson Malisa (South Africa) (Organisation of African Youth) and Khady Fall Tall from Senegal (West African Women's Association). The Bureau had a strong representation of women's and youth organizations.

19   Moyo (?, pp. 4-6)distinguishes between invented space, which is limiting, "as the guest has to conform to the host's rules", and invented spaces where CSO create opportunities for participation in their own terms. Accordingly, as an invited space, and only granted an advisory role by the AU, it is doubtful that ECOSOCC can be truly inclusive, while being at high risk of self-limiting its watchdog functions by its Ethics and Code of Conduct.

The history of AU – civil society relations contains many examples of positive collaboration and of the openness of certain AU departments, institutions, and commissions to working with civil society. Examples include the AU's Gender Directorate's fruitful partnership with CSOs that led to the adoption of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the entry into force of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Institutions like NEPAD and the Peace and Security Council (PSC), and mechanisms like the African Peer Review Mechanism (APR) were creating spaces for civil society and inviting their contributions through different modalities. Making use of those openings, African civil society groups have been contributing to the AU's work in different ways, through capacity building in some cases where the AU has staff shortages or needs external expertise; through policy development by conducting research and presenting evidence-backed analysis arguments to raise awareness about certain issues and advocating for prioritizing them; providing technical support in the processes of AU framework development[20]; through facilitation and convening different stakeholders to contribute to policy debates and to get their support.

However, with time, the AU's "initial enthusiasm to include civil society" was starting to give way to perceptions of a "closed stance", of inaccessible and unfriendly staff, and of difficulties in accessing information on processes taking place in the AU (AFRODAD et. al. 2007).

A 2016 study on the AU and RECs concluded that "non-state actors are involved in numerous regional processes. There are, however, but a few examples of effective civil society engagement with regional organisations. (…) Despite the formal space for non-state actors to engage in policy dialogue with regional organisations, there is limited uptake by the latter, except in sectors such as peace and security where a few specialised non-governmental organisations cooperate in functional ways with regional organisations" (Vanheukelom 2016b, p.7).

Overall, as a recent report on AU-civil society relations concluded, "the efforts of civil society organisations to engage the AU in the interests of their constituencies take place in the context of the resource challenges the organisations face, the political sensitivity that characterises the work of the Union and, in some states, troubled relationships between CSOs and their governments. The suspicion and mistrust that often characterise state-CSO relationships at the national level are reflected in the restricted access of CSOs to key AU processes and high-level events" (Mbaya 2023, p iv).

In marked contrast to the difficulties African civil society groups encounter to gain access to and meaningfully participate in AU processes, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), many of whom have AU liaison offices in Addis Ababa, have easier access. By virtue of their presence in the same location as the AU and having dedicated people who invest time in building relations with AU staff, INGOs become fluent in the AU language and affairs and can far more easily navigate the AU bureaucracy. The limited access of African civil society groups inevitably marginalizes them in the AU's agenda-setting platforms. If CSOs are to benefit from their collective strengths and advantages, they must coordinate their activities.

Enabling frameworks are in existence; several non-state actors, including key pan-African civil society networks, have access to some AU spaces through MOUs, but the more important decision-making spaces of the AU, particularly the Summit, remain closed to civil society. As Mbaya emphasizes, "the underlying issue that requires to be recognised and redressed is that civil society's lack of access to AU summits is symptomatic of a broader problem – the resistance of the union to CSO participation in processes deemed to be political. To interrogate and change this culture, there must be a concerted advocacy effort by CSO actors" (p. vi).

Historically, education was not treated as a political and sensitive subject area and it is still not seen as such. Was this a factor in determining the degrees of access granted by the AUC to civil society education groups?

ANCEFA's MOU with the AUC

In the education sector, ANCEFA and FAWE are the two pan-African networks that have signed MoUs with the AUC. ANCEFA's MOU, signed in 2013 with the Human Resources, Science and Technology (HRST) Directorate, expired in 2018, and its renewal is ongoing. Surprisingly, the global teachers' union (EI)'s Africa

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20 Mbaya (2023, p.4) gives some examples: "the key role of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) in the development of the AU's Transitional Justice Policy, and that of the ISS in the design of the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS)", adding that these contributions are seldom fully acknowledged".

Regional Office, which is recognized as the representative of millions of teachers in Africa and which chairs CESA's Teacher Development Cluster, does not have a MoU with the AUC[21].

The AUC-ANCEFA MOU describes ANCEFA as "a civil society education campaign network, with a mission to promote, enable and build the capacity of African civil society to advocate and campaign for access to free, quality and relevant education for all". It also emphasizes ANCEFA's representative nature, mentioning its work with at least 35 national education coalitions (at the time), and the role it plays in promoting national accountability on education issues.

Significantly, the MOU states that its overall objective is "for the parties to create a working partnership to enable them pursue collaborative activities and projects that will assist in promoting the right to education in general, and, in particular, in supporting the implementation of [what was then the main African education plan] the African Union Second Decade on Education for Africa plan of action (2006-2015) and other continental frameworks developed by the AUC"[22]. CESA was launched in 2016, replacing the Second Decade plan of action, and all the clauses in the MOU relating to the AUC and ANCEFA working together were effectively transferred to the CESA framework. Those included the following mutual obligations:

ANCEFA Obligations	*AUC (HRST) Obligations*
1. *Provide the AUC with strategic plans, programs of work, and reports related to the Commission's programs.*	• Share with ANCEFA strategic plans, program of work and reports related to the Commission's programs.
2. *Provide the AUC with contact information of its members and staff to assist the Commission in undertaking activities related to the MoU.*	• Provide ANCEFA with contact information of member states and partners to facilitate dissemination, coordination, monitoring, and advocacy related to the Second Decade / CESA.
3. *Facilitate participation of ANCEFA staff and members in the Commission's strategic activities*	• Provide ANCEFA with structured opportunities to participate in meetings of the African Union
4. *Involve the Commission as a strategic partner in key ANCEFA activities and meetings.*	• Involve ANCEFA in the Commission's activities as an important strategic partner.
5. *Provide the Commission access to and use of ANCEFA key communication channels.*	• Provide ANEFA with political support for mobilizing resources for agreed priorities.
6. *Acknowledge the Commission as an ANCEFA partner in agreed specific activities.*	• Acknowledge ANCEFA as a partner in jointly produced work.
7. *Facilitate comprehensive coverage of African education development at all levels within civil society.*	• Support ANCEFA to establish a Liaison Office in Addis Ababa.
8. *Work together to fundraise for activities and projects flowing from the collaboration stimulated by the MOU.*	

Compiled from the 2013 MOU

21   Interview with Dennis Sinyolo the EI Africa Regional Director. EI's leadership position within the CESA cluster on teachers grants it access to the AUC's education-related Commission and different departments, thus minimizing the need for a MOU the purpose of which would be to grant EI access to the AUC and to processes related to teachers.

22   ANCEFA provided a copy of this MoU to the research.

The mutual obligations cover sharing information and contacts, participation in each other's key activities, public acknowledgement of the strategic partnership, mutual support, ANCEFA's commitment to popularize the African frameworks and to mobilize and support civil society to engage with those frameworks, and the AUC's commitment to provide ANCEFA with structured opportunities to participate in AU meetings.

The MOU provides many privileges and, if implemented, grants the signatory CSO with opportunities to access information, institutions, and individuals within the AU, and to participate in meetings. The very small number of MOUs that the AU commission responsible for Education has signed underscores the value not only of obtaining this status but of fully utilizing the opportunities it offers.

ANCEFA has benefited from the MOU, gaining access to the AUC and acquiring the opportunity for structured engagement with the AUC's education bodies, including the Specialised Technical Committee (STC-ESTI). The AUC participated in different learning events organized by ANCEFA in the period 2016-2019. ANCEFA says that it participated in all the virtual consultations and the STC meeting organised by the ESTI Department after the outbreak of COVID, and that it "contributed effectively to shape the [ESTI] COVID response". Its role was recognized by the ESTI Commissioner Prof Sarah Angbor in her speech at ANCEFA's Policy Dialogue on Education Financing in 2021, which ANCEFA sees as "a demonstration of the recognition of the partnership at the highest level".[23]

While engaging with the AUC's education arms, ANCEFA does not lead any of the CESA clusters, nor does it actively participate in them. Both ANCEFA and AUC staff we interviewed confirmed lower modes of engagement over the past few years, including the COVID period. Instances of collaboration include ANCEFA's participation in the Innovating Education in Africa Selection Committee in 2021 and 2022[24].

Nevertheless, being in possession of an MOU with the AUC is an asset that maintains some of its value even if engagement decreases. ANCEFA has been invited to be part of the Steering Group for the 2024 Year of Education in Africa, which gives it new opportunities to assert its presence, mobilize its members, and to actively participate in and contribute to the different planned events and processes.

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)[25] is an important actor in the landscape of educational policy dialogue in Africa. It was established in 1988, "at the instigation of the World Bank", under the name of Donors to African Education (DAE). Initially based in Paris, its mandate was to act as a policy dialogue and coordination platform for development agencies supporting education in Africa.

Over the years, ADEA evolved from a donor-led platform to an African-led organization, maintaining its focus on fostering policy dialogue and acting as a knowledge broker.

Since 2008, ADEA is hosted by the African Development Bank (AfDB). Its staff is contracted by the AfDB and use AfDB e-mails. The exact terms of the hosting arrangements are not published, but two things can be deduced from the information available on ADEA and AfDB websites: (i) ADEA is not visible in the AfDB's organizational structure. Given its mandate, the assumption is that it would be under the Education and Skills Development unit of AfDB[26], but this cannot be confirmed by the organigram. (ii) ADEA enjoys a large degree of autonomy and is, for all purposes, an independent institution. The AfDB is one of ADEA's Steering Committee members, alongside many others, and does not seem to have a special or privileged status within the Committee.

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23   Communication, Solange Akpo.

24   The committee provided technical support to the AUC in by undertaking the technical evaluation and scoring of innovation projects. ANCEFA also participated in the final Jury decision. (Communication from Solange Akpo)

25   See the ADEA website and its facebook page https://www.facebook.com/adeanet for further information.

26   The unit falls under the Human Capital, Youth and Skills Development (AHHD) division, presided by the Bank's Vice Presidency for Agriculture, Human and Social Development (AHVP). See the AfDB's organizational structure at https://www.afdb.org/en/about-us/organisational-structure

ADEA's large Steering Committee includes multilateral and bilateral agencies which support education in Africa[27], and (18) African Ministries of Education, five of which are permanent members of the Committee[28]. Ministers and development cooperation agencies are ADEA's two principal constituents. The African Union Commission (AUC) is an observer member, while the Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the only civil society network on the Committee, has an associate member status. The Steering Committee, according to the ADEA website, "is both ADEA's governing body and ADEA's primary instance for coordination among funding agencies, among African ministries of education, and between these two groups".

Participation in meetings of the Steering Committee and of the Bureau (and Caucus) of Ministers is restricted. Civil society has no access to those meetings, information about which is also not published on the ADEA website[29]. In this, ADEA is very similar to the AU and the RECs in exhibiting a state-centric approach that shuts off its high-level meetings before civil society and relegates their participation to selective invitations to ADEA events. The ADEA website asserts that "because of its role as a forum to foster policy dialogue on issues affecting education and long-term sustainable development in Africa, ADEA recognizes the importance of reaching out to all who have a stake in Africa's future". Attempts to reach out to civil society, if they take place, do not appear to be deliberate and systematic, as interviews with civil society education groups confirmed[30].

ADEA conducts its policy dialogue roles through Steering Committee seminars, the Biennales and Triennales and other major events it organizes. The Triennales are considered a major policy dialogue space for African education. The latest Triennale was held in 2022 under the theme of reflecting on the impact of COVID-19 on Africa's educational systems and how to build resilience to sustain the development of skills for the continent and beyond. It covered what ADEA described as "Africa's key priorities" of foundational learning, the impact of COVID-19 on the continent's educational systems in terms of policy and practice responses, matching demand with supply in technical and vocational skills development, and reimagining higher education in Africa. The Triennale's programme was animated by six cross-cutting themes: technology, gender, equity, inclusion, climate change, and the well-being of vulnerable groups, especially children with disabilities, girls, and young women.

ADEA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union in 2008, which was subsequently renewed and expanded with addendums. The AU considers ADEA a key partner in the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA). ADEA was heavily involved in the development of the CESA indicators in 2018 and was assigned a major role in the overall supervision and monitoring of CESA's implementation. It coordinates the CESA Planning Cluster[31] and provides technical support to different CESA clusters through its Inter-Country Quality Nodes (ICQNs). The ICQNs, which are led by Ministries of Education, bring together countries facing a similar challenge and strategic partners with expertise in that specific field[32].

Given its role in agenda-setting, facilitating policy dialogue, and its status and roles within the CESA architecture, civil society education groups in Africa would benefit from opening channels of engagement with ADEA. ADEA should, from its side, move beyond its current state-centric approach, which severely limits its relations with African civil society groups, to provide access to civil society to participate in high-level policy debates and dialogues, and to information regarding those dialogues. The AfDB, as ADEA's hosting institution, and the AU, as the agency responsible for CESA, should both support opening up ADEA's spaces and resources to civil society.

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27   African Development Bank (AfDB); European Commission; Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department of Development Cooperation, Austria; German Cooperation; Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea; Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of International Cooperation and Development, France; Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD); Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland; The World Bank; UNESCO; UNICEF; United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

28   Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, Mauritius, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Zambia. The five Permanent Member Countries are Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, and Nigeria.

29   The news item on ADEA's 46th Steering Committee meeting in 2019, for example, did not include anything beyond a photograph, with access to information about the meeting reserved for "members only".

30   The Members and Partners page on the ADEA website has no special section on civil society, but includes ANCEFA and FAWE in the list of African organizations which are ADEA partners.

31   ADEA did not respond to this research's requests for information on the CESA Planning Cluster, despite its stated commitment to knowledge sharing.

32   There are currently six ICQNs: Early Childhood Development (led by Mauritius), Literacy and Languages (led by Burkina Faso), Mathematics and Science Education (led by Kenya), Peace Education (led by Kenya), Technical and Vocational Skills Development (led by Côte d'Ivoire) and Teaching and Learning (led by Rwanda).

The East African Community (EAC)

Institutional Set Up

The East African Community (EAC) first came into being in 1967 and was dissolved ten years later. The limitations of the cooperation achieved led to a revised EAC Treaty in 1999, which entered into force in 2000. Protocols for the Establishment of the EAC Common Market and the EAC Monetary Union were signed in 2009 and 2013 respectively. The EAC Partner States, are Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

According to GIZ, The East African Community (EAC) is the most integrated regional economic organisation in Africa according to the Africa Regional Integration Index[33]. Trade-related integration, including a Common Market and a Common Customs Union, is more advanced than in other RECs. The heavy emphasis on the private sector's role in the EAC Treaty and its documents on non-state actors is related to this economic- and trade-integration focus.

The main Organs of the EAC are the Summit (Heads of States), the Council of Ministers, the Co-ordinating Committee, the Sectoral Committees, the East African Court of Justice, the East African Legislative Assembly and the Secretariat.

The Summit of Heads of State provides political leadership and strategic direction to EAC. Underneath it, the Council of Ministers -composed of those Ministers or officials responsible for regional cooperation in their respective countries- is the central decision-making and governing organ, translating the political decisions of the Summit into the workings of the EAC.   It is a policy organ and its regulations, directives and decisions are binding to the Partner States and to all other EAC bodies, except for the East African Court of Justice and the Legislative Assembly (which maintain their autonomy in the EAC's system of separation of powers). The Council meets at least twice a year.

The Coordination Committee reports and presents recommendations to the Council of Ministers. It coordinates the activities of the Sectoral Committees and steers their work and recommends the establishment of new Committees.   The Sectoral Committees are responsible for setting priorities and designing implementation programs in their respective sectors. They meet as much as needed, but information on those meetings are not published on the EAC website. In 2016 there were 16 Committees[34], including two of relevance for this research: the Sectoral Council on Education, Science and Technology, Culture and Sports; and the Sectoral Council on Gender, Youth, Children, Social Protection and Community.

The Secretariat is the executive organ of the EAC. It is headed by the Secretary-General, appointed for a fixed five-year, non-renewable term, who is the principal executive and accounting officer of the Community, the head of the Secretariat and the Secretary of the Summit.
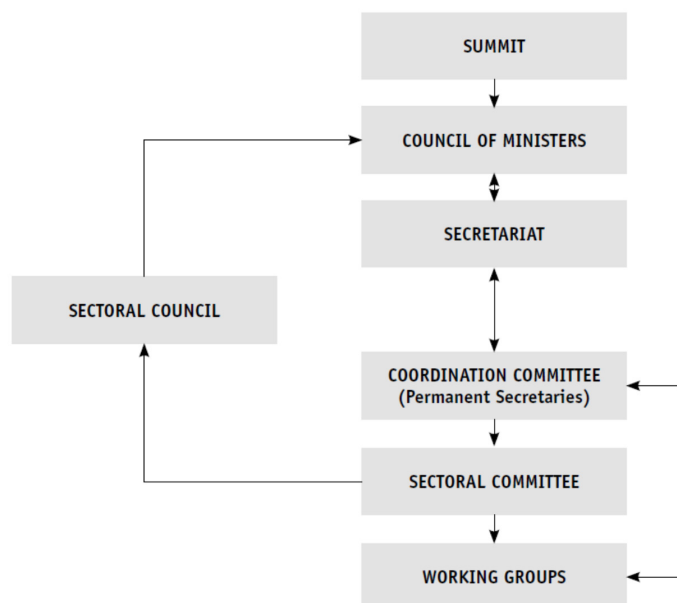
Source: Civil Society Guide to Regional Economic Communities (2016), p.16.

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33   https://strapi.eacgermany.org/uploads/Fact_Sheet_SEAMPEC_II_e0c3b317c6.pdf
34   Prominent Committees through which peace and security-related issues go through are Inter-State Security (composed of Ministers of Home Affairs and Public Security), Defence (composed of Ministers of Defence), Foreign Policy Coordination (composed of Ministers of Foreign Affairs) and the Joint Sectoral Council on Inter-State, Defence and Foreign Affairs. (see: OSF 2016 and OSAA 2018)

The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) is the Legislative Organ of the Community and has a cardinal function to further EAC objectives, through its Legislative, Representative and Oversight mandate. It was established under Article 9 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. The Assembly has a membership of 63 elected Members (9 from each Partner State), and 9 ex-officio Members consisting of the Minister or Cabinet Secretary responsible for EAC Affairs from each Partner State, the Secretary-General and the Counsel to the Community totalling 72 Members. The Assembly draws the authority to establish its Standing Committees from its Rules of Procedure. It currently has 6 Standing Committees to execute its mandate: For more information, please visit the EALA website.

EAC and Education

EAC's approach to education is largely a reflection of the Community's focus on economic integration and related trade and investment issues.   When speaking of education, the language is suffused with references to its importance for economic development and for meeting technical and business demands of the 21st century, leading to a focus on harmonization of curricula and of examination, certification and accreditation systems, as important factors to facilitate the free movement of human resources in the EAC region.   The mobility of teachers and students is seen as a boon to the free movement of persons across the Partner States as envisaged under the EAC Common Market Protocol.   There are no references to CESA in EAC's coverage of education-related topics.

Education is also one of the seven priority sectors that EAC committed to "progressively liberalize" as part of the guaranteed free movement of services between the EAC countries [35](GIZ 2022).

This year, EAC developed and adopted seven strategic education plans, covering the different education sub-sectors[36], as part of its "efforts to facilitate the quick integration of the education sector in East Africa". Work also continues on the sustainability of EAC's scholarship programs through the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) and the various EAC Centres of Excellence.

 At an institutional level, education is included in one of the sectoral committees that also includes science, technology, sports and culture, and would also be connected to a second sectoral committee dealing with gender, youth, children, social protection and community [development]. The substance of the Education Committee's work, based on EAC's approach, appears to be focused on harmonization of curricula and standards.   There is no available data on whether the deliberations of the Education Sectoral Committee involve inputs from civil society education groups or teacher unions.   National Education Coalitions in the ACE region that were interviewed for this research said they were not invited to any such deliberations and were not aware of the Committee's meeting agendas. GIZ's assessment of the slow pace of the service liberalization agenda (which includes education as a sector) points out that civil society is often not well informed and engaged, lacking "strong regional networks that are needed to take an active role in the integration process" (GIZ 2022).

Engagement with Civil Society

Part of the critique of the first EAC Treaty, which lasted until 1977, was its "over-concentration and over-centralisation of power within the Authority of East African Heads of State and the failure to involve the people in any significant decision-making process" (2018, p.).   The second EAC Treaty in 1999 attempted to address these shortcomings by declaring that the cooperation process would be people-centred and that civil society would play a key role in the EAC's Community affairs. Article 127 of the Treaty committed to strengthen partnership with civil society and the private sector, to provide a forum for consultations and dialogue between them and the EAC's different institutions, and to support the creation of an enabling environment for civil society's participation in the development of the EAC.   The mechanisms for achieving those commitments were not spelt out.

The rules governing civil society observer participation in the EAC proceedings were formulated in 2001 and require applicant CSOs to be registered in every partner state and to produce a track-record of regional activities for the past three years. The EAC's Department of Gender, Community Development and Civil Society is assigned responsibility to liaise with CSOs from the region. CSOs wishing to engage with the EAC may negotiate an MoU with the EAC Secretariat. However, both the criteria for granting observer status and the rules for participation in the meetings of the EAC are severely limiting to civil society: a lot of discretion

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35   The other sectors are business, communications, distribution, tourism, transport, and financial services.
36   Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary, Teacher Education, TVET, Continuing and Non-Formal Education, and Special Needs Education. See: https://www.eac.int/press-releases/138-education,-science-technology-news/2787-eac-develops-strategic-plans-to-integrate-the-education-sector-in-the-region

is given to the chairpersons of meetings who determine whether an organisation granted observer status is invited to meeting-and the nature of that participation.

In practice, the EAC granted observer status to very few civil society organizations, having set "stringent rules and requirements" for this (Kuviva 2018). It also followed the example of other RECs by creating a regional civil society platform to regulate its relations with civil society. The East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum (EACSOF) was established in 2005 to facilitate the involvement and engagement of CSOs in the region with EAC. It defines itself as "the premier platform organization that brings together civil society organizations in the East Africa region. Our overall goal is to have an East African Community (EAC) integration process that is inclusive of the voices of East African citizens and responsive to the needs and demands of the people. This is in line with the EAC Treaty which stipulates that regional integration and development in the community shall be people centred and participatory"[37].

EACSOF organizes the Annual Secretary General's Forum[38], which provides an opportunity for the private sector, CSOs and interested groups to share experiences and lobby the EAC[39]. The forum also discusses issues of governance in the region[40]. As the mandated regional umbrella organization to act as a focal point and intermediary, EACSOF also engages with EAC's member states on regional policies and processes. There is no updated online information on the kind of engagements it has conducted lately.

EACSOF also collaborates with the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), based on its recognition of EALA's role, which it believes makes its linkages with civil society necessary as CSOs "significantly strengthen popular participation to ensure that legislation is responsive to people's needs". There are cases of civil society organizations (such as Kituo cha Katiba and the East Africa Network of National AIDS Support) taking part in drafting legislation and advocating for their passage in the Legislative Assembly, primarily working through Private Members' Bills (OSF 2016, p.32). However, it is not clear whether EACSOF was involved and whether it has been playing a role in promoting CSO-prepared draft legislation at the EALA.

There is a lack of information on EACSOF's structures and how it manages direct engagement with national CSOs and with thematic clustering of its members in policy areas which are EAC's focus. EACSOF conducts National Consultative Forums in each country in the run up to EACSOF meetings with the EAC Secretary General, but it is difficult to assess how inclusive those consultations are.

The Kenyan chapter of EACSOF[41], which was established in 2013, replicates the role of the umbrella and the structure of the mother organization at the national level. It has over thirty individual CSO members and five CSO consortia from Coastal, Nairobi, Western and Northern regions, and sees its mandate as covering all CSOs "when it comes to representation at the East African Community Secretariat"[42]. The membership pages on EACSOF-Kenya's website lists 58 members, including well known organizations such as SEATINI and Tax Justice Network Africa, the National Council of NGOs[43], national offices of international NGOs, and professional associations. The membership is broad, representative of different sectors, and looks strong. How active they are vis-à-vis EACSOF and how they see themselves supported and served by EACSOF are questions difficult to ascertain without further interviews.

In terms of activities, EACSOF-Kenya held its national dialogue in 2022 under the theme of 'Post-Covid Recovery for Socio-Economic Transformation'. It has implemented projects, such as a project in partnership with FAWE on teenage pregnancies and child marriages, and a Ford Foundation-funded project on protecting Civic Space and engaging multi-sector partnerships in fighting corruption. Both projects target the EAC, equipping CSOs with relevant information and technical knowledge to work on specific EAC Bills or policy areas. The teenage pregnancies project, for example, supported the "development of regional

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37   https://eacsof.net/EACSOF/who-we-are/
38   The Secretary General is the EAC Secretariat's Head.
39   "EACSOF as the apex body for CSOs in the EAC Region was automatically charged with the role of representing CSOs in the Consultative Dialogue Forum (CDF). The CDF is a framework which starts at the partner state level, where CSOs, PSOs, Government and other interest Groups deliberate issues of interest to the EAC and formulate a national position (national dialogue committee). The issues are then taken to the regional level where representatives of CSOs, Partners states, PSOs, other interest groups and operatives of the EAC who represent the Secretary General deliberate the issues (regional dialogue committee)". The CDF process culminates in the annual EAC Annual Secretary General's Forum, which "is officiated by the EAC SG who gets firsthand information from the CSOs and PSOs and is expected to channel the suggestions and demands through the structures of the EAC for action" (see: http://eacsof. net/EACSOF/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Press-Release-EALA-AGREES-TO-COLLABORATE-WITH-EACSOF.pdf) also
40   The 4th Annual Secretary General's Forum in Dar es Salaam in March 2016 focused on good governance and constitutionalism and discussed the status of electoral reforms in the region. Other important issues discussed include: the protection of civic space in the region and the effectiveness of decentralisation policies and their impact on integration. The EACSOF also conducts National Consultative Forums in each country in the run up to EACSOF meetings with the EAC Secretary General.
41   https://eacsofkenya.org/
42   See https://eacsofkenya.org/
43   The NGO Council is a membership organization of more than 12,000 members. See: https://www.ngocouncilofkenya.org/

CSOs scorecards of Articles 5 (Elimination of harmful practices), 6 (marriage) and 12 (Education) of the Maputo Protocol in a bid to lobby state reporting and implementation in EAC, to support the development of the EAC Gender Policy Action Plan incorporating issues of child marriages and teenage pregnancies, supporting the validation and assenting of the EAC Gender Equality, Equity and Development Bill (…) and supporting the EAC GBV working group to jointly develop key Regional and National advocacy activities on Teenage pregnancies and child marriage". The project involved collaboration with the EAC's Gender Department, showing the possibility of civil society and specific EAC programs working as allies to achieve common goals. One of the projected outcomes of the project on civic space and corruption was enhancing the capacity of youth "to effectively participate in holding the [Kenyan] government accountable in the implementation of the EAC Youth policy" as an example of the regional policy providing a platform for heightened advocacy at the national level.

The Kenyan chapter's examples show positive cases of a national-level EACSOF entity working with national CSOs and targeting EAC policies and bodies. Nevertheless, Reinold (2019), also citing the paucity of studies on EACSOF and civil society engagement with EAC, concludes that "CSO participation in the EAC remains weak. Policy design and implementation remain largely the preserve of state leaders, while ordinary East Africans and organised civil society tend to watch from the sidelines (…) It seems that even though rules and structures have been put in place to enable civil society to participate in regional integration, member states and EAC officials tend to apply these rules in a way that undermines the purported goal of a people-driven integration process. This indicates that EAC member states are still rather reluctant to allow for meaningful civil society participation". Kivuva (2018, pp.228-9) provides a list of EACSOF's successes and weaknesses, with heavy investment in building members' capacities to engage on EAC matters prominent in the first category, while being elitist and having minimal grassroots presence standing out in the weaknesses category. A more pessimistic assessment of EACSOF is that rather than facilitate access of more CSOs to EAC, it acts as a gatekeeper, making the interactions of CSOs with EAC less effective, more cumbersome and frustrating (Kibalama, interviewed by Reinold 2019).

EACSOF new five-year strategy (2023-2027), was formulated after consultations with CSOs in the region as it reports on its website[44]. The strategy is not posted online to determine if education is one of the covered areas. What we know is that civil society education coalitions in the region are not networked in a regional organization or alliance, and that they are not active in EACSOF.

The East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC) is another regional non-state actor which enjoys an observer status within the EAC structure. Representing workers in the region, it was established in 1988 and comprises national trade union bodies in the EAC partner states[45]. It defines its role as ensuring that EAC "involves workers in all issues concerning regional integration, establish tripartism as an important mechanism of consultation and dialogue, promote the ratification of international labour standards by the partner states, promote the integration of youth and women in all spheres of socio-economic development, promote the decent work agenda, harmonization of labour laws and policies in East Africa and promote the concept of free movement of factors of production in the region"[46].

The extent to which EATUC brings the voice of teacher unions in the region on issues that impact on them, such as the harmonization and standardization agendas, as well as the liberalization of education as a service, is not clear.

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[44] Some information on previous internal consultations and strategy development can be gleaned from The Commonwealth Foundation 's support the institutional strengthening of EACSOF and worked with it to develop an East Africa regional agenda for action at the EAC. National consultations were undertaken in each of the five East African countries and findings were brought together at EACSOF's General Council meeting in 2015.

[45] EATUC is composed of the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU-K) – Kenya, the National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU) – Uganda, Zanzibar Trade Union Congress (ZATUC) and the Trade Union Congress of Tanzania (TUCTA), the National Trade Union Federations from Burundi (COSYBU) and Rwanda (CESTRAR).

[46] https://eatuc.org/

Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

ECCAS was established in 1983. Its members are Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tomé and Principe.

ECCAS is set to converge toward a single, better structured and more efficient REC together with the Economic Community of Central African States CEMAC by the end of 2023. This would be the culmination of efforts to rationalize the RECs in Central Africa, an undertaking since 2007.

ECCAS continues to undergo institutional reform, including the renewal and the renovation of its architecture.

Institutional Set Up

ECCAS has an elaborate structure (see diagram below). This includes a Civil Society Unit, which falls under the office of the Deputy Secretary General in charge of the Department of Human Integration, Peace, Security and Stability.   Initially, ECASS also had an Education and Culture Directorate, which is under the office of the Deputy Secretary General in charge of the Department of Social and Cultural Integration. The Directorate had two units: Education and Culture, and Science and Technology. The structure was subsequently simplified, with Education coming under the Commissioner for Gender, Human and Social Development.

ECASS's core governance structure is very similar to the other RECs. The Conference of Heads of State and Government is the supreme decision-making body, which defines and formulates ECASS's major policies. The Conference should meet once a year, but its meetings have been irregular due to frequent postponements.

ECCAS's ambitions are thwarted by lack of financing, casting huge doubts about the implementation capacities of the REC and of its Secretariat. Financing dominated the most recent meeting of the Conference of Heads of State and Government (June 2023) hammered home the message that "it is not possible to implement the ambition of integrating the economies and peoples of our Community space, in a way that will benefit the development of our States, if we are not in a position to assume, through our own resources, the financial cost of achieving our ambition"[47].

Engagement with Civil Society

The structure of ECCAS features a Civil Society Unit. However, there is very little information and research on the work of this Unit and its engagement with civil society.

The interest in working with civil society appears to have been concentrated in the area of conflict prevention, with UNOCA promoting the role of civil society and highlighting the example of ECOWAS-WANEP collaboration as a model to follow. Several policy documents mandate the organization to engage CSOs on conflict prevention, including its Standing Orders on Mechanism for Early Warning in Central Africa (MARAC). The ECCAS Treaty and the Protocol Establishing the Network of Parliamentarians of ECCAS also provides potential entry points for engaging with civil society. According to OASS, "in practice however, the involvement and role of civil society in ECCAS' conflict prevention work has been limited to workshops jointly organized with partners such as UNOCA and the EU, and its engagement of civil society actors as decentralized correspondents at the level of the MARAC National Bureaus[48]. In the latter case, the role of civil society is dwindling as the National Bureaus are not fully existent or operational in all the ECCAS Member States" (2018, p.82).

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47   See: The representative of Gabon, the host country, reiterated the same urgency of ECCAS members making their financial contributions. He deplored the fact that "our Community depends almost entirely on Technical and Financial Partners to implement its medium-term strategic plan". https://ceeac-eccas.org/en/2023/06/21/start-of-the-xxiiird-ordinary-session-of-the-conference-of-heads-of-state-and-government-of-eccas/

48   Historically, the MARAC operationalization process, which commenced in 2006, included the establishment of "decentralized correspondents" in each of the 11 ECCAS member states. The role of these correspondents, some of whom selected from civil society organizations, was mainly to support in-country data collection for ECCAS's early warning system on the basis of an indicator template covering political, security, economic, socio-cultural and humanitarian issues as well as regional dynamics.

Lack of financial resources, a serious issue that continues to dog ECCAS, is often given as the reason for the limited participation and engagement of civil society in ECCAS' conflict prevention work.

ECCAS has further partnered with the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), to facilitate the creation of a similar regional network of CSOs in the Central Africa region it will collaborate with on early warning and conflict prevention. The ECCAS-WANEP collaboration is envisaged to initially focus on: (i) developing a strategy or framework on enhanced ECCAS-Civil Society engagement in early warning and conflict prevention, (ii) developing a concrete and budgeted action plan on the implementation of the strategy, and (iii) facilitating a visit of potential civil society organizations from Central Africa to West Africa to gain first-hand insights on the ECOWAS-WANEP early warning and conflict prevention collaboration. (OASS 2018, p.82)

ECCAS and Education

Assigning a Directorate of its own to education in the earlier structure of ECASS can positively be seen as a statement of intent and a recognition of the importance of the theme. The later clustering of gender and human development in the office of one Commissioner, and placing education within that cluster, continues in the same direction.

ECASS declared the year 2022 to be the year of Human Development. A recent article by Kapinga Yvette Ngandu, the Commissioner for Gender, Human and Social Development (GHSD), underlined that education is at the heart of all development -economic, social, and environmental- and that armed conflicts, natural disasters and health crises are part of the challenges that undermine societies in the ECASS region - all of which affect the supply, access and maintenance of basic education services. To stress the urgency of investing in education, the Commissioner pointed out that literacy rates in the ECASS region are 30-40% and that a considerable number of children in Central Africa who are born today will be deprived of less than half of their potential earnings as adults because of their learning poverty.

The human capital approach is evident in ECASS's overall emphasis on education as a tool of economic integration, but there is a recognition that education is a fundamental human right and that building resilient education systems is key to providing equitable access to quality education even in times of crises. ECASS declares that the success of its development plans relies on "the transformative force of education, science, and culture".

Other indicators of ECASS's education work can be seen in its joint strategic plan with UNICEF (WCA) (2022-2025), which focuses on three areas of cooperation: "high-quality education that is inclusive and resilient; access to the birth registration services and birth certificates; and the generation and use of data. Priorities under this plan include consultations between countries to draw up minimum standards for high-quality primary education and conduct analyses of the effectiveness of investments in the education sector[49].

We could not locate references to CESA in ECCAS's education-related work and there is no available information on ECCAS's GHSD unit engaging with civil society education groups.

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49   See: https://www.unicef.org/gabon/en/press-releases/eccas-unicef-cooperation-high-quality-education-birth-registration-and-data-children

ECOWAS

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) came into existence in 1975, following the signing of the Lagos Treaty.   Initially limited to economic cooperation, the Treaty was revised in 1993 to expand the scope of cooperation between member states.

ECOWAS envisions the creation of a borderless region where the population has access to its abundant resources, which it can manage and utilize to the benefit of the region's people, through inclusive and sustainable development.

Institutional Set Up

Like other RECs, the organizational structure of ECOWAS consists of the following key institutions: the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers, the Community Parliament; the Economic and Social Council; the Community Court of Justice; and the ECOWAS Commission. The structure comprises the legislative, judicial, and executive parts of the ECOWAS system.

The Authority of Heads of State and Government is ECOWAS's supreme institution and is responsible for the general direction of the Community and for its movement toward the realization of its objectives. It determines general policy and major guidelines and oversees the functioning of the different ECOWAS institutions. Its decisions (either by consensus or 2/3 majority) are binding on the member states.

The President of the ECOWAS Commission is elected by the Authority of Heads of State and Government for a period of 4 years.   The President is the Chief Executive Officer with responsibility for the day-to-day administration and management of the organization, assisted by a Vice-President and thirteen (13) Commissioners. The ECOWAS Commission convenes, "as and when necessary," -as stated on its website- meetings of sectoral Ministers to examine sectoral issues as per ECOWAS's agenda and sets of priorities.

There are (7) Departments within the ECOWAS Commission, two of which are the Offices of the President and the Vice-President. The other (5) Departments are: (i) Infrastructure, Energy and Digitalization (ii) Economic Affairs and Agriculture (iii) Human Development and Social Affairs, where Education sits (iv) Internal Affairs, and (v) Political Affairs, Peace and Security.
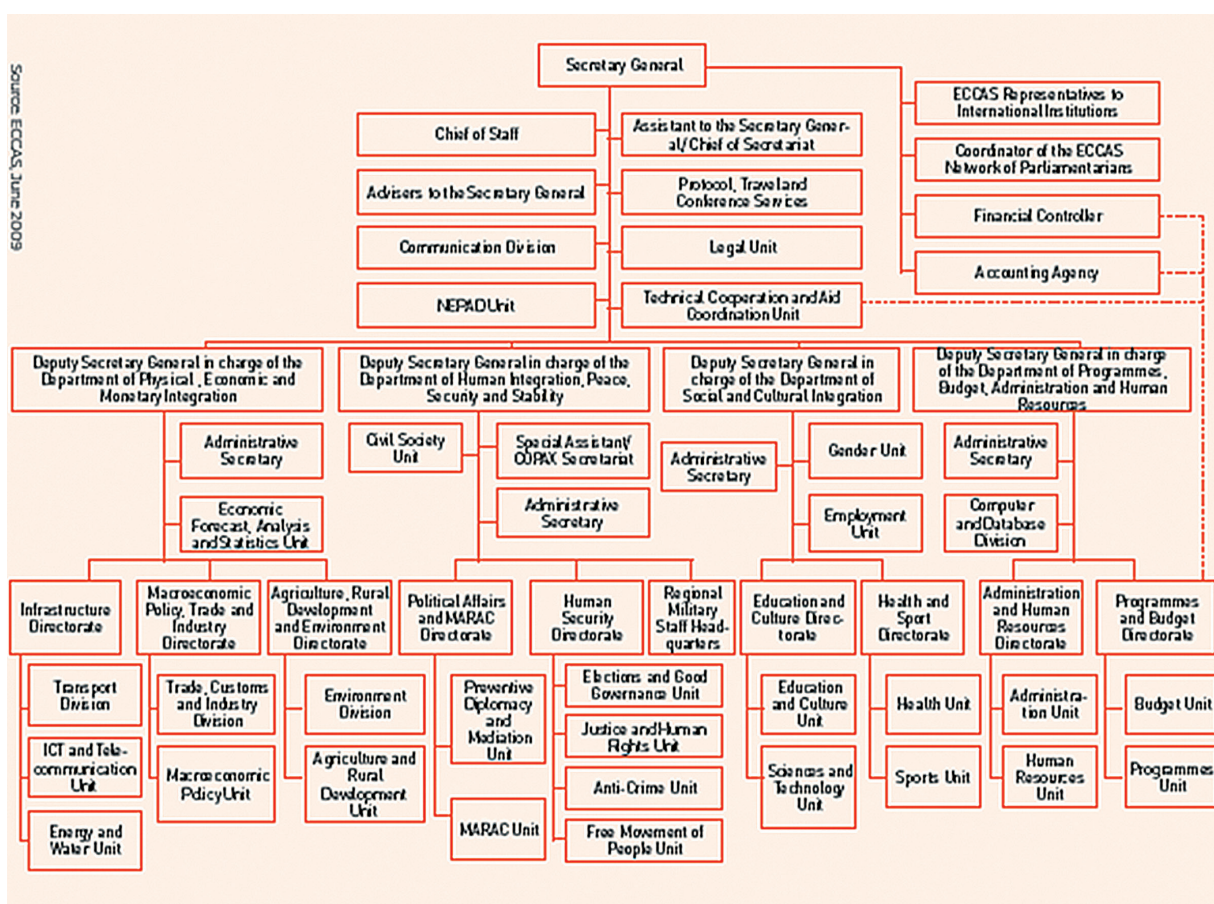
Engagement with Civil Society

The Lagos Treaty which established ECOWAS stated that the inter-governmental body "shall co-operate with regional non-governmental organisations and voluntary development organisations in order to encourage the involvement of the peoples of the region in the process of economic integration and mobilise their technical, material and financial support. To this end, the Community shall set up a mechanism for consultation with such organisations." ECOWAS was the first regional economic community in Africa to grant observer status to civil society organizations (Reinold 2019).

The revised 1993 ECOWAS treaty is credited with a shift to a more people-centered agenda. By calling for cooperation with regional CSO and the broad participation of West African citizens in the regional integration process[50], "an important change in both the structure and character of West African cooperation" occurred (WACSI).

As early as 1996, by a decision of the Council of Ministers, ECOWAS created the Forum of Associations Recognised by ECOWAS (FARE) as an "apex institution", to bridge the gap between civil society and the regional economic community. FARE had a membership base close to 30 CSOs that were assumed to represent the different constituents of civil society in the region (including worker and employer groups) and which, importantly, were granted observer status. (FARE) was assigned the responsibility to coordinate all CSOs' activities and act as a liaison between CSOs and ECOWAS Secretariat. FARE is open only to those CSOs (including worker and employer groups) that are recognized by ECOWAS institutional framework.

ECOWAS has a CSO Desk, which sits within the Department of Human Resources and Gender. It has responsibilities for issuing official invitations to CSOs to provide inputs into the Commission's work and to facilitate the negotiation of MOUs. Accredited CSOs may have opportunities to engage with ECOWAS Committees, propose agenda items, and to make presentations to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.

The West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF), an umbrella network of CSOs from the fifteen member states, was established in 2003, and subsequently endorsed by ECOWAS[51]. Its aim is "channeling civil society energies towards complimenting the regional integration and development agenda of the ECOWAS "System" Institutions' (WACSOF website 2018, cited in Reinold 2019). WACSOF defines itself as "a civil Society membership organisation, which is a privileged partner and advisor to ECOWAS and many institutions [such as the AU]". WACSOF's mission is to "serve as the receptacle for CSOs, by serving as the channel of engagement with the ECOWAS and empowering them to harness the public space at the national, regional and continental levels in order to contribute to an integrated, stable and developed Africa".[52]

Given its "privileged partner" status, WACSOF attends most major ECOWAS meetings. It developed its previous strategic plan in consultation with the different ECOWAS departments, believing this would enable "greater impact on policy implementation and formulation" (Reinold 2019). This close and "healthy relationship" has not prevented WACSOF publicly expressing concerns regarding some ECOWAS operations, such as contested the findings of ECOWAS election monitoring teams in 2011 (Reinold 2019).

There is also the example of civil society actors in the region opposing the proposed trade agreement between ECOWAS and the EU, while being supported by ECOWAS's civil society dialogue (aimed at strengthening the voice of civil society in the negotiations). This use by civil society of opportunities provided by regional institutions to challenge their regional agendas illustrates, as Moyo writes, that civil society actors have moved when needed between political opposition and political engagement at the regional level, their roles "shift[ing} between, or simultaneously work[ing] as legitimization, manipulation and contestation".

WACSOF strategically organises its annual meetings to coincide with the ECOWAS Heads of States Summit and makes policy recommendations to the summit. As (WACSI 20xx) points out, "it is difficult to measure the extent to which these recommendations are implemented by the Heads of States" (p.).

WACSOF has organized itself as a regional umbrella organization, representing (15) national CSO platforms and thematic networks which together form the foundation of the WACSOF structure[53]. WACSOF says it has more than 1,000 members and that it covers 18 thematic areas[54].

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50   Treaty of ECOWAS, 1993, Article 81.
51   ECOWAS's Civil Society Desk was also established in 2003.
52   https://wacsof-foscao.org/en/who-we-are/about-wacsof.html, accessed on 23 June 2023
53   Interview y (May 2023).
54   https://wacsof-foscao.org/en/media/press-release.html?start=8 The WACSOF website does not provide further information on the thematic groups. Latest news concerns the situation in Senegal. Activities around election monitoring form the bulk of activities posted on the website.

Interviews have shown that WACSOF has been facing multiple challenges. Its representativeness is questioned and the legitimacy and credibility of the role it plays as an official corridor for CSO is contested.[55] Critics from within civil society in the region describe WACSOF as currently being ineffective, having suffered from scandals and a perceived lack of internal democracy and consultation with member organizations. Entrepreneurship, Youth Employment and Education appear as one single thematic area, mirroring ECOWAS's clustering of these themes together.

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) is another privileged CSO network. It has been the subject of plenty of research as an example of a successful civil society – REC relationship (Eze 2020, Kogba 2023).   WANEP's extensive knowledge and expertise in its field and widely recognized technical and political skills have allowed it to be involved -as a partner- in developing the ECOWAS Early Warning system (ECOWARN), a regional conflict prevention mechanism[56].

The conflict, peace, and security domain is where ECOWAS has clearly valued the role of civil society. WANEP's co-authorship of the Early Warning System was followed by further collaboration with a wider group of civil society groups[57], who have been implementing various ECOWAS instruments, including the 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, which "provides entry points for civil society involvement" (WACSI , p.). WANEP, in fact, continues to play this model-building role beyond West Africa.   As recently as May 2023, WANEP can be seen playing an advisory role in supporting the establishment of a civil society conflict prevention network in the SADC region.

WACSOF and WANEP were at one point described as "classic interface models that other regions ought to study and adapt" (Moyo 2007, p.8).   The regional umbrella organization model of WACSOF has been adopted elsewhere on the continent by other RECs, while WANEP has been brought in by RECs in other regions to help it develop models of civil engagement in conflict prevention and peace and security-related affairs.   WACSOF's current inactivity and struggles with securing funding contrasts with WANEP's continued growth and the niche it has carved out and solidified in the conflict prevention field (OSF 2016). "Enjoying a privileged partnership with, and strong support from ECOWAS, WANEP has become the leading driver of change in peacebuilding operations in Africa," as an external evaluation of WANEP concluded in 2014.

Engagement with Education

At the institutional level, the theme of education sits in ECOWAS's Human Development and Social Affairs Department.

Initially, Education was in a separate department, together with science and culture. Its merger with the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs reflects ECOWAS's belief the social and human development pillars that those two Directorates were assigned to build belong to the same category of the enhancement and well-being of ECOWAS.

A significant development within ECOWAS is the decision to establish a specialized Education Agency in West Africa, in response to the growing educational needs and challenges in ECOWAS. The decision dates to 2017, when the Heads of State and Government adopted the recommendation of the ECOWAS Ministers of Education in this regard. The Agency's primary role is seen as promoting the harmonization of education systems in the ECOWAS Region in areas of governance, curriculum, recognition and equivalence of Certificates, quality assurance, and resource mobilization[58].
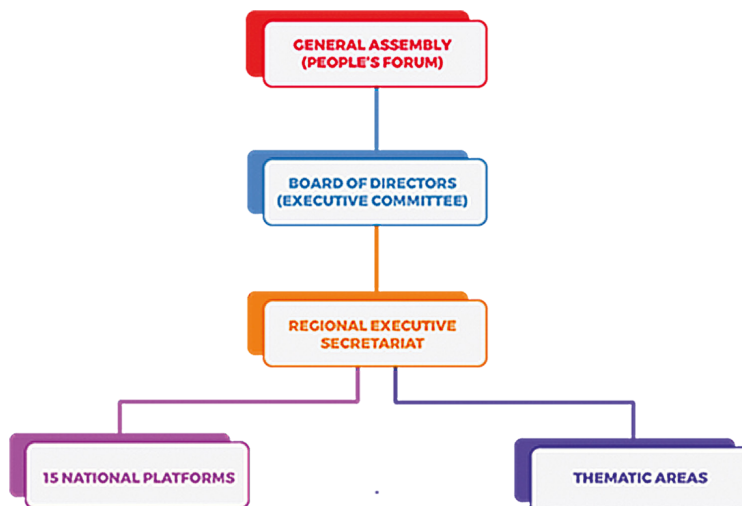
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56   Interestingly, despite being lauded for co-authoring ECOWARN, and despite ECOWARN's systematic collaboration and partnership with CSOs in its early warning monitoring, data collection and analysis at all levels, CSOs do not have a presence in ECOWARN's decision-making structures (OSSA 2018, p.89).

57   Such as Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET). "WANEP, in collaboration with many civil society organizations have made significant contribution to peace through civic education, human rights advocacy, conflict resolution, support to former combatants, among other initiatives" (Machina and Cheri 2022, p. 520).

58   See: https://ecowas.int/virtual-meeting-of-ecowas-experts-ministers-of-education-on-the-establishment-of-the-ecowas-education-agency-30th-may-to-1st-june-2023/ The foundations for the Specialized Agency can be found in several conventions agreed within ECOWAS, such as the General Convention on the

The ECOWAS Press Release on 5 June 2023 described the adoption of the expert recommendations by the virtual meeting of Education Ministers as being of "crucial importance in the internal procedures of ECOWAS" and "a major step in the establishment of the ECOWAS Education Agency".

Other initiatives taken by ECOWAS's education sector include the commissioning of a Feasibility Study on Gender Equality in Education in the ECOWAS Region, which was validated by a virtual meeting of the region's Education Ministers in the summer of 2022[59]. The meeting deliberated and made key recommendations on "practical ways, different mechanisms, strategies, policies, programs, and activities that will promote gender equality in education in the Member States".

Significantly, while the ECOWAS press release highlighted the Ministers' approval of a communication plan "to make girls' education more visible, more credible, and more supported by all stakeholders", key civil society actors in the region were not involved, as our interviews confirm[60], in the discussions of the gender equality framework or of the Specialized Agency discussions. The ECOWAS Department responsible for education and civil society education groups in the region, most notably ANCEFA and GCE-affiliated NECs, appear to be disconnected, which leads to many missed opportunities, including the loss of the valuable inputs of civil society into those important policy discussions and the support they can potentially provide to their implementation at the national and regional levels.

As for concrete cases of civil society engagement, ANCEFA had some engagement with ECOWAS in 2017, when it interacted with the ECOWAS education experts' meeting in Abuja and the Education Ministers' meeting in Lome. ANCEFA also helped the development of the ECOWAS Youth and Girls Engagement Strategy, which culminated in the virtual convening by the ECOWAS HRST Commissioner of a forum on youth skills and TVET opportunities within the ECOWAS zone.[61].

A recent case of collaboration between civil society actors in the region and ECOWAS on issues around the financing of education points out the potential gains that such collaboration could bring to both sides[62]. As countries in the region sought additional resources to address the increased needs of their education systems in the COVID period, civil society groups sensed an opportunity to engage with governments and with ECOWAS on issues around domestic resource mobilization. An important entry point was provided by Oxfam's Inequality Index, to the Steering Committee of which it had invited representatives of ECOWAS, the Africa Development Bank, the regional civil society umbrella organization WACSOF, and others. When the President of Sierra Leone announced in 2018 his plans to make education accessible for everyone, highlighting the challenge of finding the resources to do that, Oxfam engaged and presented ideas centered on optimizing domestic resources, including introducing transfer pricing regulations. Oxfam engaged the Ministry of Finance and others in Sierra Leone to arrive at agreements on the recommended policy actions, framing this within the Inequality Index work. This framing allowed linking the issue of increasing privatization of education in the region with domestic resource mobilization challenges. Interviewees from the civil society side spoke of the receptiveness of ECOWAS to their ideas. The collective advocacy efforts of civil society on those issues, however, were not sustained due to a lack of funding, and when interviewed for the purposes of this research, the ECOWAS Education Desk was not aware of this particular case of collaboration between civil society and ECOWAS on education financing, which is a case of lack of institutional memory.

Regarding ECOWAS's engagement with CESA, there are no references to CESA on the ECOWAS website. Activities undertaken by ECOWAS in 2022 on Peace Education, for example, thematically connect to CESA's Peace Education Cluster, but ECOWAS is not active in that cluster. Overall, there is little evidence showing ECOWAS engagement in CESA.

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recognition and equivalence of degrees, diplomas, certificates and other qualifications in ECOWAS Member States (2002), A Framework for the Harmonisation of Basic Education in the ECOWAS (2017), and the ECOWAS TVET Strategy for Skills Improvement and Employability (ETSSIE -2017-2026) (2017).

59   https://ecowas.int/virtual-validation-meeting-on-the-report-of-feasibility-study-on-gender-equality-in-education-in-the-ecowas-region-30th-and-31st-august-2022/
60   Interviews with ECOWAS staff and key civil society actors in the region.
61   Personal communication, Solange Akpo.
62   Interviews civil society informants (x), (y)

SADC

The institutional set up of SADC

SADC has an elaborate structure. The different parts making up the Regional Economic Community were agreed under different articles of the Treaty establishing SADC, and the various amendments to the Treaty[63].

Figure 2.1 below shows the institutional set up of SADC. We will only highlight three key parts of the structure: the SADC Summit, the SADC Secretariat, and the Sectoral Ministerial Committees.   The SADC National Committees are taken up in more detail in the next section.

Institutionally, SADC is a purely intergovernmental organization, with ultimate authority resting with the Heads of State. Councils of Ministers have an advisory role vis-à-vis the Summit, while administrative and coordinating roles are assigned to the SADC Secretariat.

The Summit of Heads of State and Government is the supreme policy-making body. It makes its decisions by consensus.   Policies (Protocols and Charters) it approves are subsequently adopted into law, which are expected to be ratified at the national level in the SADC member states. Amendments to the SADC Treaty require the approval of three quarters of members.

The agenda and papers for the SADC Summit are not made public. It is difficult for NSAs to engage SADC policymakers in the SADC Council and Heads of State Summit Meetings directly.

The Secretariat, located in Botswana, is "the principal executive institution of SADC, responsible for strategic planning, co-ordination and management of SADC programs. It is also responsible for the implementation of decisions of SADC policymakers and institutions such as the Summit, the Troikas and Council of Ministers". The Secretariat is comprised of 19 Directorates and Units. Education falls under the Social and Human Development and Special Programmes Directorate (HSD&SP). The Directorate's mandate is "to enhance human capabilities, utilisation and reduce vulnerability, eradicate human poverty and to attain the well-being of SADC citizens.

The Sectoral Cluster of Ministerial Committees coordinates co-operation and integration of policies and programs in designated sectoral areas. The joint Education and Training; and Science, Technology and Innovation is one of those clusters. Sectoral Ministerial Committees are supported by Cluster Technical Committees[64] and by the SADC Secretariat.

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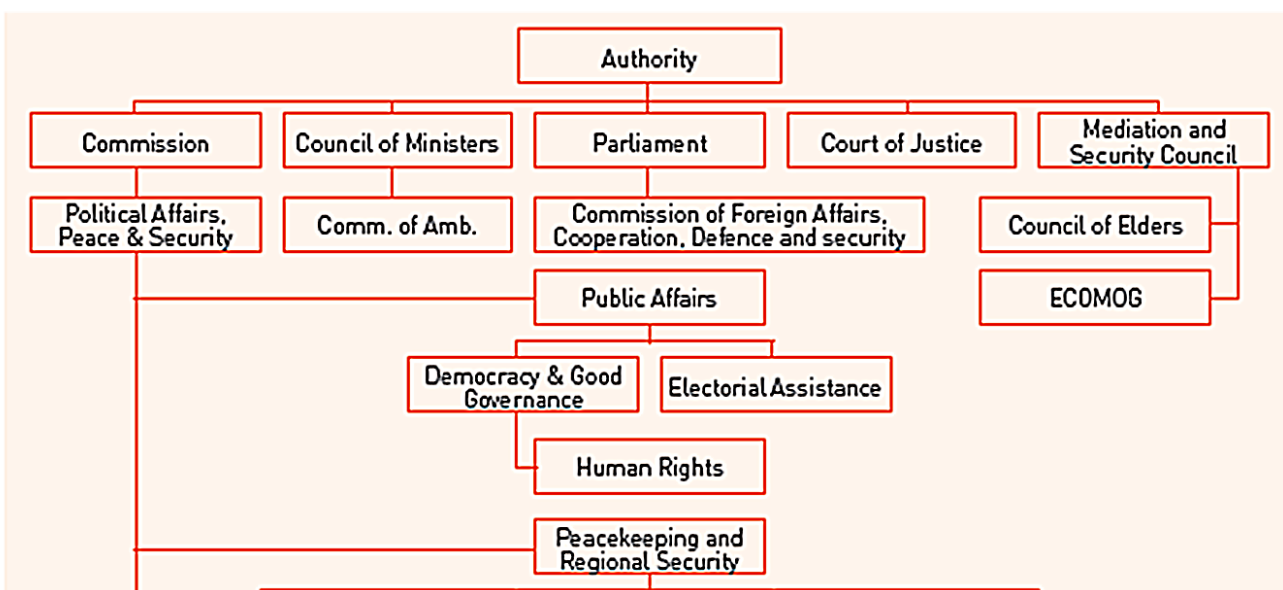
63   The Southern African Trust's Toolkit (2020) provides descriptions of all those parts making up SADC. Also see OSF (2016)
64   For an example of the role and scope of a Technical Committee's work, see the report on the SADC Technical Committee on Food Security's meeting in 2022, the year when Nutrition was the AU's thematic priority. The African Early Childhood Network (AfECN), which coordinates the CESA Early Childhood cluster was one of the participants in the meeting.
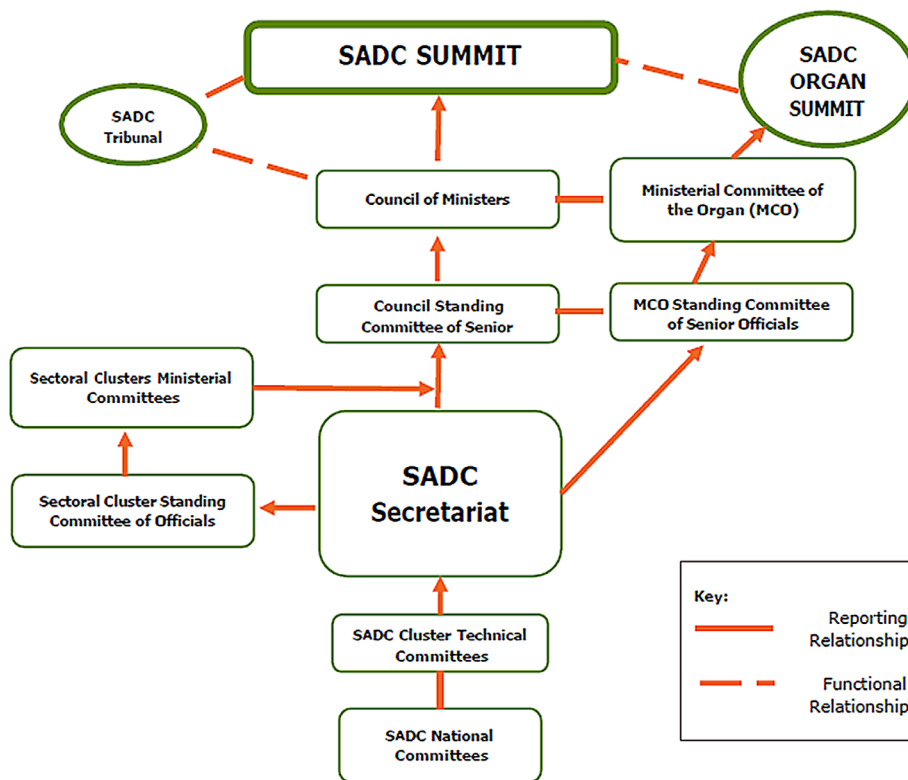
Source: Southern Africa Trust (2020) Toolkit, p. 17. SAT credits Muchero.

SADC National Committees (SNCs)

SADC National Committees (SNCs) were introduced in 2001 to allow government, civil society and the private sector at the national level a pathway for providing input into regional matters.

According to SADC, the SADC National Committees (SNCs) "have been assembled to provide inputs at national level in the formulation of regional policies and strategies, as well as coordinate and oversee the implementation of programmes at national level. The Committees are also responsible for the initiation of SADC projects and issue papers as an input into the preparation of the Regional Strategies. The Committees comprise key stakeholders from government, private sector and civil society in each Member State and a provision for their establishment is reflected in the SADC Treaty"[65].

The SNC, is, therefore, "a steering body of stakeholders aimed at guiding implementation of SADC decisions and programmes at the national level"[66].   It is one of the national structures that coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the regional agenda, playing an important role in aligning national plans and regional priorities, thereby facilitating the integration of the latter into national plans and budgets. As an extension of these roles, SNCs should monitor the progress in implementing the SADC agendas at the national level and report this to SADC. Progress at the national level aggregates into regional success, particularly in areas that regional agendas helped promote, and this demonstrates the benefits of regional integration and regional strategies.

This is the theory, and these are the aspirations attached to the SNCs[67]. The reality, however, is that overall, there is a "general lack of clarity about SADC processes at the national level, low levels of public access to and understanding of SADC information (including planning and reporting documents), and persistent under-reporting by Member States on their SADC commitments". "Functional and accessible SNCs, as key accountability mechanisms" are "absent in most Member States"[68]. "The lack of effective SNCs appears to

65   https://www.sadc.int/institutions/sadc-national-committees Also see SAT, pp. 32-33
66   Remarks, Malawi
67   For a historical view of the SNCs, see the 2009 study by Ogochukwu Nzewi and Lungi Zakwe "Democratising Regional Integration in Southern Africa: SADC National Committees as platforms for participatory policy-making" (Johannesburg: Center for Policy Studies), available at https://www.africaportal.org/documents/2273/RR122.pdf This is a study with valuable insights which, despite the passage of time, retain their validity.
68   See Communique of the Regional Dialogue for Non-State Actors (The SADC RISDP 2020-2030 and Social Accountability in Public Resource Management) (September 2022) : Also see remarks by Dr Enock Nyorekwa Twinoburyo at the SADC National Workshop in Malawi (August 2022) : There are "low levels of awareness amongst CSOs about the SADC integration process and the existing coordination mechanism remains weak. Very few CSOs were active in the recently established SADC National Committees (SNCs) as well as SADC Regional Forum". On Tanzania, see: https://www.ippmedia.com/en/news/actors-push-inclusiveness-sadc-integration-process

have deprived ordinary citizens, the opportunity to input and influence regional policy and politics and therefore, the regional integration trajectory, from the ground up" (Masevanga 2018, p.142).

Progress seems to have been made in establishing SNCs in some countries, particularly in the last three years[69]. In Malawi, for example, the President launched the SADC National Committee (SNC) in April 2021. The government says that it follows the guidance of the SADC Treaty to include key stakeholders from different constituencies, including civil society, in the SNC. CSOs are particularly concentrated in the Social, Human Development and Special Programmes Cluster of the SNC (which Education falls under). With plans to populate other SNC clusters with stakeholders from civil society and other stakeholders, the government affirmed "its desire to ensure that CSOs are fully incorporated and are involved in the SADC regional integration process through SNCs structures"[70]. Zambia declared that its SADC National Committee had been integrated into the National Development Coordinating Structure; that a SNC Website and Knowledge Management System was created[71], with the aim of improving the SADC National Committee's "reach to the common citizen on the streets"; and that these achievements have led to "marked improvements in the tracking" of regional program implementation in the country. Assessing whether these intentions translated into practice and whether the reported positive steps were sustained requires further research in those countries. The overall picture largely remains that SNCs, which are supposed to facilitate the engagement of national CSOs in SADC processes, are extremely weak.

The establishment and activation of the SNCs is crucial to improving the governance and accountability structures of SADC, and to ensure better and stronger linkages between national and regional policies and strategies. "Existing national committees or national level structures," as a SADC Secretariat staff emphasized recently, "should be better resourced and less bureaucratic, allowing for greater accessibility and engagement by local NSAs"[72]. In turn, the more democratic and inclusive SNCs are, the more will this reflect on SADC structures at the regional level and the more demands it will place on them to move in the same direction of expanding participation and inclusiveness.

It is also important to take into account that not all governments in the SADC region demonstrate the same levels of openness to the inclusion of civil society in participatory and consultative processes, including those related to SADC. As Janet Zhou from the Southern Africa People Solidarity Network stated: "about six SADC states are hotspots in terms of the shrinking democratic space for engagements at [the] national level," where "non-state actors, particularly civil society organisations, remain viewed as a nuisance"[73].   In those contexts where there is shrinking civic space, SADC can play a role in urging national governments to comply with their commitments to build inclusive multistakeholder national committees as key institutions stipulated in the SADC Treaty. At the very least, by providing transparent and easily accessible information on national processes (such as the reports and inputs of the different SNCs), the SADC Secretariat can help CSOs and other NSAs find ways of being informed and of expressing their opinions and inputs based on that.

National Education Coalitions (NECs) in the SADC region, which were interviewed for this research, did not mention the SNCs as active platforms they had knowledge of or which they have been invited to participate in.   Even in those countries where progress has been made in establishing and injecting some energy into the SNCs, education movements do not seem to have been part of those developments. The case of the 2022 joint meeting of the SADC Ministers of Education and Science (see box below) shows that NECs did not find a path to the meeting through their national SADC Committees, despite the declared function of those committees to engage with and provide inputs to regional strategies. In an ideal scenario, Ministers of Education would have gone to the SADC meeting carrying the inputs and recommendations of key education stakeholders in their countries, bolstered by this input and support from groups representing their citizens.

Given the large number of sectors and themes that the SNC covers, one single SNC will face enormous organizational challenges in convening all key stakeholders in those sectors and in facilitating their meaningful participation. The feasible solution is clustering, as the Malawi SNC was intent on[74], and in

69   SNCs were established in 2020-2021 in Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia. On Malawi, see: https://sdgcafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/REMARKS-CSOS-updated.pdf On Namibia, see: https://economist.com.na/58711/extra/namibia-to-launch-the-au-sadc-national-committee/ On Zambia, see: https://www.facebook.com/109795000664296/posts/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-permanent-secretary-for-international-relations-and-/223304025980059/ GIZ have provided funding to the SADC Secretariat, through the Strengthening National-Regional Linkages in SADC program, to support "SADC Member States to establish and strengthen national structures that coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the regional agenda. These include SADC National Committees that bring together relevant government authorities and non-state actors to work together towards implementing SADC protocols and policies at the national level".

70   Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Malawi (August 2022) "Remarks to be delivered by Mrs. Faith Kazembe Mwalubunju, Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during the Civil Society Organization National Workshop on SADC Regional Integration"

71   We have not been able to locate this website

72   The remarks were made by Wazha Omphile, the Coordinator of the Integrated Institutional Capacity Building (IICB) Program at the SADC Secretariat, at a workshop on NSA engagement with SADC held in September 2002. See: the report in the Seychelle's The Nation.

73   The Nation (Seychelles) 7 October 2022

74   In 2021, Malawi had already set up one cluster (Social and Human Development Cluster) and was considering establishing a Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment cluster (TIFI); a Food Agriculture and Natural Resources cluster (FANR); and an Infrastructure and Services cluster.

some cases sub-clustering. Clustering is critical for the effectiveness of the SNC, "so that specific issues are thoroughly thrashed and when they come to the consolidated group there is clear guidance from the technical experts or area experts in those different clusters"[75].

Education as a sector and theme falls under the Social and Human Development pillar. It needs its own specialized sub-cluster, building on the multistakeholder model of the Local Education Group (LEG). Its mandate would be to (i) oversee the domestication and adoption of SADC regional strategies and frameworks (ii) Monitor and coordinate reporting on the implementation of these strategies (iii) Provide input to SADC policies and strategies, including through the SADC Ministers of Education Meeting (see Box).

SADC Secretariat Engagement with Non-State Actors

In August 2022, the SADC Council of Ministers approved the Regional Non-State Actor (NSA) Engagement Mechanism.   This has been a long process. The mechanism is now waiting to be operationalized.

Different civil society groups and think tanks have been advocating over the past years for the approval of the Engagement Mechanism[76], diagnosing participation deficits and implementation gaps, and proposing a roadmap for the establishment of an institutionalized mechanism, as a way of fully operationalizing article 23 of the SADC Treaty and subsequent amendments, such as those contained in articles 5(2b) and 16A.   Research on civil society engagement with SADC, focused on specific policy sectors, such as gender and labor (Hulse et. al. 2019), looked at the characteristics of transnational civil society networks that were engaging with SADC, to determine which were more effective. This strand of research also contributed to diagnosing the governance deficits of SADC.

The diagnostics converged towards the same conclusions:

- SADC is largely inaccessible.

- SADC only allows limited civil society participation through formalized, institutionalized mechanisms (Hulse, p.).

- There are no rules of procedure for NSA participation.   Engagement with non-state actors is ad hoc, with no systemic mechanisms.

- Absence of guidelines on how Non-State Actors can be accredited and actively participate in the implementation of the regional programs

- There are few, regular, open, public hearings and consultations for NSAs to provide formal inputs and submissions.

- CSOs face difficulties in establishing direct formal relationships with SADC institutions (primarily the Secretariat).

- Only two of the major regional CSOs [the SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SADC-CNGO) and SATUCC] have concluded MoUs with the Secretariat, which provide a legal framework for cooperation and gives the CSOs the opportunity to be invited to Ministerial meetings.

- SADC-NCGO and SATUCC, together with the Fellowship of Christian Councils of Southern Africa, a third network with MoU status, form an Apex Allianc with responsibility for organizing an annual Civil Society Forum, which usually takes place before the SADC Summit. According to Hulse et. al. "CSOs feel that the Civil Society Forum does not effectively feed civil society inputs into the Summit decision-making process, in part because they are not adequately informed of the Summit's agenda, and in part because the Summit simply does not listen to civil society (2018, p.) Proposals to establish a more inclusive and representative NSA Forum (see below) express the need to go beyond the limitations of the Apex Alliance's Civil Society Forum.

- Even SADC-CNGO has difficulty arranging meetings with the SADC Secretariat, despite being in the same city as the Secretariat[77].

- Studies conducted by SADC showed that the engagement between SADC and NSAs have a tendency of occurring at the discretion of the Secretariat[78].

75   The Nation (Seychelles) 7 October 2022
76   See for example: Southern Africa Trust (2018) The Proposed SADC Mechanism for Engagement with Non-State Actors in Line with Treaty Provisions (Kyalami: Southern Africa Trust)
77   The Nation (Seychelles), 7 October 2022
78   CUTS (2021) "Magnifying The Role Of Non-State Actors In The Africa Continental Free Trade Area" p.4

- Because of the limits of formal access, some CSOs resort to establishing informal relations, which yield results in some cases, but remain highly unreliable.

- "Interaction between CSOs and SADC organs occurs mainly through the SADC Secretariat, yet the real locus of power within SADC is the Council of Ministers and their summit meetings, where CSOs are marginalized." (Reinold, p.7).

- Overall, the institutional permeability of SADC, meaning the extent to which its formal and informal rules and practices allow non-state actors access to decision-making processes, is low (Hulse, 2018).

Add to the above challenges resulting from capacity-related constraints at the (under-staffed, under-resourced) SADC Secretariat, leading to a lack of a dedicated focal point within SADC secretariat to coordinate NSA engagement, and irregular and limited availability of information on SADC's activities and access to its documents[79].

Hulse et. al. (2018) provides an overview of the different existing access mechanisms for non-state actors in the SADC region, which is very useful for analytical purposes.

Overview of existing access mechanisms for non-state actors		
ACCESS MECHANISM	OPERATING PRINCIPLE(S)	ASSESSMENT
Formal		
SADC National Committees (SNCs)/ National Contact Points	National-level committees bringing together government, civil society and the private sector to formulate inputs for regional decision-making.	Formally, the best avenue for CSOs to exert influence, but most countries do not have functional SNCs; access is controlled by government and does not allow direct participation at the regional level.
Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)	Legal framework for cooperation between SADC and selected regional umbrella CSOs.	Gives access to SADC meetings, but difficult to obtain. Process of obtaining MoU lacks transparency.
SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC- PF)	Brings together parliamentarians in SADC member states. Lacks legislative or oversight powers.	Relatively open to civil society but lacks real powers within SADC.
SADC Tribunal (2007-2012)	Had individual access and jurisdiction in human rights, rule of law and democracy, creating an avenue for activism via courts.	Tribunal was closed due to human rights rulings against Zimbabwe, meaning SADC no longer has a legal avenue for civic activism.
Informal		
Annual Civil Society Forum	Initiative by three regional umbrella CSOs (SADC-CNGO, FOCCISA and SATUCC). Held just before the annual Summit and aims to funnel final communiqué to Heads of State.	More of a forum for exchange between CSOs as they struggle to feed results into the Summit. Government representatives rarely attend, despite regular invitations.

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79   Unsurprising that one of the key points in the civil society Communiqué of September 2022 is to "Remind SADC Secretariat and Member States of their responsibility to facilitate timely access to publicly available information that relates to SADC processes. The SADC Secretariat website should be regularly updated with official plans, reviews, reports, and strategies, among other publicly available documents, in all four SADC official languages (English, French, Portuguese and Kiswahili), in accordance with the SADC Policy on Strategy Development, Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting. Information should also be shared through social media to facilitate young people's access".

Meetings on sidelines of Ministerial and Summit meetings, lobbying Chair of Summit, etc.	Ad hoc and based on personal relationships and inclinations of government representatives.	Only avenue for CSOs to provide input on political matters.
Technical engagement with directorates at SADC Secretariat	Ad hoc and based on personal contacts and inclinations of SADC bureaucrats. If CSOs can gain access, they can be invited to meetings and provide inputs in a thematic area.	Grants access to CSOs with technical or thematic expertise. Somewhat exclusionary, as many CSOs are uninformed or not invited to participate. Somewhat risky or unstable, as CSO can be terminated at discretion of SADC.

Source: Hulse et. al. (2018), p. 20

Challenges on the Civil Society Side

Questions regarding civil society's readiness to engage, in terms of its own capacities, and its legitimacy, in terms of its representativeness, have also been raised.

- Non-state actors in the region are too diverse and do not have a common approach to working with SADC.

- The SADC Secretariat faces the challenge of dealing with some NSAs who do not know how SADC works and do not have the expertise to provide meaningful inputs.

- NSAs face resource challenges that limit their ability to engage with SADC processes[80]

- Existing non-state actor formations and engagement platforms are not representative of every sector. Current created spaces are not comprehensive and representative enough for all concerned[81].

A Non-State Actor Forum?

Discussions are centered now on the operationalization of the NSA Engagement Mechanism.   The main question is: what would be the best mechanism?

This is a question that clearly can best be answered through dialogue and consultation between civil society and SADC, following internal consultations between the different civil society groups interested in engaging with SADC policies and processes at the national and the regional levels. Nevertheless, some of the elements of the engagement have been in the discussion domain for some time.

One of ideas put forward is the Southern Africa Trust (SAT)'s proposal to establish an NSA Forum, along the lines of AU ECOSOCC, the membership of which would be open to NSAs with competences in the policy areas that SADC works on[82].

SAT said that the Mechanism it proposes seeks to achieve multiple objectives:

- Take SADC to the people.

- Provide for SADC and NSAs to consultatively work towards realizing SADC's priorities and ensuring a people-centred regional integration process.

- Enhance and strengthen partnerships between SADC and NSAs.

- Provide a structured framework for consultation between SADC and NSAs in regional integration processes.

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80   Omphile: "most NSA engagements are being funded through [SADC] programmes. For example, the Integrated Institutional Capacity Building (IICB) programme has funded NSAs or CSOs that are trying to come up with a database of all the NSAs and CSOs operating in some targeted member states" (The Nation, 7.10.22)

81   One of the recommendations CUTS (2021) makes in its report on NSA engagement with the Africa Continental Free Trade Area is: "Before NSAs begin to air grievances on the challenges of engaging with responsible bodies in the AfCFTA, they must ensure that they have inclusive and flexible structures that capture and represent the various voices of NSAs in that umbrella. All decision making must occur after consultations from everyone to ensure concise representation" (p.7).

82   SAT, p.36

- Provide an enabling environment for NSAs to participate in SADC processes and discussions.

- Enhance coordination and harmonization of positions by NSA in SADC processes.

- Strengthen the capacity of NSAs and other interest groups to more effectively and meaningfully engage in SADC processes.

- Establish clear and effective communication mechanisms between SADC organs and NSAs[83].

Regional NSA networks and national-level NSAs who are members of existing networks would obviously have strong assets favoring their membership[84]. The emphasis that the Forum's membership should be open to all interested rested civil society, trade union, and other NSAs with expertise and knowledge in SADC's priority fields, is coupled with proposals on creating a data base for NSAs, and that a vetting system should be agreed, whereby NSAs would be scored against criteria such as their history, regional connections, representativeness, and legal status (or recognition as an active player in its field)[85].

Given the high number of SADC areas and priorities, a Forum with an open membership would most probably have a difficult-to-manage expansive size, requiring organizational solutions to ensure both broad participation and effectiveness. For the effectiveness of such a Forum, SAT proposed that it be divided into "thematic clusters, groups, or pillars of development within the SADC".

Similar to what we underlined regarding the national-level SADC Committees, there is a need to assign education a cluster of its own at the regional level NSA Forum as well. In steps with establishing Education Clusters within active/reactivated SNCs, existing NECs and other national and regional education networks, can advocate for a SADC Education Cluster, and for working out the details of how this will be organized.

Civil society groups have described the attempt to regulate SADC – NSA relations through Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) as slow and cumbersome, pointing out that very few actors were successful in securing this privileged status.

The alternatives proposed to the MoU mechanism center around simplifying accreditation procedures. This would ensure a faster route to getting formal recognition by SADC and secures the participation of a larger number of civil society groups in SADC processes. The accreditation of NSAs would also enable them to attend high-level political events, such as the SADC Summit and various Ministerial Meetings. With observer status, NSAs would gain formal rights to access documents, to speak and submit contributions to meetings, to lobby officials, and to organize side events.

For SADC to devote dedicated attention to building relations with NSAs and to have the capacity to carry out their vetting and accreditation, SAT proposes the establishment of an adequately staffed and resourced Liaison Office at the Secretariat. No such facility currently exists at the SADC Secretariat. Early childhood networks in the region made several attempts to contact the SADC Secretariat, with the aim of getting their assistance in bringing their advocacy positions to the attention of SADC policymakers but were frustrated by the lack of response and the unclarity regarding who's responsible at the Secretariat[86]. They then turned to national level contacts at their respective Ministries where they managed to find channels to get through to SADC. The lack of a Liaison Office or dedicated person(s) in the interim largely explains why these difficulties keep occurring.

Figure 2.2 below, taken from SAT's 2018 document, shows the proposed NSA Forum and its interactions with the different SADC bodies.

The right-hand side of the diagram represents non-state actors. To ensure geographical representation and accountability, as well as strong connections between the national and regional levels, National NSA Forums are the foundation of the NSA edifice. The National Forums are members of the SADC NSA Forum, which would include other regional NSA actors (such as SATUCC for example). A dedicated SADC Liaison Office manages relations with NSAs and ensures regular information flow between SADC structures and NSAs.

83   SAT

84   SAT mentions SADC-CNGO and SATUCC as two regional networks which possess these different attributes

85   The establishment of data bases seems to be ongoing and is a resource-dependent endeavour. According to Omphile, "most NSA engagements are being funded through SADC programmes. For example, the Integrated Institutional Capacity Building (IICB) programme has funded NSAs or CSOs that are trying to come up with a database of all the NSAs and CSOs operating in some targeted member states". The Nation (7.10.2022) CUTS is implementing a SADC and EU-funded project to capacitate regional civil society organizations and their networks to effectively participate in the SADC regional integration process. The project is implemented in four focus countries (Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). Selected partner organizations are mandated to work with their respective SADC National Committee, mobilize and build the capacity of 30 CSOs in their respective countries. Key project outcomes include centralized databases of participating CSOs, media, Parliamentary committees, and SADC National Committees; as well as CSO mapping and assessment tools.

86   Interview with early childhood network coordinators in Zimbabwe and Malawi (date)

The left-hand side of the diagram shows the different SADC structures and bodies. The National Level forms the base again. The National Committees (SNCs) are led and coordinated by respective governments. The National Focal Points, who liaise with SADC, often come from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Secretariat and SADC Summits, Councils, and Sectors are the other bodies in the governmental and inter-governmental side[87].
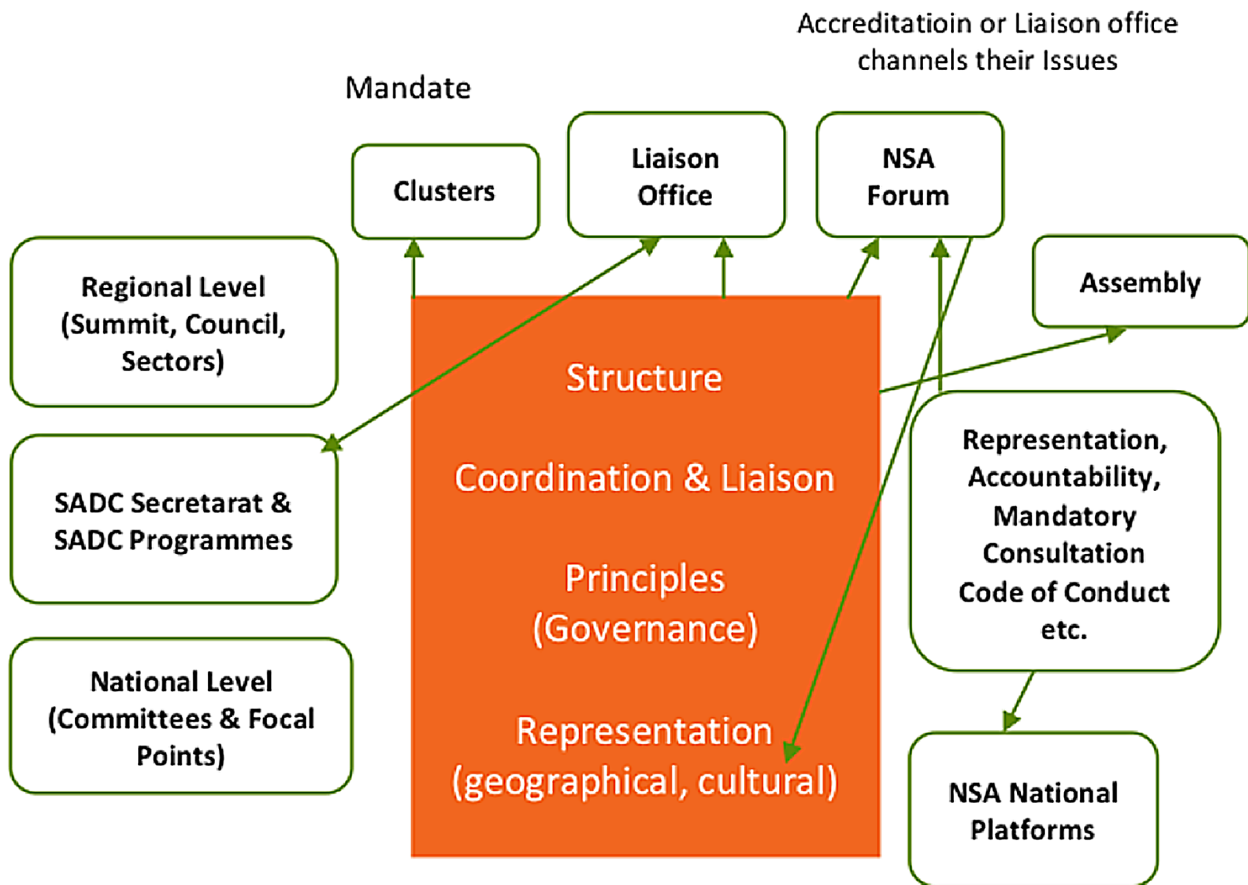
Source: Report On The Proposed SADC Mechanism for Engagement with Non- State Actors (NSAs) by Southern Africa Trust. May 2018

Education in SADC Structures

As can be seen in figure (2.3) below, Education in SADC falls under the Social and Human Development Directorate (SHD) of the SADC Secretariat. The Sectoral Ministerial Clusters belonging to SHD are (i) Health and HIV (ii) Youth (iii) Education and Training (ET) and Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) and (iv) Labour and Social Partners.

The ET-STI Ministers' Meeting takes place annually and is supported by an Education Program Officer the SADC Secretariat. The example of the 2022 ET-STI meeting we looked at in detail (see Box below) shows that a large number of regional policies and strategies are dealt with in this cluster, including teacher- and early-childhood-development-related frameworks.

Given the multi-sectoral nature of the issues related to those two areas, Teacher Unions also engage with the Ministerial Cluster on Labour. The implementation of the SADC Protocol on Labour and Employment, which aims for a decent work agenda for all, involves tripartite social dialogue between governments, trade unions (represented at the regional level by SATUCC), and employees (Hulse et. al. 2019). Civil society education groups working on early childhood relate to the health and labour clusters as well.

The SHD Directorate also has the Youth Cluster under it. This cluster is of interest to education groups and trade unions, especially those working on TVET, life-long learning, and youth participation in policymaking.
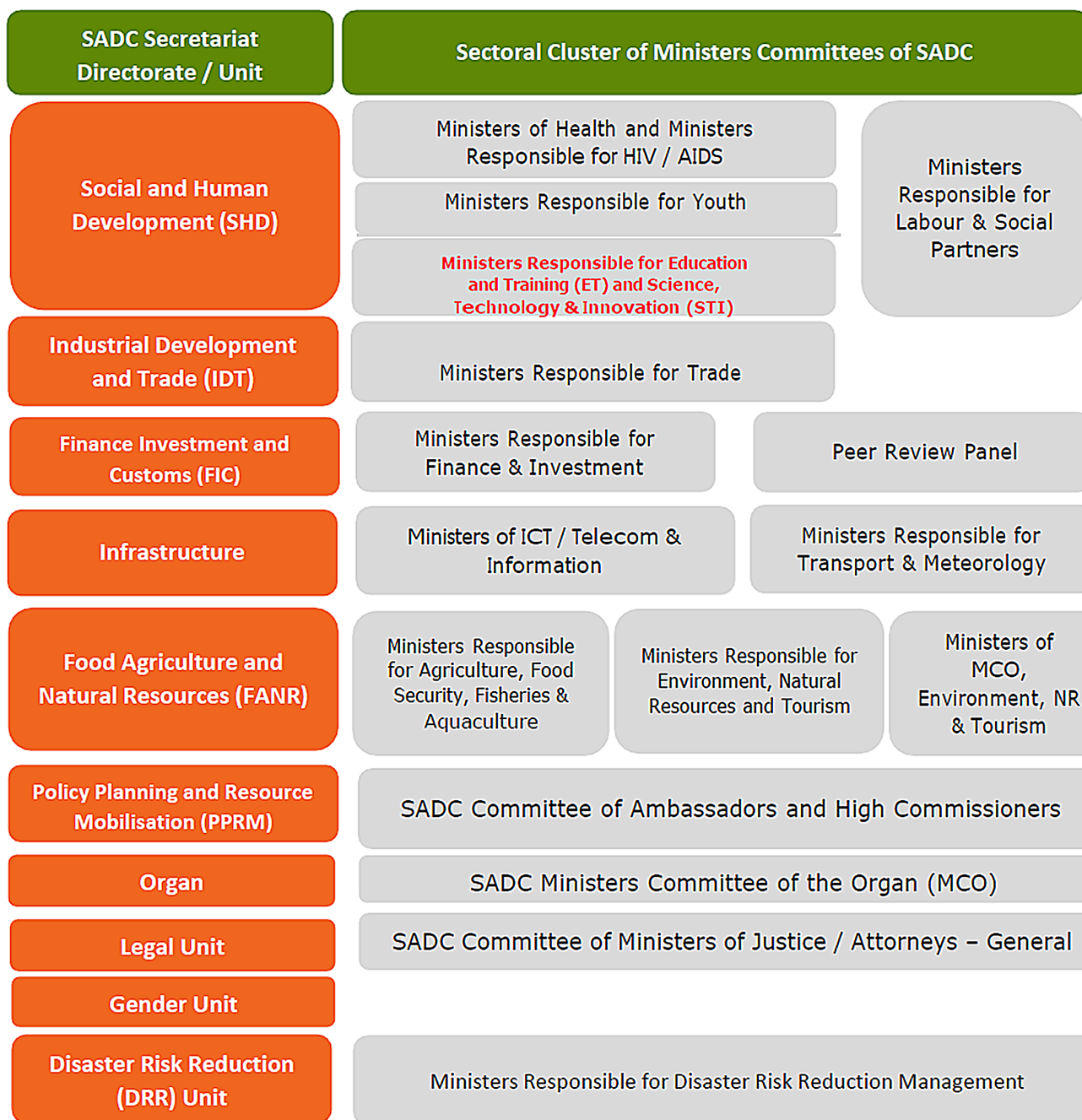
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87   The excellent and extensively detailed Toolkit, produced by the Southern Africa Trust, provides full information on those different Councils and Sectors (see pages 17-28). We do not include them here given our focus on education. Southern Africa Trust (2020) "Enhancing Citizens' Participation in the SADC Development Agenda: SADC Regional Integration Toolkit for Non-State Actors".

Currently, there are no regional education-focused NSA networks or teacher unions who have MoUs with SADC or who have formalized engagement mechanisms with the ET-STI Ministerial Cluster. Any engagement that has taken place to date, such as at the Malawi meeting in 2022, was on an ad hoc basis and did not secure meaningful engagement for the involved civil society education groups.

As for the Education International (EI)-affiliated teacher unions in the SADC region, they are represented by SATUCC, who has 22 affiliates with a total membership of more than 5 million members in 14 SADC member states. The affiliates are umbrella federations / confederations / congresses of trade unions in different sectors (such as COSATU in South Africa and the Zambia Council of Trade Unions). Teacher Unions can engage with SATUCC through the trade union federations they are members of. There has not been such a recent case of a Teacher Union going through its national umbrella trade union federation to bring issues of concern to SATUCC. For SATUCC, if the national or regional Teacher Union issues can be classified as falling under the Employment and Labour Cluster (qualifications, status), then they would be able to bring those up in their work with SADC. SATUCC would like to be able to engage on the broad spectrum of social and economic development issues that they see as concerns of theirs and not to be confined to employment and labour issues only.[88]

Outside the privileged umbrella organizations, the Declaration of the 2022 SADC People's Summit, convened by the Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) (which Moyo [2022, p.101] considers a striking example of transformist counterforce civil society) devoted a special section to early childhood development (ECD). It called for the inclusion of ECD in SADC's Education and Training Protocol, urged SADC governments to "establish structures and systems for ECD to thrive, especially for providing leadership, infrastructure and training of teachers for this level", and called for the allocation of at least 5% of national budgets to ECD. The Declaration's call for increasing access to quality inclusive universal ECD in the SADC region referenced SDG4.2, the SDG4 target on early childhood. SAPSN country communiqués presented to the People's Summit also included sections on education: Zambia's communiqué highlighted low levels of financing for education, low salaries for teachers, inadequate consultative mechanisms on educational policies, and child marriages and teenage pregnancies in a list of concerns in the education sector. The Malawi position paper underlined that "most SADC countries, including Malawi, are lagging behind in [the] realization of [the] SADC protocol on Education, Training and Development as well as SDG4," and that addressing "most of the challenges affecting access, quality, equity and management of education services require adequate financing". Although the Zimbabwe paper had no separate section on education, it mentioned ongoing teacher union strikes due to low salaries and unfavorable work conditions, as well as harassment faced by some of the unions.

SAPSN has no MOU with the SADC Secretariat and is not one of the privileged civil society umbrella organizations. It addresses SADC structures from the outside as it were. And although education is not one of its five thematic areas, the 2022 People's Summit Declaration show that the network is taking up education as a concern and that its members at the country level include civil society education groups who insert education issues into the network's agenda and communications.

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88   Interview (July 2023)

SADC Secretariat Directorate / Unit	Sectoral Cluster of Ministers Committees of SADC	
Social and Human Development (SHD)	Ministers of Health and Ministers Responsible for HIV / AIDS	Ministers Responsible for Labour & Social Partners
	Ministers Responsible for Youth	
	Ministers Responsible for Education and Training (ET) and Science, Technology & Innovation (STI)	
Industrial Development and Trade (IDT)	Ministers Responsible for Trade	
Finance Investment and Customs (FIC)	Ministers Responsible for Finance & Investment	Peer Review Panel
Infrastructure	Ministers of ICT / Telecom & Information	Ministers Responsible for Transport & Meteorology
Food Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR)	Ministers Responsible for Agriculture, Food Security, Fisheries & Aquaculture	Ministers Responsible for Environment, Natural Resources and Tourism	Ministers of MCO, Environment, NR & Tourism
Policy Planning and Resource Mobilisation (PPRM)	SADC Committee of Ambassadors and High Commissioners	
Organ	SADC Ministers Committee of the Organ (MCO)	
Legal Unit	SADC Committee of Ministers of Justice / Attorneys – General	
Gender Unit		
Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Unit	Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Reduction Management	

Source: Southern Africa Trust (2020) Toolkit (p. 20). The Toolkit credits Martin T. Muchero for producing this figure on the SADC Sectoral Cluster Ministerial Committees. We have edited the Sectoral Cluster (marked in red) to include the Ministers of Education and Training, who meet annually in a joint cluster with the Ministers of Science, Technology, and Innovation (the joint meeting of ET-STI).

SADC Education Ministers' Meeting 2022

On 17 July 2022, the SADC Ministers responsible for education and training, and for science, technology, and innovation (ET-STI), held their annual meeting in Malawi. Fourteen out of the sixteen Ministers or their representatives attended the meeting, together with representatives of continental and international partners[89]. The Ministerial meeting was preceded by a two-day meeting of the Senior Education Officials.

There is no online information we could access announcing the meeting and its agenda in detail or providing information on how to register to attend any open sessions. What we know about the meeting comes from a SADC press release which summarized the outcomes of the meeting, listing the different issues that the Ministers discussed, and the different strategies and frameworks that they considered, approving several of them[90].   Further information, not available in the public domain, comes from interviews and documentation shared by interviewees. The reconstruction that follows is our attempt to understand who attended the meeting, what was discussed, and what decisions were made.   The SADC Education Ministers' meeting appears to be the only regularly held meeting of its kind in the RECs and is important in terms of understanding how RECs engage with education.

STRATEGIC PLANS / DOCUMENTS APPROVED	
Draft Regional Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Strategic Plan 2022-2030	
Regional Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Strategic Framework[91]	• Approved 8-year regional ESD Strategy Implementation Roadmap • Urged Member Statesto organise National Policy Dialogues to develop and/or review their National ESD Strategy • Urged Member States to mainstream Education for Sustainable Development throughout the education system[92]
REGIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS GUIDELINES AND TOOLKIT	
SADC Qualifications Recognition Manual	• Stressed the Manual's value as an important component of the SADCQF implementation strategy, setting clear and uniform standards for recognition practice in the SADC region • Commended Mauritius for successfully aligning her National Qualifications Framework to the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF)
Draft SADC School Feeding Guidelines and Regional Indicators[93]	• Urged Member States to domesticate the SADC School feeding guidelines and report progress on implementation in the next meeting, June 2023[94]

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89   Participants listed in the Record of the meeting are: African Union Commission (AUC), African Union Development Agency – NEPAD; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); MiET Africa; UN Food and Agricultural Programme (FAO); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); European Training Foundation (ETF); UN World Food Programme (WFP), Southern Africa Regional Universities Association (SARUA); NEPAD Southern African Network for Biosciences (SANBio); Southern Africa Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and GIZ Regional Office, Botswana. Note that no civil society representatives attended.

90   Information on the 2023 (20-23 June, DRC) was also provided by a Press Release on 16 June, only four days before the Senior Officials' meeting and two days before the Ministerial Meeting.

91   For information on UNESCO-SADC organized policy dialogue on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), see: https://en.unesco.org/news/sadc-education-sustainable-development-framework-horizon For the subsequent efforts to translating the regional strategy into national strategies, see the information on Zambia, the first SADC country to develop a draft national ESD strategy: https://sustainabilityteachers.org/zambia-embarks-in-drafting-a-national-strategy-for-education-for-sustainable-development/

92   From the Record

93   SADC's work on School Feeding is thematically connected to the CESA cluster on School Feeding. In explaining the background to the school feeding guidelines, the document states that school nutrition was "identified as a key element to advance the CESA's Strategic Objective 2, which seeks to 'build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, to expand access to quality education'" (p.3)

94   From the Record

Draft Child and Youth Participation Framework	• Approved the Child and Youth Agency Framework as an addendum to the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Framework[95]. • Urged Member States to utilise the Child and Youth Agency Framework to strengthen their national policies and curriculum frameworks for the 21st Century education for agency. • Urged Member States to invest resources towards curriculum review to take into consideration issues of Care and Support for Teaching and Learning[96] • Urged Member States to conduct country assessments on innovation and technology capacities and needs and to increase funding to support innovation ecosystems • Ministers directed SADC Secretariat to encourage Member States to support and implement the approved policy tools and instruments through technical support and capacity-building interventions.
REVIEWED / DISCUSSED	
***Follow-Up Report on SADC Member State Education Sector Response to COVID-19*[97]**	• Requested UNESCO to continue providing support to Member States in implementing innovation and technology solutions in response to the impact of COVID-19 • Urged Member States to invest in supporting local innovations and technology solutions to support teaching and learning
Progress in SADC Cyber-Infrastructure Framework	• Ministers noted the progress made
SADC Science, Technology and Innovation Measurement	• Ministers noted the progress made
Regional Indigenous Knowledge Systems Programme ***SADC Charter on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology* (approved in 2017)**	• Ministers noted the progress made • Expressed concern at the number of Member States which are yet to fully implement the Charter. Currently, only 10 Member States have signed the Charter[98].
***TVET*[99]**	• Underscored the importance of Technical TVET in SADC Member States • Urged the Secretariat to continue its search for funding for a regional program to promote Member States' skills development (to advance SADC's Industrialisation Strategy)
***Data-Gap Report*[100]**	• Overall data coverage is less than 50% for Southern African region

95   More information on the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning CSTL Framework can be found at https://mietafrica.org/projects-programmes/ addressing-barriers-to-learning-development/care-and-support-for-teaching-and-learning-cstl-sadc/

96   From the Record

97   In the more detailed Record of the meeting, it is important to highlight that the "Ministers noted the following recommendations emanated from the report: i. there is a need to invest in technological infrastructure to strengthen Member States' education systems resilience; ii. there is need to prescribe and implement specific policies for vulnerable learners to ensure a more inclusive approach; iii. Member States need to review their national strategic policy on assessments given the new normal environment; iv. development of a dedicated plan for early and young learners is imperative to mitigate the risk of a lost generation due to the lingering crisis; v. funding from international organizations can be very helpful to set-up specific projects dedicated most particularly to vulnerable learners. vi.Member States should promote the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs); vii.capacity building initiatives are needed to enhance the skills and competences of academic and non-academic staff for their effective involvement in the development of digital and audio-visual resources and teaching kits; and viii.national education preparedness plans should cater for capacity building strategies on the use and management of online learning tools by students".

98   The charter aims to develop a SADC database of women in science, technology, engineering and maths, or STEM, as well as facilitate the establishment of fully functional networks; lobby for more women representation in decision- and policy-making bodies and positions relating to STEM and build stronger partnerships between women scientists, engineers, technologists and their communities.
 The charter promotes gender mainstreaming in science, engineering, technology and innovation; calls for commissioning research on key issues relevant to the improvement of women's participation in science, technology and innovation (STI) in the SADC region and for organising conferences, seminars and workshops on research and research skills for women and girls in STI and SADC women entrepreneurs. See: https://www.universityworldnews.com/post. php?story=20220622221024744

99   On TVET, see: https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2022-07/Revised_TVET_M%26E_Framework_0.pdf

100   Information on the Data Gap Report was not mentioned in the SADC Press Release but obtained through interviews conducted with other regional actors.
 For background see: SADC Member States to reflect on Data Gaps for SDG 4 targets | UNESCO Also see: Progress_Report_on_SDG4_Targets_by_SADC_ Member_States.pdf

OPERATIONALISATION OF THE SADC UNIVERSITY OF TRANSFORMATION (SUT)[101]	
Progress on the Renewal of Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Ministerial Commitment on Accelerating Access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Health Services for Adolescents and Young People (2021-2030)[102]	• Noted that 10 countries in ESA endorsed and affirmed the ESA Ministerial Commitment on education, health and well-being of adolescents and young people (2021-2030)[103]. • Noted ongoing efforts in collaboration with the RECs, to afford the remaining 11 countries an opportunity to endorse the Commitment. • Directed SADC Secretariat to support the finalisation of the ESA Commitment Regional Accountability Framework in collaboration with the East African Community, civil society and development partners and report progress during their next meeting in 2023

The *Record* of the meeting, 98-pages long, includes many agenda items and details which are not, understandably, mentioned in the press release. Both documents show a large number of SADC education strategies and frameworks that were discussed, approved, and reviewed. Topics covered are quite wide ranging, from open and distance learning to the operationalization of the SADC University of Transformation. The *Record* shows that a lot of data was also made available to the Ministers to monitor the implementation of previously approved frameworks and to consider in the discussion of draft strategies.   The regional strategies and frameworks are assumed to be adopted by governments in the SADC region and translated into national strategies and policies. Assessing the extent to which regional SADC strategies are adopted is something that requires further research, but on the evidence of this one meeting of SADC Education Ministers, it is clear that the regional level has influence over national policies and that at times, such as with the ESA Ministerial Commitment on Sexuality Education and Health Services, it can be instrumental in putting sensitive issues on the agenda of national education policy. This connection to the national level is important for NECs, and for CSOs focused on the thematic areas that the different SADC frameworks cover, to be aware of, engage in how those frameworks are translated into the national policy, and be involved in monitoring and influencing.

No CESA

The search of the meeting record and the SADC press release showed that CESA did not appear at all in either document.   The tentative conclusion to make here is that the development of SADC regional policies and frameworks are not seen to flow from or interact strongly with CESA as a strategy or as a framework. Two agenda items in the Malawi meeting, school feeding and life skills, have their own CESA clusters, but the clusters are not mentioned.   Connections between SADC and the continental level appear to be stronger in the areas of science, technology and innovation.

Who attends?

Senior officials meet prior to the Ministerial meeting, no doubt to delve into the substance of the issues and to prepare and work out the details for the Ministers.

Continental organizations / bodies which attended this particular meeting are the AUC and NEPAD. UN agencies UNESCO, UNICEF, and WFP attended, together with multi- and bi-lateral donors (ETF, SDC, and GIZ). Then there is the group of regional organizations working in fields related to some of the agenda items (SARUA, SANBio, and SARIMA).

No civil society participants, and no CESA-cluster coordinators or members (in this capacity), are listed in the *Record* as being present.

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101   On the decision to establish the University, see: https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20180823133836796. The SADC website provides the following information on the University: "The conceptualisation of the establishment of the SADC University of Transformation [SUT] has already been approved and in 2021, a Technical Working Group to work on the Operationalisation of the SUT has been set up to expedite the process. In a similar vein, the Guidelines for the identification of Centres of Excellence and Centres of Specialisation have already been approved and it is expected that these will support the promulgation of research and innovation and the development of programmes of studies respectively, to be offered by the SUT". Information on the Ministers' discussion of SUT comes from the Record and is not mentioned in the SADC Press Release about the meeting.
102   Only in the Record. Appears to be connected to the CESA Life Skills cluster.
103   The CESA Life Skills Cluster played a role in advocating directly with some of the (10) countries which ratified the ESA Commitment (Interview 1).

Absent Attendees: SADC region civil society

Although they do not appear among the meeting attendees, civil society education groups in the SADC region did make attempts to participate in the meeting, both by requesting to organize a parallel civil society event, and by requesting to submit a written contribution to the meeting[104].

There is no tradition of civil society attending the SADC Education Ministers meeting or of organizing a parallel civil society event next to the official meeting. CSOs first attempted to get information about the Malawi meeting, receive accreditation, and secure an invitation through the SADC Secretariat. As SADC had not yet finalized its own protocols for non-state actor (NSA) involvement, CSOs' attempts were not successful, the reason given by the SADC Secretariat that there is no agreed procedure for civil society participation in such meetings. As Malawi was hosting the meeting, the Civil Society Education Coalition of Malawi contacted the Ministry of Education and sought its help with gaining access to the meeting. The Coalition, working with other NECs in the SADC region, also sought to get information on the meeting's agenda points and to prepare a civil society position paper which they would present to the Ministerial meeting.

Given the good relations between the Coalition and the Ministry of Education in Malawi (the Coalition is co-chair of the Local Education Group), the Ministry's response was positive, and they agreed to facilitate some form of access. Based on the information they managed to collect on the Ministerial meeting's agenda, together with issues that the NECs and other civil society education groups in the region prioritized, such as increasing investments in education, a position paper was prepared, covering the following topics: (i) Education and Skills Development: Teacher Education and Training (ii) Digital Learning and Transformation (iii) Education Care and Support, with a focus on a number of critical issues: the environment, safe schools for girls and boys, gender based violence; sexual reproductive health rights issues, nutrition, health assessments, and early identification of developmental delays and disabilities (iv) Financing education as a cross-cutting issue (v) SADC's Education and Training Protocol, highlighting the Protocol's silence on early childhood development and inclusive education, and calling for their addition to the protocol and for increased allocations to early childhood[105].

The position paper was compiled with little preparation time and with no access to the full information on the meeting's agenda and documents. It succeeded, nevertheless, in expressing the voice of diverse education groups working on different sub-sectors and in presenting well-articulated positions and recommendations on some key issues.

The *Record* of the Ministerial meeting does not mention civil society participation nor the position paper the CSOs circulated. Civil society's inputs remained outside the formal documentation of the meeting. The host country, Malawi, helped bring the paper to the attention of others, albeit informally. It was not possible, however, to arrange a meeting between CSOs and the SADC member state delegations, which meant that rather than dialogue, there was a one-sided delivery of positions and recommendations from civil society, and no follow up in the form of recognition, response, or arrangements for future dialogue.

The experience of civil society groups in this case highlights, once again, the need for clear provisions for civil society engagements with the SADC Secretariat: accreditation, based on simplified criteria, and, once accreditations have been issued, a formal commitment by the SADC Secretariat to facilitate civil society participation in formal spaces, such as the Education Ministers' meeting, including the organization of side events and dialogue with officials.

The SADC Education Ministers' annual meeting, because of its regular convening and the substance of its agenda(s), which appear to be highly connected to the national level, shows the importance of this space, which the REC acts as Secretariat for. It should become an occasion for regular SADC Ministers – civil society meetings and dialogue. The SADC secretariat should act as a liaison office for civil society education groups from the region and facilitate their accreditation. The engagement of civil society groups with education-related SADC structures and processes should take place through systematic mechanisms, not *ad hoc* arrangements and opportunities.

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104   Interview with the Coordinator of the Malawi National Education Coalition.
105   For the full text of the position is paper, see Annexes to this chapter.

Summary and Conclusions:

In this chapter we looked at the AU and 4 RECs (EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, and SADC) from the following angles:

I. *What provisions are there in the AU's or the REC's statues for civil society participation?*

II. *What are the mechanisms and platforms through which the AU or the REC regulates civil society participation in its work?*

III. *Is education as a theme represented in this mechanism / platform?*

IV. *How does the AU and how do the RECs engage with education as a theme?*

V. *What are some examples of civil society education groups' engagement with the AU or the REC?*

The following table provides a summary of those issues for the AU and the 4 RECs:

	Provisions for Civil Society	Mechanism / Umbrella Organization	Education represented as a cluster in the umbrella organization?	Engagement with Education	Civil Society Education Groups' Engagement with the Body
AU	The Constitutive Act of the African Union and the Abuja Treaty of 1991, which established the African Economic Community, provided for the inclusion of civil society in the programs of the AU. Continental Education Strategy (CESA) underlines "strong partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector," and explains that the mechanism for this is "a coalition of actors. CESA mentions ANCEFA and FAWE as pan-African civil society networks it sees as key partners.	ECOSOCC	Education is part of the Human Resources, Science and Technology cluster (HRST), which also includes Youth, Human Resources, Science and Technology. Not an active cluster. ANCEFA and other pan-African education groups do not participate in the cluster.	- Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) -Directorate for Education, Science and Technology (ESTI) -Specialized Technical Committee (STC-EST) -C10 – Champions of Education -CESA Clusters -Continental Report (jointly with UNESCO) (first report came out in 2023, next ones planned in 2025 and 2030)	-ANCEFA and FAWE mentioned in the CESA Document -ANCEFA has MOU with AUC -EI chairs a CESA Cluster; FAWE co-coordinates a cluster; AfECN coordinates a cluster; 2 INGOs coordinate two more clusters -FAWE and ANCEFA invited to the Steering Committee of the Year of Education 2024

EAC	Article 127 of the EAC Treaty commits to strengthen partnership with civil society and the private sector, to provide a forum for consultations and dialogue with them, and to support the creation of an enabling environment for civil society's participation in the development of the EAC. EAC granted observer status to very few civil society organizations, having set "stringent rules and requirements" for this.	EACSOF	No. Mainstreaming Science and Technology is a thematic priority area for EACSOF, but it is not clear how this links to education. NECs are not part of any EACSOF cluster.	-Education one of the sectoral committees that also includes science, technology, sports and culture -Focus on harmonization of curricula and of examination, certification, and accreditation systems -Education one of the seven priority sectors that EAC committed to "progressively liberalize" as part of the guaranteed free movement of services between the EAC countries -EAC developed and adopted seven strategic education plans, covering the different education sub-sectors, as part of its "efforts to facilitate the quick integration of the education sector in East Africa"	
ECCAS	The structure of ECCAS features a Civil Society Unit. However, there is very little information on it. Interest in working with civil society appears to be concentrated in conflict prevention.	---	---	-Education is within the Gender and Human Development Cluster, which is assigned a Commissioner -	No information

ECOWAS	The Lagos Treaty which established ECOWAS committed to "co-operate with regional non-governmental organisations and voluntary development organisations in order to encourage the involvement of the peoples of the region in the process of economic integration" and to "set up a mechanism for consultation with such organisations." - ECOWAS was the first regional economic community in Africa to grant observer status to civil society organizations	WACSOF	One of WACSOF's thematic clusters is Entrepreneurship, Youth Employment and Education. This is not an active cluster. NECs in the region do not participate in the cluster.	- Education sits in ECOWAS's Human Development and Social Affairs Department -Decision to establish a specialized Education Agency in West Africa	-ANCEFA, Oxfam and other CSOs engage with the SADC Secretariat on taxation, domestic resource mobilization and education financing.
SADC	- Article 23 of the SADC Treaty and subsequent amendments [articles 5(2b) and 16A] commit to work with civil society and non-state actors. -Engagement Strategy with Non-State Actors (approved 2022)	SADC-CNGO SATUCC SNCs (SADC National Committees)	No	-Annual Meeting of Education Ministers (jointly with Ministers responsible for Science and Technology) -Education, Science and Technology Strategies and Frameworks	-Informal engagement of civil society groups with the 2022 Ministers' meeting in Malawi (CSO Position Paper)

1. The AU and the 4 RECs we look at all have provisions in their constitutive acts or statues for the participation of civil society, but do not always elaborate the mechanisms for this. The AU established ECOSOCC as an advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups of AU Member States, the purpose of which is to provide an opportunity for African CSOs to play an active role in contributing to the AU's policies and programs.   EOSOCC is criticized for not being sufficiently independent of the AU and of not providing access to critical CSOs.   RECs have opted for establishing regional umbrella organizations (EACSOF, SADC-CNGO and WACSOF) which were given the task of regulating and channeling civil society relations with the regional economic communities' executive secretariats.   All three umbrellas have also been criticized for not being inclusive and representative, and of being funding-dependent for their operations.   The conclusion to draw here is that ECOSOCC and the regional civil society umbrella organizations have not to date provided inclusive and dynamic spaces that facilitate the engagement of civil society organizations from their regions with the AU and with the relevant REC.

2. ECOSOCC and the umbrella organizations organize themselves internally in thematic clusters that often directly mirror the priorities and thematic engagements of the AU and the relevant RECs. Education is part of bigger clusters in ECOSOCC and WACSOF, but those are not active and civil society education groups do not participate in them.   EACSOF in East Africa does not have education per se in any of its thematic clusters, and it is not clear to what extent "mainstreaming science and technology" links to education. ECASS has no regional umbrella organization. Overall, education does not appear to be priority within ECOSOCC and the regional umbrella organizations, and this is reinforced by the fact that pan-African and regional civil society education groups do not participate in the education-related thematic clusters in those organizations.   One of the outcomes of this mutual lack of engagement is that ECOSOCC and the regional umbrella organizations are themselves not involved in any visible way in promoting or connecting to CESA.

3. The AU is engaged in education through CESA. The CESA strategy document and the governance architecture it envisions mention ANCEFA and FAWE as examples of key pan-African civil society actors. ANCEFA has an expired MoU with the AUC, which is in the process of being renewed. FAWE and AfECN are active in the CESA clusters, with FAWE having contributed significantly to the development of CESA's Gender Strategy and Gender Indicators. However, those examples do not add up to the AUC's openness to civil society and to a deliberate strategy of outreach and creating more spaces for dialogue with civil society. Important spaces for continental education dialogue, coordination and policymaking remain largely closed and inaccessible.

Chapter 3 | CESA and SDGs: Convergence and Agreement on Joint Indicators

Introduction

This chapter covers the important convergences that have taken place in the past few years between CESA and SDG4, culminating in the publication in February this year of the first Continental Report which uses benchmarks and indicators agreed between the AU and UNESCO to monitor progress in the implementation of both agendas in the different African countries.

Although CESA developed its own indictors as early as 2018, there has never been any systematic reporting on the implementation of the CESA goals by African countries.   The Continental Report is the first time that such reporting on CESA took place. Understanding the convergence of the two frameworks and being aware of the benchmarks and joint indicators that were agreed between the AU and UNESCO are crucial for the operationalization of CESA at the national level, and for governments and civil society to be able to monitor progress in CESA's and SDG4's implementation.

Visibility of SDG4, Invisibility of CESA

Interviews with national education coalitions and other stakeholders all showed that while there is a strong appreciation of CESA's value as the articulation of the African vision for education, this recognition does not extend to monitoring progress in CESA implementation at the country level.   African governments monitor their own progress in implementing the global SDG4 goals through the voluntary national reports (VNRs), but do not do the same with CESA goals. Civil society groups follow their governments' reporting on SDG4 and issue shadow reports but do not extend that to monitoring how their countries are performing in the implementation of CESA goals.

The most direct explanation for this lack of monitoring and reporting on CESA by governments and civil society is that CESA is not very well known and has not been integrated into national education planning and target-setting in most, if not all, African countries.   Despite CESA being the education component of the Africa We Want vision that was approved by all African countries, and despite CESA having clear goals (and indicators, as we will see below), the translation of CESA into the national context has not taken place, at least not in any visible ways. Mentions of CESA or references to it are totally absent in many national education sector plans[106].   National education coalition websites and publications also fail to cite or reference CESA. Effectively, CESA is invisible at the national level.   The gap between the political valorization of CESA as the African vision that expresses the continent's real needs in the education sector, on the one hand, and its absence in plans and targets at the country level, on the other, is striking. Civil society is part of this lack of attention to and presence of CESA at the national level, just as well as governments.

CESA Indicators

CESA developed its own indicators two years after the launch of the CESA strategy.

In 2018, the African Union published a 69-page long CESA Indicators Manual.   The Foreword explained that the "the manual has been developed to empower education managers both inside and outside of African Ministries responsible for Education to perform their jobs more effectively. The selection of indicators for inclusion under the CESA 16-25 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework has been done with participation of Member States officials, representatives from Regional Economic Communities, key agencies working in education in Africa including ADEA, UNESCO and special interest groups, under the auspices of the CESA Education Planning Advisory group".   It described the CESA indicators as the "harmonized framework," against which countries can report their progress in implementing CESA.

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[106]   This observation is based on a sampling and scanning of recent national education sector plans. A notable exception is Zimbabwe's ESP 2021-2025, which includes CESA in the section on the international policy environment. It highlights six of CESA's SOs as being "highly applicable to the Zimbabwe context and are also reflected in the country's policy documents" (p. 43). The Zimbabwe ESP also references SADC and its frameworks, especially those related to teachers.

The Manual provides indicators for each of the twelve CESA Strategic Objectives.   It also has indicators for two relevant additions: (i) Aspiration #7 of the Africa 2063 agenda: "Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics"; and (ii) Education Financing Indicators, an area which has long been a focus of civil society education groups in Africa.

The authors of the Indicators Manual asserted that the indicators were selected, "based on how well they reflect the goals of the CESA Strategic Objectives and the targets of Sustainable Development Goal Four [SDG4], as well as their feasibility for collection".

They also pointed out the evolving nature of the indicators, and the need to test, review and refine them, in light of experience and after assessing their usefulness. Several indicators are marked as being in the pilot phase. One such indicator is 1.2 under SO1 (Proportion of teachers qualified in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics, by sex), which the manual said needs "to be tested, in order to determine its validity and reliability".

The attention shown to developing indicators that are consistent with global goals and which would not pose additional burdens for education systems- in terms of data collection and reporting on different frameworks-, is important to note, as those consideration would subsequently help in bridging the CESA and SDG4 frameworks.

The Manual's inclusion of indicators to monitor the extent to which governments adhere to their commitments to achieve education goals, through increased and targeted financing of the sector and its sub-sectors, is important to highlight, as this is an area that African civil society education groups consistently advocate on and alertly seek to monitor and engage with.

CESA has three indicators to monitor progress in the realization of commitments to finance education goals:

● F.1 Public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure, by level

● F.2 Public current expenditure on education as a percentage of total education expenditure, by level

● F.3 Public expenditure on education as percentage of GDP

Those are important indicators, as they demand the provision of data on the financing that is allocated to each of the levels of the education system (pre-primary, primary, secondary, TVET, and tertiary). Such data is extremely important, for example, for the groups promoting and monitoring early childhood education on the continent.   Detailed indicators that show spending per level and sub-sector allow for understanding trends and priorities within education systems and allow for more informed policy discussions.

The inclusion of the Agenda 2063 Aspiration on strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics is also significant, as this relates to mother tongue education, and to highlighting the role promoting and implementing the use of African languages in teaching and learning plays in strengthening the continent's cultural identity and its values.

INDICATORS CESA 2016 - 2025

Strategic Objective		Accepted Indicators
SO1	Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels of education	1.1. Percentage of Teachers Qualified to Teach According to National Standards;
		1.2. Percentage of teachers qualified in Science or Technology or Engineering or Mathematics by Sex
		1.3. Existence of operational teacher development policy
		1.4. Percentage of Teachers who have undergone In-Service Training
SO2	Build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, so as to expand access to quality education	2.1. Proportion of schools with access to;
		2.1.i. basic drinking water
		2.1.ii. single sex basic sanitation facilities
		2.1.iii. basic hand-washing facilities
		2.2. Proportion of schools with
		2.2.i. adapted infrastructure
		2.2.ii. materials for students with disabilities
		2.3.Existence of Operational Teacher Development Policy
SO3	Harness the capacity of ICT to improve access, quality and management of education and training systems	3.1 Proportion of schools with access to;
		3.1.i. electricity
		3.1.ii.the Internet for pedagogical purposes
		3.1.iii.computers for pedagogical purposes
SO4	Ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonization processes across all levels for national and regional integration	4.1. Gross intake ratio to last grade of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary
		4.2.Existence of a National Qualifications Framework
		4.3.Membership in the Network of African Learning Assessments
		4.4.Percentage Distribution of Tertiary Graduates by field of study
		4.4.a. Mathematics
		4.4.b. Science
		4.4.c. Social Sciences
		4.4.d. Law
		4.4.e. Accounting
		4.5. Proportion of children and young people by sex
		4.5.a.i. in grade 3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading
		4.5.a.ii. in grade 3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics
		4.5.a.iii. in grade 3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in science
		4.5.b.i. at the end of primary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading
		4.5.b.ii. at the end of primary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics
		4.5.b.iii. at the end of primary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in science
		4.5.c.i. at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading
		4.5.b.ii. at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics
		4.5.b.iii. at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in science
		4.6.Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional by sex
		4.6.a. literacy
		4.6.b. numeracy skills
SO5	Accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity	5.1. Gender Parity Index for Gross Enrolment Ratio
		5.2. Percentage of Female Teachers
		5.3. Percentage of Female Head Teachers
		5.4 Girls' dropout rate per reason of drop out
		5.5 Percentage of girls enrolled to STEM
SO6	Launch comprehensive and effective literacy programmes across the continent to eradicate the scourge of illiteracy	6.1. Youth literacy rate
		6.1.a. Female youth literacy rate
		6.2. Adult Literacy Rate
		6.2.a. Female adult literacy rate
		6.3. Participants in literacy programmes as a percentage of illiterate population between 2008 and 2013
		6.3.a. Female participants in literacy programmes as a percentage of illiterate population between 2008 and 2013
SO7	Strengthen the science and math curricula in youth training and disseminate scientific knowledge and culture in society	7.1. Percentage of teachers qualified to teach in Science or Mathematics according to national standards
		7.1.a. Percentage of female teachers qualified to teach in Science or Mathematics according to national standards
SO8	Expand TVET opportunities at both secondary and tertiary levels and strengthen linkages between the world of work and education and training systems	8.1. Percentage of Total Enrolment in Secondary and Tertiary Technical and Vocational Education and Training
		8.1.a. Percentage of Total Female Enrolment in Secondary and Tertiary Technical and Vocational Education and Training
		8.2. Percentage of TVET Graduates
		8.2.a. Percentage of Female TVET Graduates
		8.3. TVET Graduates Labour Force Participation Rate
		8.3.a Female TVET Graduates Labour Force Participation Rate
		8.4. Percentage of Students who Meet National Requirements for Academic programs in secondary or tertiary and enrol for TVET
		8.5. State of National TVET policies and governance structures
		8.6. Percentage of TVET Graduates who have participated in Apprenticeships
SO9	Revitalize and expand tertiary education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness	9.1. Number of earned doctoral degrees by field
		9.2. Expenditure on Research and Development as a Percentage of GDP
		9.3. Enrolment of Students in Higher and Tertiary Education per 100,000 Inhabitants
		9.4. Inbound Mobility Ratio
		9.5. Outbound Mobility Ratio
		9.6. The quality of graduates and their employability in the world economy
		9.7. Conducive environment for research and innovation through the provision of adequate infrastructure and resources
		9.8 Proportion of Learners enrolled in
		9.8.a. Distance Education
		9.8.b. Open learning
		9.8.c. E-Learning Programmes

SO10	Promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups	10.1 Existence of National Strategies to ensure the continuation of education during humanitarian situations, emergency situations such as armed conflict and support the re-establishment of educational facilities
		10.2. Existence of National education policies to address psychosocial support, disaster risk reduction and other systems/mechanisms to protect education from attacks and support for rehabilitation of school infrastructure
		10.3 Extent to which the following are mainstreamed;
		10.3.a.i. global citizenship education in national education policies
		10.3.a.ii. global citizenship education in curricula
		10.3.a.iii. global citizenship education in teacher education
		10.3.a.iv. global citizenship education in student assessment
		10.3.b.i. Peace, Life Skills, Media and Information Literacy education in national education policies
		10.3.b.ii. Peace, Life Skills, Media and Information Literacy education in curricula
		10.3.b.iii. Peace, Life Skills, Media and Information Literacy education in teacher education
		10.3.b.iv.Peace, Life Skills, Media and Information Literacy education in student assessment
		10.3.c.i. education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights in national education policies
		10.3.c.ii. education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights education in curricula
		10.3.c.iii. education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights in teacher education
		10.3.c.iv. education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights in student assessment
SO11	Improve management of education system as well build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and use	11.1 Funds allocated to EMIS
		11.1.i. are used specifically for EMIS activities
		11.1.ii. absorption capacity is optimal
		11.2 Your Government produces an Annual School Census Report: Last year available
		11.3 School Census Return Rate
		11.4 Your Government Conducts EMIS Assessments: Last year conducted
		11.5. Education sector plan includes a chapter on EMIS
		11.6. EMIS Data Production Lag time (Timeliness)
SO12	Set up a coalition of stakeholders to facilitate and support activities resulting from the implementation of CESA 16-25.	12.1 Existence of School Management Committee Policy
		12.2 Existence of National Education Cluster
		12.3 Does your Government provide financial or political support to the CESA Implementation cluster on Education Planning
		12.4. Evidence of communications and advocacy for CESA objectives at country level
Additional Indicators		
2063	Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics	A.1 Existence of African Language Policy
		A.2 Percentage of pupils being taught using an African language as a medium of instruction
		A.3 Percentage of Learners learning an African language as a subject
		A.5 National cultural activities in Learning Institutions
Finance Indicators		F.1 Public Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of Total Government Expenditure by level
		F.2 Public Current Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of Total Education Expenditure by level
		F.3 Public Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of GDP

CESA's Gender Strategy

In 2018, at the same time that the CESA Indicators were published, FAWE and CIEFFA produced an important Gender Equality Strategy for CESA. The strategy was intended to provide "detailed guidance to all AU member states on mainstreaming and integrating Gender perspectives as they implement CESA 16-25"[107]. It recommended entry points and concrete measures for integrating gender into all the 12 CESA strategic objectives. It also recommended" leadership, financing and management arrangements to ensure accountability, integrity and impact[108]".

As FAWE made clear in the preface of the strategy document, "for African member states to attain gender equality and equity in education, they need to understand the implications of each of the 12 Strategic Objectives and their respective areas as articulated in CESA 16-25". The Gender Equality Strategy was, therefore, an invitation for countries to take "a strategic approach to address gender inequalities, the exclusion of females in particular and vulnerable persons in general, and to integrating gender equality into and through Education, from Early Childhood Development to tertiary levels, including technical and vocational education and training".

To show the practical value of the Gender Strategy, we can look at the same example of the indicator piloted in the CESA Manual, on the gender disaggregation of teachers qualified in STEM (1.2). FAWE added a clear target of establishing "professional development programmes exclusively for female teachers of STEM", with the indicator for this being the "increased proportion of female teachers against total trained, upgraded and deployed in STEM", and the "increased ratio of female learners in STEM".

FAWE's integrated approach can be seen in the following detailed gendered objectives it proposes for CESA's goal on advancing STEM in Africa (SO7):

- Mainstream gender in the curriculum framework for science from an early stage of education [this allows for practical engagements, for example, with the CESA Curriculum Cluster]

- Develop gender-sensitive national programmes to improve learning outcomes for female and males in science

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107   Gender Equality Strategy for CESA, p.
108   Ibid, p.

- Put in place frameworks that take into account gender concerns in the promotion of scientific knowledge, indigenous scientific knowledge and culture to improve learning outcomes

- Develop gender-responsive curricula for contextualized scientific knowledge and alternative delivery modes[109]

These detailed gendered objectives of CESA SO7 follow from a brief, but succinct and profound analysis of the situation of STEM in Africa[110]. One particular paragraph hammers home the importance of starting paying attention to gender in STEM from a very early phase of children's development, the first 24 – 36 months of their lives. It is striking for its eloquence and depth:

> African Member States need to deliberately and urgently promote gender socialization for STEM and un-stereotype the systems in which girls and boys play, learn and grow up. Across Africa -at home, in schools, at play, in the workplace and through the stories Africa tells- African Member States need to reflect and create an enabling environment where girls can thrive in science, so that their success becomes as probable as they are capable.

FAWE has followed up on the CESA Strategy with a number of reports on Gender-Responsive Pedagogy, including one focused on early childhood; STEM; School-related SGBV; TVET, and a series of reports[111] on country policies and practices on school re-entry of pregnant girls. All those tool kits and manuals should be read together with the CESA Gender Equality Strategy, even if not formally endorsed by the AUC, as being supplementary elaborations of the strategy.

Five years after its publication, the Gender Strategy is still an important reference and guidance for how partnerships can be developed at the national and continental levels to advance the gendered objectives of CESA. The strategy puts forward concrete proposals for establishing Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality at the country level, along the lines of FAWE, UNGEI, and GPE: multi-stakeholder platforms to advance gender equality within the implementation of the CESA strategy, in which different constituencies -including boys, girls, adolescents, youth, and civil society- participate meaningfully. It calls for those partnerships to have clear purpose and ToRs, and to follow clear partnership principles that include the meaningful participation of learners, as well as government leadership and developing a shared, concrete vision, where expectations of mutual responsibilities and accountabilities of all partners are spelled out. These ideas ae particularly important given how little attention has been given to date to operationalizing CESA's twelfth SO on building partnerships, an alliance of education stakeholders, to support CESA.

Despite all the positive aspects to the Gender Equality Strategy of CESA, and the added value of the gendered indicators to supplement the CESA indicators, there have been no annual reports to monitor the implementation of the Gender Strategy or to show how progress is made by different countries using the gender indicators[112].

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109   Gender Equality Strategy, p. 19
110   Ibid., pp.8-9
111   See the reports on Malawi, Namibia, Senegal and Tanzania, and a synthesis of those four country studies.
112   The lack of such monitoring is even more surprising given the high level of political support for the strategy, as can be seen in the 2018 Nairobi Declaration's emphasis on the implementation of the CESA Gender Strategy as a key component of its commitment to achieve gender equality.

An example of how the Gender Strategy document supplemented the CESA Indicators Manual with additional indicators for each SO can be seen below in the proposed indicators for SO1 on teachers[113]:

Expected Results	Indicators	Means of Verification
SO 1: Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels		
1. Gender Responsive Pedagogy in teacher training; CPD; NFTE and Literacy Programmes;	Results Based Financing include Equity dimensions; Gender Responsive budget for teacher education, NFTE and Literacy; GRP, Gender responsive training, curricula & materials	Education budget and detailed budget lines within subsectors; Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS); teacher training materials
2. Professional Development Programmes exclusively for female teachers of STEM	Increased proportion of female teachers against total trained and upgraded and deployed in STEM; Increased Ratio of female learners in STEM	EMIS data; gender specific data and FAWE Research reports
3. Framework for Quality Gender Responsive living standards and equitable compensation for both female and male teachers and other vulnerable groups	Teacher Quality & Status; Salary scales for female and male teachers & living conditions commensurate and linked with other Gender equity indices	Salary Scales and conditions of service for female and male teachers in context
4. Sufficient quantities of gender sensitive, relevant, quality teaching and learning materials available and accessible to male and female teachers and to female and male learners	Ratio of Teacher to teaching materials per level; Ratio of Learner to teaching/learning material by level/sub-sector	Teaching and Learning materials Review reports; EMIS data
5. A Gender Responsive data bank for Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning in core competencies. and which apply Gender in testing, in results, reporting and utilization	Improved Learning outcomes/performance on test scores for female learners against total	Assessment for Learning and Examinations/test Data Bank; SACMEQ reports; EGRA, EGMA reports
6. A gender Responsive, inclusive and objective criteria and system for identifying dedicated and innovative female and male teachers in place	Increased proportion of female teacher innovators	Annual Publications/Reports; EMIS data; Research Reports

Absence of Civil Society

There are no indications that African civil society groups, with the exception of FAWE[114], were involved in the formulation of the CESA indicators or in any subsequent effort to review and refine them.

This contrasts with the deliberate inclusion of civil society -and particularly organizations representing teachers- in the technical work undertaken in the SDG4 framework to develop and refine indicators.

This absence of civil society from the CESA indicator development processes partly explains why those civil society groups remain largely unaware of the existence of those indicators and -therefore- are not integrating them into their work in monitoring their governments' commitments to CESA goals. This is another issue that should be taken up in the planned CESA evaluation. The minimum expectation of civil society education groups in Africa is that they would become part of the collective efforts to review and refine CESA and other education-related indicators, including SDG4.

No Annual Reports on CESA Implementation

With indicators in place, the assumption would be that since 2018 monitoring CESA implementation has become operational, and that data showing annual progress in the implementation of the strategy, per each strategic objective, have become available.

The CESA Indicators Manual spoke of an AU Continental Education Observatory to which governments would submit their data on the implementation of CESA, and different CESA documents, including the Strategy document itself, speak of an annual report, the Report of Annual Continental Activities (RACA):

> The Report of Annual Continental Activities (RACA) will be the opportunity and the medium to highlight activities that are carried out across the continent in support of education and training as well as the main institutions in charge of the sector at national, regional, continental or even international levels. RACA will also provide the opportunity for joint evaluation mechanisms to help compare and track progress achieved and thereby enable a stimulating exchange of experiences[115].

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113   The full list of gender indicators proposed by the Gender Equality Strategy for CESA can be found at the end of this chapter.
114   This refers to the responsibility assigned to FAWE to develop a Gender strategy and framework for CESA
115   CESA, p.9

The CESA Strategy document detailed what RACA would consist of and contain, and when reporting should be made every year:

A Report of Annual Continental Activities will present, on a consolidated basis, the progress made in education in relation to the Continental Education Strategy 16-25, STISA -2024 and TVET strategy.

Information relating to the school enrolment and the budgetary contribution towards ESTI and the youth will be consolidated under the responsibility of each country.

The Annual Continental Activities Report will include at least the following five chapters in the report:

- AUC/HRST Report (AUC)
- Reports from member states
- Reports from RECs
- Reports from partners and other stakeholders
- Continental Synthesis and Orientations

Elements from all member states of the AU and stakeholders must reach the AUC (HRST) no later than October 20 of each year. Thus at the AU summit in January AUC shall submit the report to the team of ten (10) Heads of States and Governments, and EST champions in Africa[116].

After 2018, when the CESA indicators were developed, the AUC has not published any annual (or bi-annual) comprehensive comparable data showing the progress registered by the different African countries in implementing the CESA strategy.   The Report of Continental Activities that the CESA strategy spoke of in detail did not materialize. For all the value that the indicators represent -no doubt finalized following great efforts by technical experts and education practitioners- they have not been embraced nor made use of, as the former AU HRST Commissioner urged in her forward to the CESA Indicators Manual.

The absence of annual reports on progress in CESA implementation, based on the indicators developed in 2018 (including the supplementary gender indicators contained in the Gender Equality Strategy for CESA), show that the operationalization of CESA has not been highly effective. This absence has also, no doubt, contributed to rendering CESA less visible and to weakening its potential role in influencing and contributing to national education plans.

There was also a clear need, from early on, emphasized in different CESA and UNESCO documents, to avoid parallel monitoring frameworks, which place additional burdens on AU member states, and which risk conveying a sense of CESA and SDG4 being competing agendas, rather than aligned and complementary. In 2018, AU member states recommended at the Pan-African Conference on Education (PACE) (held in Nairobi)[117] that the AUC and the UIS work together to ensure a joint monitoring and reporting framework for CESA and SDG 4. This is what we will look at next.

The Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action 2018

The 2018 Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action[118] are significant in that they (i) articulated the intention to bring the CESA and SDG4 agendas into closer and meaningful alignment, and (ii) injected a new emphasis on equity, which -with the exception of gender- was largely absent from the CESA goals and indicators[119].

The CESA framework has a strong emphasis on gender equality, as we have seen, both in terms of according to gender equality a specific strategic objective, and in the detailed gender strategy and indicators for the CESA framework. Beyond this, however, the various forms of inequality and discrimination in education on the African continent receive minimal mentions in CESA. References to sources of disparity occur in CESA's overview of the different education sub-sectors, where 'regional location, minority groups, pastoral communities, and the poor'[120] are made in the overview of primary education; 'social class, geographic location, minority groups, and disability' in the section on tertiary education[121]; and 'marginalized and vulnerable groups' when CESA covers informal and non-formal education.

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116   CESA, p.37
117   According to the GCE's Julie Juma Civil society actively participated in the conference and was very much involved in the drafting of the Nairobi Declaration (personal communication).
118   Read the full text of the Ministerial Declaration in the Annexes of this Chapter.
119   For further details see the concept note of the 2018 Pan-African Conference on Education (PACE), and the Conference Report, which includes very useful day by day summaries of the different workshops and thematic discussions.
120   CESA, p. 15
121   Ibid., p.19

Not only does the Nairobi Declaration address inequalities in education in Africa more explicitly, but it can also be seen as a significant refinement of the CESA 16-25 framework and a supplement to it. The commitments to "quality lifelong learning for all at all levels"; to integrated early childhood development, care, and education[122], with particular attention to marginalized and vulnerable children; to "reaching the unreached", including those with disabilities, through adequately resourced learning policies and programs; to effectively address the problem of out-of-school children and all forms of exclusion; to promoting mother-tongue education; and to the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in national education systems – all those commitments were not explicit in CESA and did not have indicators to monitor them in the list of CESA indicators.

The next Pan-African Conference was planned to be held in Morocco in 2020, as per the intention to convene the conference every two years, to seize the momentum and the significant political will generated by the Nairobi Declaration. The disruption caused by the pandemic did not only lead to the postponement of the next edition of PACE, but also delayed the implementation of the many practical steps regarding the alignment of CESA and SDG4, which were detailed in the Nairobi Declaration under the following commitment:

We commit to strengthening National Assessment and Monitoring Mechanisms for CESA 16-25 and SDG4 Education 2030 targets and commitments and using the results of these assessments to improve the performance of education systems, to enhance equity, quality and relevance of educational outcomes at all levels, and to strengthen public accountability, transparency and responsiveness[123].

It is worthwhile mentioning here that this same section expressed a commitment to "expanding spaces for public participation including youth, teacher organizations, as well as media engagement in education dialogue and decision-making", a significant nod to some sections of civil society.
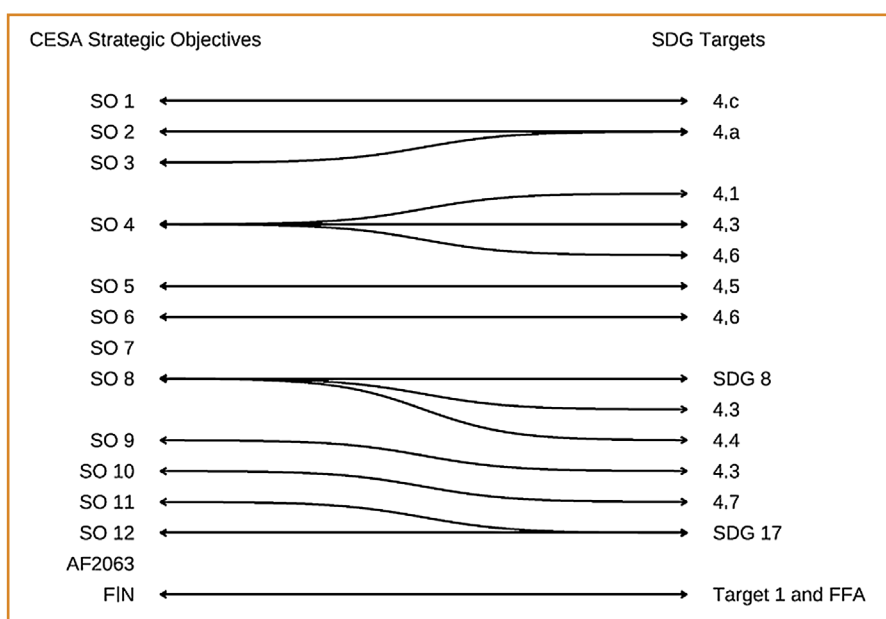
Bridging CESA and SDG4

The efforts of the AU and UNESCO's Institute of Statistics (UIS) to bridge CESA and SDG4 have gone through different stages, starting with a general mapping that determined the correspondence between CESA's strategic objectives and the SDG4 goals[124], culminating in the publication of three important reports: <u>Continental Overview: Bridging CESA and SDG4</u> (January 2021), <u>Education Baseline in Africa: Expanding the Coverage of CESA Indicators</u> (November 2021), and <u>Placing Equity at the Heart of Policy</u> (February 2023).

It is important to highlight that while the CESA framework is more ambitious than the SDG 4 equivalent, overall, there is correspondence between the two frameworks' objectives, if not in the full details, then in the general formulation of the objectives / goals.

As can be seen in the figure below[125], in some cases, the correspondence between a CESA SO is seen to be fully or partially corresponding to SDGs outside of the education sustainable development goal. SO8 on TVET is considered to correspond to Sustainable Development Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), as well as SDG4 targets 4.3 and 4.6[126]. The CESA SO12, setting up a coalition of education stakeholders, corresponds to SDG17, which is about partnerships to achieve the sustainable development goals.

The one CESA SO which does not have any corresponding SDG target(s) is the STEM objective in CESA. The Agenda 2063 Aspiration 7, which is included

CESA Strategic Objectives	SDG Targets
SO 1	4.c
SO 2	4.a
SO 3	
SO 4	4.1
	4.3
	4.6
SO 5	4.5
SO 6	4.6
SO 7	
SO 8	SDG 8
	4.3
SO 9	4.4
SO 10	4.3
SO 11	4.7
SO 12	SDG 17
AF2063	
FIN	Target 1 and FFA

122   This commitment to early childhood beyond education indicates an adoption of the nurturing
123   Declaration, p. 4
124   See: <u>Summary Report of Africa Regional Technical Consultations on Regional Benchmarks for SDG 4 and CESA 16-25: Final Outcomes Document</u> (henceforth Technical Consultations)
125   Figure taken from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (November 2021) <u>Education Baseline in Africa: Expanding the Coverage of CESA Indicators</u> , p. 23
126   SDG target 4.3 is: "by 2030 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university", while 4.6 is: "by 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy".

in the CESA indicators and is concerned with a strong African cultural identity, is clearly an Africa-specific objective. The Financing Commitments that are included in the CESA Indicators are seen to correspond to the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) and to SDG1 on eradicating poverty, the indicators for which include the "proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)".

Although Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the CESA framework is identified as a major challenge for Africa, it is not one of CESA's 12 Strategic Objectives. The establishment of a special CESA cluster focused on Early Childhood is an indication of the subsequent prioritization of the theme[127], but not being a CESA SO meant that the area of early childhood has no CESA indicators. Consequently, SDG Target 4.2, which focuses on access and quality at the level of early childhood education, finds no direct correspondence in the CESA. This is a case where developing a joint framework allows CESA to benefit from the SDG4 targets and indicators it lacks to monitor progress in early childhood education in Africa.

When it comes to the CESA and SDG4 indicators, both frameworks have a number of common indicators. According to UIS, in 2021, there were about 47% of CESA indicators being produced by the UIS as part of data it collects for the global monitoring of the SDG4. The conclusion, therefore, was that there is a need for UIS and the AU to jointly increase the coverage of CESA-specific indicators for a joint CESA and SDG4 indicator and monitoring framework in Africa.

The Continental Overview: Bridging CESA and SDG4 publication that came out in January 2021 marked an important development. In the report, UIS assessed the data availability of SDG4 indicators related to CESA SOs for each African country. The publication also detailed the progress of those countries from 2016 to 2020.   Significantly, this was the first time that a compilation of available data on how countries are progressing on CESA objectives was made.   As the exercise also assessed data availability, it revealed considerable gaps in data, an important step in identifying how those gaps can be addressed.

An example of how this bridging of the two frameworks and the expansion of indicator coverage is applied can be seen in the examination of the CESA SO2 on infrastructure. In full, this objective reads as: "Build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, so as to expand access to quality education"

SO2 has three indicators:

2.1 Proportion of schools with access to (i) basic drinking water; (ii) single sex basic sanitation facilities; and (iii) basic hand-washing facilities

2.2 Proportion of schools with (i) adapted infrastructure; (ii) materials for students with disabilities

CESA 16-25 indicators (March 2018 revision)	CESA indicators for reporting as per the agreement between the UIS and the AU	Benchmarked	Reporting status
2.1 Proportion of schools with access to (i) basic drinking water; (ii) single sex basic sanitation facilities; and (iii) basic hand-washing facilities	2.1 Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service (SDG 4.a.1): (i) basic drinking water; (ii) single sex basic sanitation facilities; and (iii) basic hand-washing facilities		Reporting
2.2 Proportion of schools with (i) adapted infrastructure; (ii) materials for students with disabilities	2.2 Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service (SDG 4.a.1): (i) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities		Reporting

The first two of those SO2 indicators find a degree of correspondence with SDG4 and are already being reported. The third indicator, national safe school policies, is being developed.   As can be seen below[128], there are clear advantages of aligning the indicators of the CESA and SDG4 frameworks and expanding the coverage of the CESA indicators as a task for UIS. As per the agreement between the AU and UIS, there will be reporting on adapted infrastructures and materials for students with disabilities, which is extremely important to monitor progress in expanding inclusive education in Africa.

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127   The April 2018 Nairobi Declaration committed to "Integrated approaches to early childhood development, care and education policies, programming and financing with an emphasis on holistic development including literacy and numeracy with particular attention to marginalized and vulnerable children, with the commitment to progressively ensure at least one year of free and compulsory pre- primary education and with the active participation of families, communities and local governments."

128   Baseline, p.45. See pp. 45-49 of the Baseline document for details on SO2, including information on availability of data and progress per country. Basic handwashing facilities (2.1.iii) is now one of the agreed indicators for regional benchmarking in Africa.

The process of bridging CESA and SDG4 involved the AU and UNESCO convening consultations and expert meetings to agree possible alignments between the indicators of the two frameworks and expanding the coverage of CESA-specific indicators. The recommendations of the Experts' Meeting, which took place on 25 February 2021, stated that the experts "reviewed the indicators against the selected SDG4 indicators to ascertain alignment, identified the strategy and methodology for setting minimums, in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities, and assessed readiness and capacity of Member States to provide the needed data for the selected indicators[129]".

The recommendations also called on African member states to support the benchmarking process; adopt the agreed indicators for the regional benchmarking of SDG4 and CESA; and to adopt an interim level for each of those CESA and SDG4 indicators.

CESA STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE		SDG TARGET	
SO 1	Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels of education	4.c	By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least-developed countries and small island developing States
SO 2 SO 3	Build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, so as to expand access to quality education Harness the capacity of ICT to improve access, quality and management of education and training systems	4.a	Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
SO 4	Ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonization processes across all levels for national and regional integration	4.1 4.3 4.6	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
SO 5	Accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity	4.5	By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
SO 6	Launch comprehensive and effective literacy programmes across the continent to eradicate the scourge of illiteracy	4.6	By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
SO 7	Strengthen the science and math curricula in youth training and disseminate scientific knowledge and culture in society		No specific target for science and math. Refer to UNESCO STEM/SAGA project

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129   *Final Outcomes, p. 15*

SO 8	Expand TVET opportunities at both secondary and tertiary levels and strengthen linkages between the world of work and education and training systems	4.3	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
		4.4	By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
		SDG 8.6	Target 8.6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
SO 9	Revitalize and expand tertiary education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness	4.3	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
SO 10	Promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups	4.7	By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
S0 11	Improve management of education system as well build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and use	SDG17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development
SO 12	Set up a coalition of stakeholders to facilitate and support activities resulting from the implementation of CESA 16-25		

Source: Education Baseline, pp.97-98

Equity at the Heart of Policy

In February 2023, the first joint CESA-SDG4 continental report was published. A joint UNESCO-AU effort, Placing Equity at the Heart of Policy built on the earlier endeavors to align the two frameworks, to develop joint indicators that fill the gaps in each framework while remaining responsive to African priorities as expressed in the CESA agenda. As we briefly covered above, this resulted in agreements on a list of joint indicators and benchmarks, as well as identifying where there are significant data gaps at the country level. Most importantly, it led to the publication of the first data-based report showing progress in implementing CESA in the different African countries. This first continental report, "anchors its conceptual framework and the quantitative components of its baseline situation analysis on these indicators"[130].

Placing Equity is an important report also because it comes as education systems in Africa take on the challenges of addressing learning losses incurred during the pandemic, and of integrating the lessons of the COVID period in terms of remedying system-level weaknesses and building up their digital capabilities through approaches that place equity, as the report's title emphasizes, at the heart of education policies.

The report presents the baseline situation analysis of both CESA strategic objectives and SDG4 targets in a consolidated framework organized around six topics:

1) early childhood education (ECE),

2) primary and secondary education,

3) skills for work (with a focus on technical and vocational education and training [TVET] and tertiary education),

4) teachers,

5) education facilities, and

6) means of implementation.

The report devotes a separate chapter to each of those six topics, in which the relevant indicators are listed and described, and the availability of data for those indicators is presented. Given the large gaps in data, where relevant and possible, country-level changes with regards to the benchmark indicators are described.

As the focus of this year's global SDG4 Scorecard[131] is on Early Childhood, it is appropriate to briefly look at the chapter on the same topic in the African continental report[132]. Early childhood is not one of CESA's 12 Strategic Objectives but was prominently highlighted in the 2018 Nairobi Declaration and has an active CESA cluster dedicated to promoting it as a priority area[133]. SDG4 indicator 4.2.2, the participation rate in organized learning one year before the official primary age, was also selected by UIS and AUC as one of the benchmarks to monitor progress in Africa.

Despite the large data gaps in Africa on early childhood and school readiness, the chapter on this topic presents the available information in accessible terms. Its findings show comparative progress in access to ECE and the advance made in preparing qualified ECE teachers in the different African countries. The analysis looks at important areas such as the different approaches to expanding ECE and the diverse models of service delivery; the multiple dimensions of quality in ECE; and inequalities in access to ECE, particularly in conflict and humanitarian settings.

Looking at ECE as a potential tool to narrow inequalities in school readiness and its potential role in breaking intergenerational cycles of inequity, the report's findings are very clear:

When governments do not put equity at the heart of their expansion efforts, then children from wealthier families are more likely to access ECE, and the programmes they access are more likely to be of higher quality, which can widen the gap between them and children from poorer households and marginalized groups.

(...) poorest children are at the end of the line when it comes to benefiting from expanded access and are more likely to lose access when ECE service availability declines.

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130   Placing Equity, p.24

131   For a useful introductory note to the SDG4 Scorecard, see: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/how-fast-are-countries-transforming-their-education-what-you-need-know-about-new-2023-sdg-4

132   The Early Childhood and School Readiness chapter is on pages 58-83 of the Placing Equity report

133   CESA is not silent on early childhood and, in fact, emphasizes the need to integrate it into the strategy: "Pre-primary education is the pillar on which future learning and training are grounded. However, it is a neglected area in terms of policy and investment. The sub-sector is therefore characterized by disparities, poor management and lack of coherent curriculum and linkages with primary education. It is a sub-sector that deserves a special attention in CESA 16-25". CESA, p.18

These findings emphasize, as the report concludes, "the need to focus more on monitoring equitable access to ECE going forward". This is a priority that many national civil society early childhood networks in Africa also iterated in the interviews we conducted with them. Their monitoring of equity in access to quality ECE, and their consistent advocacy on those issues, will be important for further work within the increasingly convergent CESA and SDG4 agendas on this topic.

Early childhood education CESA and SDG Indicators

In the absence of a CESA strategic objective focusing on ECE, pertinent indicators are almost exclusively from the SDGs. Specifically, SDG Target 4.2[134] identifies two global indicators.

Indicator 4.2.1 concerns the proportion of children under five who are developmentally on track in terms of health, learning, and psychosocial well-being and relates to school readiness.

Indicator 4.2.2 concerns the participation rate in organized learning one year before the official primary age. **This indicator is also the one selected by UIS and AUC for the benchmarking exercise to monitor progress in Africa.** It is defined as 'the percentage of children of the given age who participate in one or more organized learning programmes, including programmes which offer a combination of education and care', and it is also referred to as the adjusted net attendance rate (ANAR).

In the UIS database, there are two values for indicator 4.2.2: one calculated based on administrative data and the other one calculated based on household survey data. Given the focus of the Placing Equity report on equity and disaggregated analysis, values estimated using household survey data are used.

SDG Target 4.2 also identifies [three other] thematic indicators.

Indicator 4.2.3 concerns children who experience

positive and stimulating home learning environments. It is defined as a 'percentage of children aged 36-59 months who live in households where their mother, father, or other adult household members engage with them in the following types of activities: reading or looking at picture books; telling stories; singing songs; taking children outside the home; playing; and naming, counting and/or drawing'.

Indicator 4.2.4 concerns the gross early childhood education enrolment ratio regardless of age in both pre-primary education and early childhood educational development.

Indicator 4.2.5 concerns the number of years of free from tuition fees and compulsory pre-primary education guaranteed in legal frameworks.

From: Placing Equity at the Heart of Policy, p.251

Given the historical engagement of African civil society education groups with advocacy around financing education, the continental report's Chapter 8[135] includes important data and analysis on this topic, particularly with the demands of the post-pandemic period making increased investment in education a high priority and, equally, a highly challenging field.

The report succinctly presents the main issues in the discussion of education financing in Africa, rightly highlighting the emphasis CESA placed on the domestic financing of education, reaffirmed by 16 African Heads of State who signed the 2021 Declaration on Education Financing. The report argues that this this needs to be placed in the context of competing demands on national budgets. African governments, as the report contends, are facing growing demands to increase funding to education, not only in general, but to all its sub-sectors, including early childhood and post-secondary education (TVET and tertiary education).

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134   For the latest list of official SDG4 indicators, as of May 2023, see: https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/02/SDG4_indicator_list_2023_02_28.pdf

135   Chapter 8 (pages 212-243) looks at Means of Policy Implementation at the System Level and covers the important topics of education planning and financing, with a synthesis of the cross-cutting issues of data availability, ICTs, and enabling legal frameworks.

The overall status of education financing that the report presents (see figure below[136]) shows that about half of the 40 countries where data is available meet the minimum target of 4% of GDP, while 25 countries meet the minimum target of 15% of total government expenditure, and 9 countries meet the target of 20%. The report underlines that these figures "would benefit from being discussed as part of broader debates on increasing national tax revenue and expanding the fiscal space for education spending[137]". These are areas that civil society education groups in Africa and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) strongly advocate and campaign on. They have consistently been calling for increasing education budgets through policies focused on increasing domestic resource mobilization and increasing revenue through progressive tax systems, fair taxation, ending harmful tax competition and tax exemptions, and combatting tax avoidance. African civil society groups and GCE have also been working in recent years on debt as a key area, conducting research and campaigning for debt cancellation and considering different tax restructuring arrangements that would increase fiscal space[138]. Civil society's knowledge on those issues and its connections to different African movements and campaigns working on tax justice, debt, and macroeconomic issues, would bring important perspectives and ideas on education financing in the CESA and SDG4 frameworks.
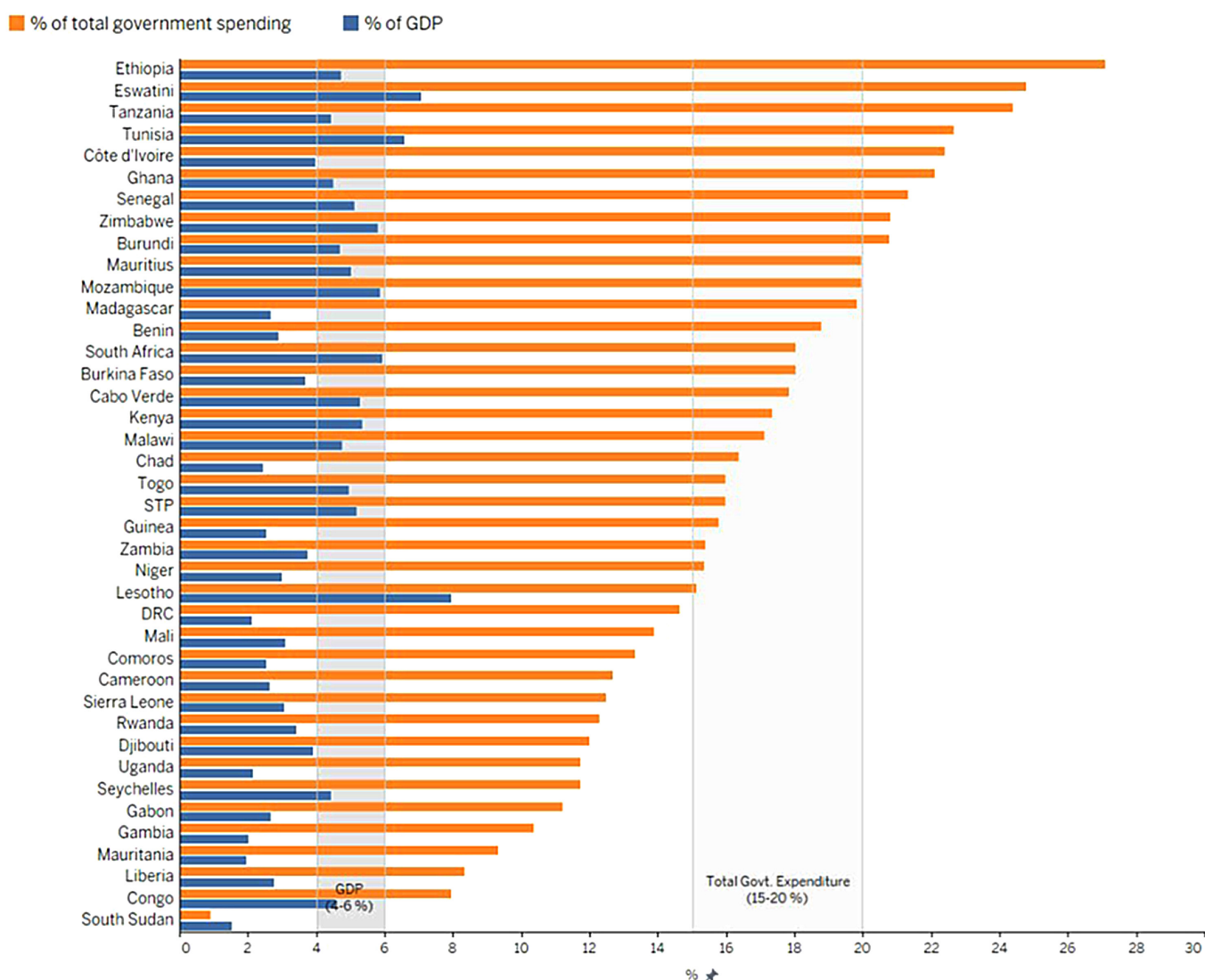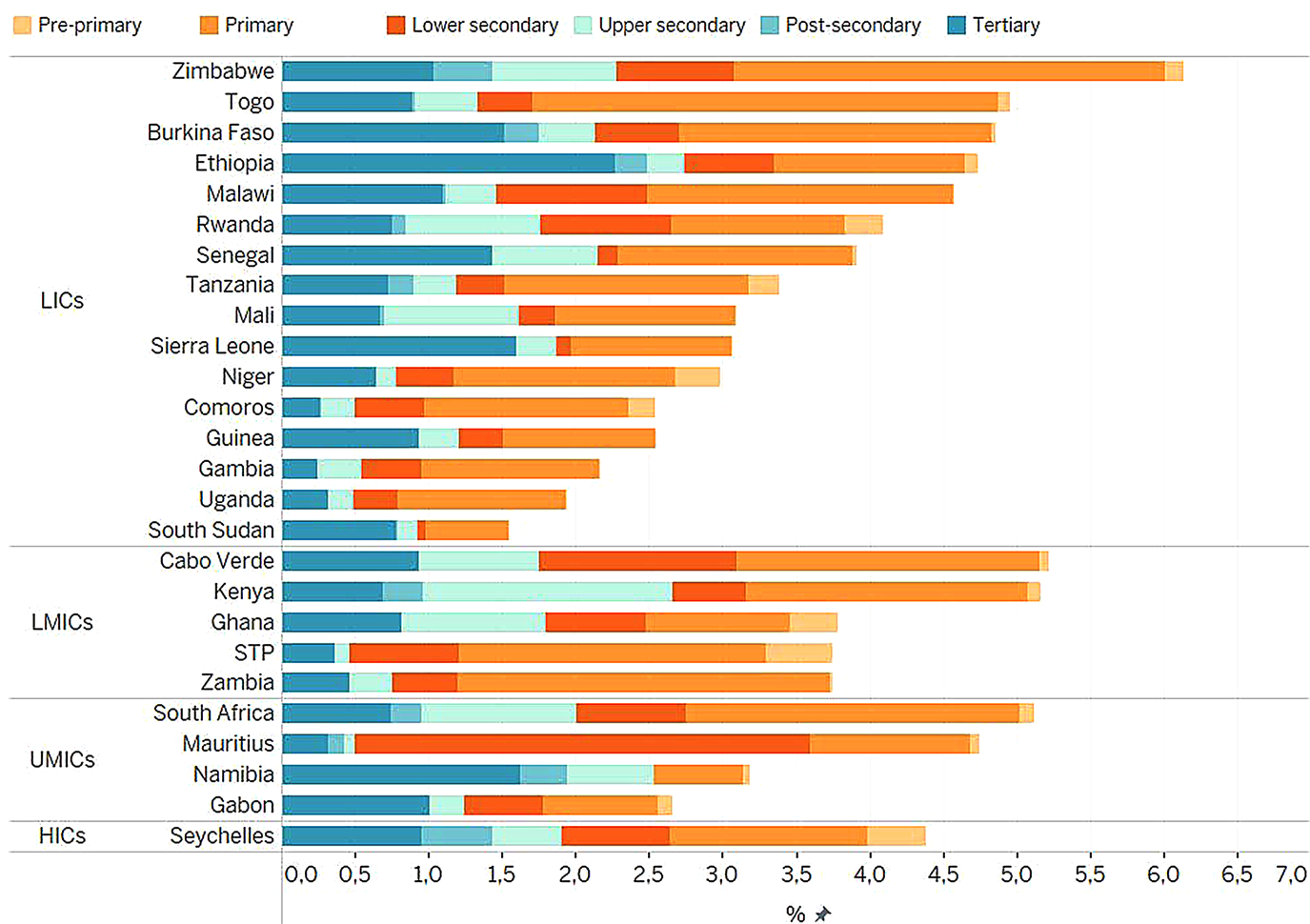

Data Source: UIS, "Government expenditure on education as (i) percentage of total government expenditure, and (ii) percentage of GDP", http://data.uis.unesco.org/
Note: Countries are listed in the order of the government expenditure on education as percentage of total government expenditure
Data is from the following years: Ethiopia (2015), Eswatini (2014), Tanzania (2017), Côte d'Ivoire (2016), Ghana (2016), Senegal (2016), Zimbabwe (2017), Burundi (2016), Mauritius (2016), Mozambique (2016), Madagascar (2016), Benin (2016), South Africa (2016), Burkina Faso (2015), Cabo Verde (2015), Kenya (2016), Malawi (2016), Chad (2017), Togo (2016), STP (2016), Guinea (2016), Zambia (2016), Niger (2016), Lesotho (2017), DRC (2016), Mali (2016), Comoros (2015), Cameroon (2016), Sierra Leone (2016), Rwanda (2016), Djibouti (2016), Uganda (2016), Seychelles (2016), Gabon (2014), Gambia (2016), Mauritania (2016), Liberia (2017), Congo (2015), South Sudan (2016)

136   The figure shows expenditure on education both as a percentage of total government expenditure (orange bars) and as a percentage of GDP (blue bar). The grey areas mark the respective spending targets set in the Education 2030 Framework for Action (4-6% of GDP and/or 15-20% of total government expenditure).
137   Placing Equity, p.224
138   See for example: https://campaignforeducation.org/en/2-resources/1857-can-debt-alleviation-mechanisms-increase-national-education-financing

The continental report also provides important data on the allocation of national education budgets by education levels and sub-sectors (see figure below).

Data Source: National Monitoring Database: Government expenditure on education as % of GDP http://data.uis.unesco.org/
Note: Countries are listed in order of their government expenditure on education as % of GDP
Data is from the following years: Zimbabwe (2014), Cabo Verde (2016), Kenya (2015), South Africa (2015), Togo (2016), Burkina Faso (2016), Mauritius (2016, 2017), Ethiopia (2015), Malawi (2016), Seychelles (2016), Rwanda (2015, 2016), Senegal (2015,2016), Ghana (2014), STP (2014), Zambia (2016), Namibia (2014,2016), Tanzania (2014),Mali (2016), Sierra Leone (2016), Niger (2016), Gabon (2014), Comoros (2015), Guinea (2016), Gambia (2015), Uganda (2014), South Sudan (2016)

As no reports were published on progress in the implementation of CESA, the data on education financing presented in the continental report is of great value to civil society education groups working for equity within their education systems. Allocation decisions made by governments, as the example provided in the report shows, have significant consequences from an equity perspective. For example, two countries, Mauritius and Ethiopia, which have similar spending levels on education as percentages of their respective GDPs, have made very different allocation decisions. Mauritius allocates 2/3 of its budget on lower secondary, while Ethiopia spends less than 15% at this level. And whereas Ethiopia spends about 50% of its education budget on the tertiary level, Mauritius allocates only 5%. Allocation decisions also reveal effective preferences regarding the role of the private sector in certain sub-sectors (such as pre-primary education, for example, in 8 countries which spend almost nothing from their public education budgets on this sub-sector, leaving provision to private actors, with the most likely situation being that very few children from lower income groups access pre-primary services, resulting in lower levels of school readiness).

Civil Society Absent(ed) Again

How participatory and inclusive were the benchmarking and exercises bridging the CESA and SDG4 indicators?

The list of participants139 included in the Regional Benchmarks report does not include any civil society representatives. The meetings and consultations that took place to produce the benchmarks are branded as highly technical, with predominant participation of experts from AU bodies and UN agencies, in addition

139   Placing Equity, pp. 13-14

to representatives of national governments (Ministries of Education) and RECs[140].

Benchmarking exercises involve political and technical processes. At the political level, as UNESCO emphasized at the outset of its regional SDG4 exercises, "the starting point for a benchmarking-setting process at the regional level should be the utilization of existing regional coordination mechanisms and the involvement of regional organizations with an education agenda[141]", which in Africa consisted of the AU and the RECs. The clear rationale here is that the active participation of regional organizations is crucial for national ownership, essential to achieve alignment between global and regional education agendas, and necessary to avoid duplication.

We also assume that the political process of regional benchmarking should have engaged and involved education stakeholders other than the official continental and sub-regional actors, such as civil society. This happened is some regions, but not in Africa[142], which once again deprived the benchmarking of the inputs and political support of civil society, of significance for deepening national ownership of the benchmarking exercise's outcomes, especially as, for the first time, benchmarking covered both CESA and SDG4.

The identification of technical expertise with a certain group of experts may have its justifications, but if the non-inclusion of African civil society groups stems from an assumption that they have no technical expertise or important technical contributions to make to benchmarking discussions, this would not only be wrong and unfounded, but exclusionary as well, which does not help build up political support for the benchmarks, particularly at the national level. The Technical Cooperation Group on SDG4 Indicators (TCG), for contrast, had two civil society members in its membership (Education International and CCNGO, the Collective Consultation of NGOs, which ANCEFA is a member of[143]).

There is, however, an acknowledgment in the Regional Benchmarks report of the need to broaden participation in the discussion of the benchmarks, with a nod to civil society:

> It is important to involve a wider audience (civil society, economic operators, local and national elected representatives, etc.) in addition to the experts already involved in the process[144].

It is important that this acknowledgement is followed by practical steps which are inclusive and show a genuine commitment to benefit from the perspectives of the different non-state education stakeholders in Africa. This is vital for the next operational phase of CESA.

Summary:

1. CESA was launched in 2016 as the domestication of the global SDG4 agenda to respond to Africa's realities and needs. Many of its 12 strategic objectives are aligned with the SDG4 targets. The CESA framework is broader and more ambitious in its coverage of sub-sectors, such as TVET STEM, and Higher Education.

2. CESA developed its indicators in 2018, two years after the publication of the objectives. The Gender Equality Strategy for CESA was published in the same year, proposing gendered objectives for each CESA SO and supplementing the indicators with additional gender indicators. The launch of the CESA clusters indicated that steps were being taken to operationalize the CESA strategy.

3. While acknowledging each other, the CESA and SDG4 frameworks effectively operated as separate domains, each with their own set of indicators and architectures (CESA clusters and SDG4 thematic Task Teams). At the national level, governments and civil society reported and commented on progress in the implementation of the SDG4 agenda. No similar efforts were made for CESA, which remained far less known than SDG4. The 2018 Pan-African Conference on Education (PACE) called for the alignment of the CESA and SDG agendas.

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140 Some regional benchmarking meetings that took place in other regions at the same time included several civil society representatives. The author of this report participated in the MENA region benchmarking meeting which included representatives from regional civil society networks, philanthropies working in the region, and a representative of teachers' organizations.

141 UNESCO and UIS (2020) Benchmarks for SDG4 Indicators: A Political and Technical Basis for Discussion, p. 3

142 The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), which coordinates the CESA Education Planning Cluster, was a prominent institution involved in the benchmarking exercise. ADEA coordinated the CESA indicator development process and authored the CESA Indicators Manual. It is difficult to categorize ADEA as a civil society organization. It defines itself, "a pan-African institution based within the African Development Bank (AfDB)". In the CESA architecture, ADEA is accorded an overall coordination role. Our interviews have not shown that ADEA actively sought to involve the CESA clusters in the benchmarking exercise. GESCI, which coordinates the CESA TVET Cluster, is listed as a participant as well, reflecting, most likely, the significance accorded to TVET as an African priority.

143 See: https://www.sdg4education2030.org/collective-consultation-ngos-education-2030-0

144 Technical Consultations, p.10

4. Work on the alignment of CESA and SDG4 intensified with the benchmarking exercise undertaken in 2021.   The AU and UNESCO reached agreements on joint CESA and SDG4 indicators, and on extending the coverage of CESA indicators.   The first continental report presenting comparable data on progress in the implementation of CESA and SDG4 was published in February 2023. The report was the first-time reporting on CESA implementation happened, albeit partially, given the unavailability of data for several SO indicators. The continental report's employment of an equity lens in looking at CESA and SDG in Africa underlined the need for more disaggregated data on the continent. Further reports are planned for 2025 and 2030, with ongoing work to strengthen data collection and utilization.

5. Our interviews showed that, with the exception of FAWE, there was very little or no civil society participation in developing the CESA Indicators and in the subsequent benchmarking exercises which saw agreements on joint SDG4 and CESA indicators.   For the indicators to become more widely owned and utilized, especially at the country level, and for their continued refinement and enrichment, the participation of civil society is essential.

CESA clusters are the most visible and operational part of the CESA implementation strategy. Currently there are (12) thematic CESA clusters:

- Teacher Development*
- ICT in Education
- Women and Girls' Education*
- STEM Education*
- TVET*
- Higher Education*
- Peace Education*
- Education Planning*
- Early Childhood Education and Development
- Curriculum
- School Feeding
- Life Skills

These clusters do not strictly correspond to CESA's (12) Strategic Objectives (SOs) but overlap in seven cases (marked).

CESA is a strategy, and not a definitive action plan. As such, as the AUC, describes it, the cluster approach "provides a robust opportunity for a variety of players to participate, on their own and/or in a coalition, in the implementation of the continental framework. Every participating agency contributes with its particular strengths towards the achievement of the overall vision and mission of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa, within identified action areas".

The emphasis here is on a delegated approach, which gives great autonomy to the interested stakeholders to self-organize according to their priority areas or expertise. The conceptualization of the clusters is one that invites multiple national, regional, and continental players, programs, institutions and development partners to step forward and take leadership for convening and integrating other relevant stakeholders. The AUC sums this up by emphasizing that clustering "seeks to provide each education stakeholder the opportunity to make its best contribution to education and training in Africa". The expectation is that the cluster leadership and members will mobilize their collective resources to publicize and promote the thematic area and sustain the work of the cluster. Clusters are expected to meet regularly, to document their work, and report on their activities and results to the AUC." The diagram below, published in the CESA Journal, shows the conceptualization of the governance and implementation structures of CESA, where the clusters position and role can be seen.

As there are great efforts being made by the AU and UNESCO to bridge CESA and SDG4, as shown in the previous chapter, it is important to note that the UNESCO SDG4 Coordination Group in Africa, organized as RCG4-WCA, has seven task teams focusing on specific thematic areas: (1) Early Childhood Education (ECE), (2) Education Systems' Strengthening (SYSTeam), (3) Gender and Inclusion in Education (GENIE), (4) Higher Education, (5) Learning to Live Together (LTLT), (6) Technical and Vocational Education and (7) Teaching and Learning: Educators' Network for Transformation (TALENT). These task teams are, according to UNESCO, "eager to work in partnership with the CESA clusters covering corresponding topics by participating in each other's activities and meetings, organising joint events, sharing resources and ensuring that initiatives across the continent jointly respond to both the CESA and SDG4 indicators".

COMMITTEE OF TEN HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT
Champions of Education, Training and Science, Technology and Innovation

CESA IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Continental Education Strategy for Africa CESA 16-25

- STISA 2024
- X... Other themes
- TVET Strategy
- ICT in Education
- School Feeding
- Life Skills and Career Guidance
- Higher Education
- Early Childhood Education
- Education Planning
- Gender Equality
- Peace in Education
- Higher Education
- Member States Plans and Strategies
- Teacher Development
- RECs Plans and Strategies

CLUSTER STRUCTURE
Member States, RECs, Education agencies
Volunteer Coordinators
Agreed Terms of Reference

OPERATION
Joint Work plans
Baseline Studies
Experience sharing and mutual learning events

REPORTING
CESA Journal
Education Outlook
RACA

E.M.I.S
INDISPENSABLE MEASURING TOOL
Indicators, Data, Performance, Impact, Early Warning, Knowledge Based Policy and Practice

Why are Clusters Important for Civil Society?

From a civil society perspective, clusters are extremely important in that they offer the most structured opportunity, within the continental education architecture in Africa, for regular and sustained engagement with CESA.

Civil society has an interest in inclusive and well-functioning thematic clusters which it can participate in and engage with, learn from, contribute and provide support to. Assuming that a cluster is active and meets regularly, it offers civil society with opportunities to access information on developments in specific thematic areas, be in contact and engage with experts and education officials, and to bring structured contributions to the cluster (policy proposals, advocacy themes, and campaign ideas).   A cluster can, in this way, perform the role of a community of practice and the role of a forum for stakeholders and experts to engage in dialogue, technical consultations and exchanges of best practices, where stakeholders collaborate to produce inputs and contributions that informs policies and strategies.   If civil society is not present nor active in the clusters, effectively it is shut out of -or shuts itself out- of potentially important policy spaces.

Other participation mechanisms for civil society in AU-led and AU-related education processes, such as the High-Level Political Leaders Meetings, or the regional Ministers of Education meetings, are uncertain and more difficult to access.   Those spaces are formal, closed for external participants, who -if invited- can attend as observers only. There is no established culture, or practice, yet of organizing spaces for civil society to hold parallel activities, where it can voice its points of view and advocate for certain issues relevant to the official meeting taking place, as well as being able to interact with the people attending the formal event. Civil society parallel events are a feature of many formal global, regional, and multilateral meeting spaces, such as the G7, European Union, and World Bank/IMF meetings, but the same organized and structured format is not followed in the AU education spaces. The recommendation of this report is that the AUC and the RECs should provide civil society organizations with calendars and agendas of AUC and REC-organized education meetings for heads of state or regional Ministers of Education, and to provide an officially accredited space for parallel civil society events (around the same priority themes of the formal meeting, in addition to other issues of interest and concern to civil society) which overlaps with the formal meeting. The accreditation is crucial as it signifies civil society as an important education stakeholder whose participation in the formal events, using this format of parallel forums, is not only legitimate but invited and welcome. This is elaborated further in the Recommendations section at the end of the report.

The table below presents information about the different clusters. As the subsequent analysis highlights, this information is not easily accessible is dispersed in numerous websites and documents, requiring painstaking and not fully satisfactory work to compile what is available on each cluster's leadership, membership, governance, ToR, work plans, and KPIs.

CESA SO	CLUSTER	CLUSTER (CO-) CHAIR(S)	CLUSTER CONVENOR / COORDINA-TOR	CLUSTER MEMBERS CSOS	OTHER CLUSTER MEMBERS	TECH-NICAL WORKING GROUPS	TOR	REPORTS / NOTES	SDG4 RCG WORKING GROUP
Revitalizing the Teaching Profession	Teacher Develop-ment[145]	EI-Africa Regional Office	UNESCO IICBA	FAWE	-Africa Federa-tion of Teaching Regulatory Authorities (AFTRA)[146] -African Curriculum Association (ACA) -IGAD -CAFOR		African Union commissioned AFTRA to develop three key Teacher Frameworks: (i) Continental Teacher Qualifi-cation Framework; (ii) Continental Framework of Competences and Standards for the Teaching Profession and (iii) Continental Guidelines for the Professionalization of Teaching in Africa – all of which will provide the foundation for the implementation of the AU Continental Teacher Mobility Protocol.	The last meeting of the cluster was scheduled to take place at the AF-TRA Conference in May 2023[147]. It did not take place as planned[148].	Teaching and Learning: Educators' Network for Transformation (TALENT)

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145   (https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/conceptnotes/35322-cn-c10_summit_concept_note_en.pdf) Teacher Development: To strengthen education, there is need for a fresh focus on the place of the Teacher in Africa, from early childhood to university level, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), as well as non-formal education. The AU Study on the training, working and living conditions of teachers in Africa revealed the need for increased numbers of teachers, quality of training, motivation of teachers, and the need to build professionalism in order for teaching to become a desirable first option profession for high performing youth. There is significant shortage of qualified teachers particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). High-level political commitment is required from Committee of Ten Heads of State (C10) to promoting Teacher Development efforts and the teaching profession by supporting the establishment of the AU Teachers Prize to enhance teacher motivation.

146   AFTRA is an intergovernmental continental umbrella comprising the national agencies regulating teaching in 54 African countries. Inaugurated on October 12, 2010, in Abuja, Nigeria, by the Ministers of Education of Nigeria and South Africa and with an initial fifteen countries as members, AFTRA has grown into a continental Federation that leads policy development and implementation for the professionalization of teaching in Africa. AFTRA is also a member of the International Forum of Teaching Regulatory Authorities (IFTRA) which comprising national teaching councils from all the continents of the world. AFTRA is a member of other continental and global bodies on teachers, including the CESA Teacher Development Cluster and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. See: https://au.int/ar/node/40538

https://www.africateaching-authorities.org/aftra-holds-10th-teaching-and-learning-conference-12th-roundtable-in-windhoek-namibia-may-9-12-2023/
Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities (AFTRA) is the intergovernmental umbrella of the Ministries of Education and National Teaching Council whose mandate is to coordinate the regulation and professionalisation of teaching in Africa. It is the key Education Partner of the African Union which leads the development of the continental teacher policies and frameworks. It was established in 2010 by the Ministers of Education in Africa and has consistently held its annual Conference and Roundtable since then. This year's AFTRA Conference was hosted by the Namibian Ministry of Education and the Namibia National Teachers Union (NANTU).
The Conference brings together the Ministers of Education and heads of the various Ministerial Departments, National Teaching Councils, teacher unions, teacher education institutions, African Union organs, UNESCO/International Task Force on Teachers, UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa, Education International Africa Region, Commonwealth of Learning, Canada, and several other continental and global bodies, to help chart the way forward for the teaching profession in Africa. The theme of this years' Conference was "Transforming Education in Africa: Teachers, Teaching and the Teaching Profession." This is in line with the ongoing dialogue motivated by the UN Secretary General's TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT (TES) which in part focused on the teaching profession.
The Roundtable is AFTRA's Annual General Meeting (AGM) which enables the assembly of the Ministries of Education, National Teaching Councils and other member organisations of AFTRA to ratify high level decisions. All African countries are members of the AGM. The conference announcement encouraged the Ministries of Education, National Teaching Councils, teacher unions, teacher education institutions and the relevant African continental and global teacher-related organisations are to "formally register with AFTRA to contribute their quota towards strengthening the regulation and professionalisation of teaching in Africa. This will immensely contribute towards the achievement of the SDG4c targets in the continent.".
The 2023 conference was opened by the President of Namibia, followed by the Annual Ministerial Session featuring the presentation of policy briefs by the relevant teacher policy organisations in Africa (AFTRA, African Union Commission, UNESCO/International Task Force on Teachers, UNESCO IICBA, Education International and others). Attending Ministers issued their Annual Ministerial Communique on the Teaching Profession, which AFTRA describes as "a powerful instrument and blueprint for channelling efforts towards the regulation and professionalisation of teaching in the continent".

147   AFTRA has, with the support of the Education Division of the AUC, institutionalized the hosting of the CESA Teacher Development Cluster meetings once a year, taking advantage of its international conferences that are usually attended by high-level officials from various parts of the African continent.

148   Personal communication from the EI-Africa Regional Office Director

CESA SO	CLUSTER	CLUSTER (CO-) CHAIR(S)	CLUSTER CONVENOR / COORDINA-TOR	CLUSTER MEMBERS CSOS	OTHER CLUSTER MEMBERS	TECH-NICAL WORKING GROUPS	TOR	REPORTS / NOTES	SDG4 RCG WORKING GROUP
Providing Educational Infrastructure									81
Harnessing the Capacity of ICT	ICT In Education Cluster		Global eSchools and Communi-ties' Initiative (GeSCI)	FAWE		Launched 2016. Activities reported on website are up to 2018. Activities include the launch of the African Digital Schools Initiative (ADSI). Was involved in the formu-lation of the African Union Digital Education Strategy		In May 2023, ADEA announced its intention to "to revive the ICT in Education Task Force, a vehicle driving policy level engagement on ICT integration in education in Africa through high-level ministerial forums"[149]. This will be based on a report which ADEA prepared on ICT use for educational purposes during COVID and the needed investments for the digital transfor-mation of 34 African education systems. The press release and the report do not mention the CESA ICT cluster.	

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149   The announcement was made at the eLearning Africa Conference, which was held in Dakar. The Conference is a high-profile annual event. The 2023 edition, which hosted sessions on issues such as transforming the African education landscape, inclusion and access, the role of technology and regulation in teacher training, and digitizing higher education, had only one speaker from African civil society education groups (from COSYDEP, the National Education Coalition of Senegal, where the conference was held). Despite several sessions addressing teacher-related issues, no teacher trade union representatives are listed among the speakers. Curiously, none of the speakers were from the CESA ICT Cluster or from the AUC.

CESA SO	CLUSTER	CLUSTER (CO-) CHAIR(S)	CLUSTER CONVENOR / COORDINATOR	CLUSTER MEMBERS CSOS	OTHER CLUSTER MEMBERS	TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS	TOR	REPORTS / NOTES	SDG4 RCG WORKING GROUP
Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills									
Achieving Gender Parity and Equity	Women and Girls Education Cluster		AU/CIEFFA[150] FAWE	There are plans to convene a meeting September 2023) to revitalize the Gender Cluster. FAWE and AU-CIFFA have reviewed the Gender Cluster's TOR and identified representatives of different education stakeholders who can strengthen the membership and the work of the cluster[151].	FAWE participates in and contributes to four CESA Clusters: Teacher Development, TVET, STEM, and Early Childhood	FAWE developed CESA's Gender Equality Strategy, and, in collaboration with AU-CIEFFA, developed a gender mainstreaming guideline for CESA, with the aim of ensuring "that in all CESA activities, no one shall be left behind on the basis of gender".		Examples: http://fawe.org/ wp-content/ uploads/2019/ 05/ Conference-outcome-statement-final-version.pdf	Gender and Inclusion in Education (GENIE)

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150   AU/CIEFFA, located in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, is a specialized institution of the African Union established in 2004, to coordinate the promotion of girls and women's education in Africa, with the aim of achieving their economic, social, and cultural empowerment. It operates under the AUC's Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI). The Centre works closely with AU member States and governments, civil society and international partners to implement its programs and activities and maintains specific working relationship with UNESCO to ensure a strong partnership in the implementation of its programs. The Centre's objectives are:

• Promote girls' and women's education at both formal and non-formal levels ;
• Promote gender mainstreaming in education policies and development programmes ;
• Build the operational capacities of Member States on girls and women's education issues ;
• Establish networks for information and experience sharing on girls and women's education ;
• Develop strategies and innovative approaches for advocacy and a fruitful partnership to promote and consolidate girls and women's education
• Promote research on girls and women's Education issues ;
• Conduct observatory activities on the status of education and training for girls and women in Africa ;
• Organize training on information and data collection, management and programmatic use ; and
• Monitor and report on decisions and programmes implementation at national, regional and continental levels.

2019: AU/CIEFFA convened a two-day technical meeting at the Pan African Parliament (PAP), with the aim of popularizing and soliciting support for the girls' and women's education agenda, which AU/CIEFFA is mandated to advance. Recommendations: Building capacity of member states in domesticating legal and institutional frameworks; Organizing partnership sessions with Peace and Security to develop strategies for reduction of girls' vulnerability in conflict and post-conflict situations; Developing capacity building programs on gender-responsive pedagogy with teachers training institutions, with an emphasis on promoting Women in STEM and Male dominated TVET fields and Establishing a Network of Civil Society Organizations working on girls and women education in Africa.

151   Interviews with AU-CIEFFA and FAWE, May and June 2023

CESA SO	CLUSTER	CLUSTER (CO-) CHAIR(S)	CLUSTER CONVENOR / COORDINATOR	CLUSTER MEMBERS CSOS	OTHER CLUSTER MEMBERS	TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS	TOR	REPORTS / NOTES	SDG4 RCG WORKING GROUP
Launching Comprehensive Literacy Programs									
Strengthening Science and Mathematics	STEM Education Cluster[152]	Kenya / Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTEA)	African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS)	FAWE -------------- African Unity 6th Region Canada (AU6RC) (diaspora organization)	-GeSCI -MoE – Ethiopia -MoE – South Sudan -Ministry of Scientific Research – Egypt -MoE – Namibia -MoE – Zimbabwe -MoE – DRC -African Development Bank (AfDB) -CEEAC -SADC Strengthening of Mathematics and Science Education – Africa (SMASE)[153]				
Expanding TVET Opportunities	TVET Cluster	CISCO Systems Inc (co-Chair)	African Union Development Agency (AUDA) / NEPAD	FAWE	-GeSCI) -ADEA -CAPA -ILO -UNESCO -Worldskills Intl. -FHI 360 -CAPA-ATUPA -DBTA -Ashoka Africa (Gold Youth Development)				Technical and Vocational Education
Expanding Tertiary Education	Higher Education Cluster [154]		Association of African Universities (AAU) / International Network for Higher Education in Africa			Established 2016. The cluster's first meeting took place virtually in February 2022.	ToR of the Cluster https://blog.aau. org/aau-appointed-cesa-higher-education-cluster-coordinator-african-union-commission/	ToR of the Cluster[155]	Higher Education

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152   The cluster serves to consolidate information on STEM education in Africa for peer learning, enhance alignment and harmony to facilitate identification and creation of synergies.

153   https://www.smase-africa.org/

154   https://aau.org/current-projects/continental-education-strategy-for-africa/
        The basis for the Higher Education Cluster's activities were drawn from the Guiding Principles and Pillars articulated in CESA.
  •   Harmonized education and training systems are essential for the realization of intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation
  •   Quality and relevant education, training and research are core for scientific and technological innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship
  •   Gender equity throughout the education system
  •   Strengthened Institutional capacity
  •   Bringing together actors for credible partnership[s] between government, civil society and private sector
        The objectives of the cluster include:
  •   Mobilize member organizations' expertise and technical support in implementing agreed work plan and other joint activities in higher education
  •   Facilitate and support information sharing, communication and interaction within the cluster and beyond
  •   Agree on key indicators for measuring progress
  •   Contribute to the development, implementation, monitoring and reporting of agreed annual or biennial work plans, anchored against established baselines
  •   Establish sub-clusters as need arises and also when a group of stakeholders wishes to coordinate and implement a higher education initiative within the objectives of the Strategy
  •   Provide a continental platform for dialogue and communication through regular meetings to create awareness and ownership of CESA, particularly on higher education related objectives.
  •   Develop programmes to support national, regional and continental higher education activities with keen focus on quality assurance; harmonisation and mutual recognition of qualifications; excellence in research, innovation and entrepreneurship; teaching and learning; and institutional leadership.
  •   Promote policy dialogue at relevant regional, continental, and global conventions interested in and committed to higher education
155   The proposed Terms of Reference for the Cluster include:

CESA SO	CLUSTER	CLUSTER (CO-) CHAIR(S)	CLUSTER CONVENOR / COORDINA- TOR	CLUSTER MEMBERS CSOS	OTHER CLUSTER MEMBERS	TECH- NICAL WORKING GROUPS	TOR	REPORTS / NOTES	SDG4 RCG WORKING GROUP
Promoting Peace Education	Peace Education	Kenya / ADEA ICQN-PE (co-Chairs)	Save the Children[156]	-Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC) - Ken-ya[157] -Education for Somalia (EFASOM) -National Coalition for Education for All – South Sudan -Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for Education for All – Mali -National Coalition for Education for All - Burkina Faso -National Coalition of Education for All - DRC -Coalition of EFA Campaign - Niger -Education for All Coalition, Madagascar - National Coalition of Education for All - Benin	MoE – Somalia MoE – Mali MoE – Burki-na-Faso MoE – Cam-eroon MoE – Bo-tswana MoE – Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence – Madagascar MoE - Angola Federal MoE – Nigeria Education Divi-sion – Nigerian Army		Research report on the Peace (in) Education cluster, and particularly on the extent of protection of education in humanitarian situations in Africa (2019)[158] 2022 Report on the integration of Peace Education into teaching and learning in second-ary schools in 10 targeted countries in Africa[159].	ANCEFA partnered with Save the Chil-dren International to convene the first capacity building workshop bringing together National Education Coali-tions and Ministers of Education and Ministries of Security / Interior representatives to discuss the Safe School Declara-tion, in the margins of ANCEFA's 2018 Policy Forum.	

i. Provide a continental platform for dialogue and communication through regular meetings to create awareness and ownership of Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), particularly on higher education related objectives.
ii. Develop programmes to support national, regional and continental higher education activities with keen focus on quality assurance; harmonisation and mutual recognition of qualifications; excellence in research, innovation and entrepreneurship; teaching and learning; and institutional leadership.
iii. Promote policy dialogue at relevant regional, continental, and global conventions interested in and committed to higher education.
iv. Mobilize member organizations' expertise and technical support in implementing agreed work plan and other joint activities in higher education.
v. Facilitate and support information sharing, communication and interaction within the cluster and beyond.
vi. Contribute to the development, implementation, monitoring and reporting of agreed annual or biennial work plans.
vii. Establish Sub-Clusters as need arises and also when a group of stakeholders wishes to coordinate and implement a higher education initiative within the objectives of the Strategy. It is envisaged that one sub-cluster will be 'Higher Education Leadership and Management'.

156 Repeated attempts over a period of two months to identify the person at Save the Children responsible for coordinating the Peace Education cluster and to receive any information on the cluster were unsuccessful. Save the Children did not respond to our requests for information.
157 ANCEFA facilitated the NECs to join the cluster, which explains the large number of NEC members. (Personal communication, Solange Akpo, July 2023)
158 For the recommendations of the research report, see: https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/37841-wd-recommendations_for_adoption_of_peace_education_en.pdf. An important recommendation of the report was the adoption of "a mechanism for reporting on peace education and the protection of education in humanitarian situations, including during armed conflict by all AU member states towards the implementation and reporting on CESA". Another important recommendation was to improve "national education policies and curricula through the mainstreaming of key elements such as global citizenship, peace, life skills, media skills, among others, towards education for sustainable development and the realization of the peace and education strategic objective of CESA 16-25". Other areas covered were refugee- and IDP education and safe schools.
159 The report concluded that most countries have in one way or the other integrated peace education (PE) into their teaching and learning programs, but some of them lack structural standards and policy guidelines on integration of PE. Teachers emphasize lack of capacity and the need for teachers to have "the necessary training, skills and competencies to better understand the elements that contribute to long term peace and how to operationalize the peace concepts in the curriculum".

CESA SO	CLUSTER	CLUSTER (CO-) CHAIR(S)	CLUSTER CONVENOR / COORDINA-TOR	CLUSTER MEMBERS CSOS	OTHER CLUSTER MEMBERS	TECH-NICAL WORKING GROUPS	TOR	REPORTS / NOTES	SDG4 RCG WORKING GROUP
Improving Management of Education Information Systems	Education Planning Cluster		ADEA / IPED[160]			Launched at the end of 2017, and mandated "to have oversight on all other CESA clusters"[161]. The cluster was tasked with the develop-ment and mainte-nance of M&E tools for tracking progress in the imple-mentation of CESA, using the indicators that ADEA helped develop.	The CESA 16-25 Indicators Manual was published in March 2018	Key action areas being undertaken by the cluster include; Lead in monitoring achievements against CESA and SDG 4 objectives; Support and promote capacity building for improved education planning at every level; Mobilize stakeholders' expertise and technical support in in research and implementation of joint activities in Education Plan-ning, Promote and facilitate policy dialogue and information sharing at relevant regional, conti-nental and global conventions on Education Planning.	Education Systems' Strengthening (SYSTeam)

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160   The Pan-African Institute for Education Development (IPED) is a specialized institute of the AU, tasked with the responsibility to function as Africa's Education Observatory. It was launched in 2016.

161   See p. 6 of Volume 2 of the CESA Journal (December 2017) https://www.adeanet.org/en/system/files/cesa_journal_vol1.pdf. The same issue reported that the CESA Indicators Framework was validated and approved at the same meeting that launched the Planning Cluster. Participants in the validation meeting are listed as: the Bureau of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the AUC, AU CIEFFA, AAU, ADEA, and Education Officers from SADC, ECCAS and ECOWAS, and partners Save the Children International, Global Partnership for Education, UNESCO, UIS and UNICEF.

CESA SO	CLUSTER	CLUSTER (CO-) CHAIR(S)	CLUSTER CONVENOR / COORDINATOR	CLUSTER MEMBERS CSOS	OTHER CLUSTER MEMBERS	TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS	TOR	REPORTS / NOTES	SDG4 RCG WORKING GROUP
Set up a coalition of all education stakeholders									
	[Early Childhood Education and Development][162]	AU Commission / Mauritius	African Early Childhood Network (AfECN)	ZINECDA ZANEC Malawi EC Network (?) FAWE		Established 2018[163] **Policy and Advocacy** and Communications (Zambia / UNICEF) **Governance and Accountability** (Seychelles/ Commonwealth)[164] **Access to Quality ECD Services** (Senegal and Burkina-Faso) **Knowledge Generation, Documentation and Dissemination** (Association of African Universities and Mauritius Institute of Education) **Health and Nutrition** (CIFF and Save the Children) **Early Learning** (Plan) **Safety and Protection** (Child Fund International)			Early Childhood Education (ECE)

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162 For the background to the establishment of this cluster, and for the cluster's objectives, see: https://www.ecedcluster.africa/mandate

163 https://www.gesci.org/fileadmin/user_upload/CESA_Journal_Vol_5.pdf (p.4)

164 Other country members of this sub-cluster are Mauritius and Ethiopia. See: https://www.nation.sc/articles/2743/iecd-attends-early-childhood-education-and-development-meeting-in-addis-ababa (11 December 2019). The sub-cluster (or Working Group), according to the newspaper article, committed to "provide technical assistance to the ECED Cluster, with the development of a Governance and Accountability Framework for ECED in Africa based on the experience of Seychelles as a model of best practice in ECCE". Additionally, "to move from policy to action, the Governance Group led by Seychelles propos[ed] that a forum is organised for member states to discuss and share the Draft Framework, followed by a mapping exercise to take stock of an existing governance ECED system, in at least one country in Africa. The results of which will inform the trial implementation of a proposed and contextualised Governance & Accountability System

CESA SO	CLUSTER	CLUSTER (CO-) CHAIR(S)	CLUSTER CONVENOR / COORDINATOR	CLUSTER MEMBERS CSOS	OTHER CLUSTER MEMBERS	TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS	TOR	REPORTS / NOTES	SDG4 RCG WORKING GROUP
	[Curriculum Cluster]	AUC/South Africa	Africa Curriculum Association (ACA) / Senegal https://acuass.org	AfECN ---------- VSO	MoE – Senegal CAPA-ATUPA MoE – Gambia MoE – Burundi MoE - Benin MoE – Equatorial Guinea MoE – Madagascar MoE – Zambia MoE - Malawi MoE - Namibia AUDA-NEPAD ADEA AFTRA CEMASTEA UNESCO	Established 2018[165]		https://acqf. africa/resources/ mapping-study/ school-curriculum-mapping-report-synthesis-report-english-2022 https://acqf.africa/ about/overview[166]	
	[School Feeding Cluster][167]		WFP	The TOR on the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Cluster states that the membership of civil society organizations will be by invitation. The document mentions FAWE and ANCEFA, both of which are currently not members of the cluster. The document includes details of who is eligible for membership in the cluster[168].	-FAO -UNICEF -AUC/DREA -AU/AUDA -AU/DSA -UNESCO IICBA -WFP/CERFAM			CESA HOME GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING CLUSTER: Terms of reference, Strategy, Workplan and Indicators 2019 - 2021	

for ECED and will set the stage for the eventual establishment and institutionalisation of a robust and resilient system for Early Childhood Development, in the pilot country. These are expected to be implemented in the next two years, by the Working Group led by Seychelles in collaboration with the Working Group on 'Knowledge generation, documentation and dissemination' and with the support of the AUC CESA Cluster for ECED".

165   The Curriculum Cluster's objectives at the time of its launch were listed as follows:
  •   Take stock of existing regional and continental curriculum harmonization frameworks and build on them.
  •   Ensure that curriculum instils entrepreneurship and employability skills in youth to address the issue of unemployment in Africa.
  •   Establish the minimum standards for curriculum development, including mainstreaming gender in curriculum development and implementation
  •   Emphasise learner-centered teaching and learning in order to unearth the creative and problem-solving skills of children.
  •   Ensure reflection and consideration of the African society and context
  •   Ensure inclusive curriculum, tailored to special needs learners and persons with disabilities.
  •   Involve relevant agencies and institutions, including private sector, and the AU ACALAN that deals with matters of language
    See: https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181210/launch-cesa-currriculum-cluster
166   The call for the establishment of a continental qualifications framework for Africa was formulated in crucial policy documents and strategic initiatives geared towards integration and prosperity on the continent. The African Union's (AU's) 'First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 (2014–2023)', the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment (AU Free Movement Protocol), and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025 (CESA 16–25) explicitly include the continental qualifications framework among their goals. Moreover, the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in its Protocol on Trade in Services, sets the frame for mutual recognition of education.
167   The ToR for the cluster with details of its objectives, benchmarks and indicators are available at: https://centrodeexcelencia.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CESA-SF-Cluster-Instruments-EN.pdf and at https://www.readkong.com/page/home-grown-school-feeding-cluster-cesa-2019-2021-1806089
168   See p. 26 of https://centrodeexcelencia.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CESA-SF-Cluster-Instruments-EN.pdf under: "The membership to CESA's HGSF Cluster"

CESA SO	CLUSTER	CLUSTER (CO-) CHAIR(S)	CLUSTER CONVENOR / COORDINATOR	CLUSTER MEMBERS CSOS	OTHER CLUSTER MEMBERS	TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS	TOR	REPORTS / NOTES	SDG4 RCG WORKING GROUP
	[Life Skills and Career Guidance Cluster][169]		IPPF Liaison Office to the AU and AEC / UNESCO		EHW Cluster -SRRH Africa Trust (SAT) -UNAIDS -UNFPA Soft Skills / Career Guidance -Afringa -Don Bosco Tech Africa (DBTA) -CAPA-ATUPA -Africa Careers Network at Africa Leadership Academy (ALA) - CAP-Youth Empowerment Institute	Two sub-clusters: 1.**Education for Health and Wellbeing** (EHW) of Adolescents and young people in Africa. This sub-cluster oversaw the development of a continental strategy, with a focus on three pillars: (a) Skills-based sexual and reproductive health education[170] (b) Safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all (c) Promoting healthy eating and drinking, and physical activity and sports, and (d) Substance use 2.Soft Skills and Career Guidance (coordinated		The EHW sub-cluster developed a draft Continental Strategy on Education for Health and Wellbeing and presented it, through the AUC channels, to the Education, Science and Technology Specialized Technical Committee (STC-EST), which has approved the draft and is recommending it to the AU Summit for final approval. The sub-cluster's work involved collaboration with the Gender and Youth Division of the AUC[171].	Learning to Live Together (LTLT)
	Overall Coordination	AUC ESTI							

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169   https://www.gesci.org/fileadmin/user_upload/CESA_Journal_Vol_5.pdf Inception meeting (April 2019) Established the coordinating framework of the cluster on Life Skills Education and Career Guidance; Shared understanding of cluster objectives among its membership; Defined the operational objectives and biennial interventions of the cluster; and Identified sub cluster members.

170   See the information on the IPPF-organized event in ECA on engaging stakeholders to advance comprehensive sexuality education in Africa through education https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/TCND/ARFSD2022/Sideevents/Concept%20Note_Side%20Event%20AFRSD_DRAFT.pdf ,which appears to be related to this sub-cluster strategy

171   Interview, July 2023

What do we know about the Clusters?

1. **Information about Clusters is Difficult to Access:** There is no dedicated single online resource for information on the clusters[172]. The Early Childhood Cluster is the only one which maintains a website, with information on the cluster's background, its objectives and structure. It also provides the possibility of applying for membership and for subscribing to the cluster's newsletter. The other clusters have no similar websites. Some information, often outdated and only related to the launch of the cluster and its objectives, can be found on the websites of the coordinating agencies of some clusters (such as the Association of African Universities which coordinates the Higher Education Platform, and the African Curriculum Association). In other cases, the websites of the coordinating agencies include no information at all (for example ADEA, which coordinates the Education Planning Cluster, UNESCO-IICBA the coordinator of the Teacher Development Cluster) and Save the Children, which is the coordinator of the Peace Education Cluster). For most clusters, there are not even contact details available for anyone interested in receiving information on a specific cluster or in joining it. For the purposes of this research, some cluster coordinators did not respond to requests for information and referred us to the AUC. Others did not respond at all to repeated written requests for information.

The CESA Journal, which is published by ADEA, includes important information on the launch of some clusters, brief reports on their important meetings and activities, but the last issue came out in 2019.

The absence of information on most clusters, and the lack of responsiveness to requests for information on them, is inconsistent with the rationale behind their establishment as "effective tool[s] for enhancing coordination and strengthening partnerships around common themes". Given how little CESA is known, certainly to large sectors of civil society in Africa, clusters are not making an effort to render themselves visible. Without such visibility, the possibilities for generating interest in the clusters' work and for attracting education stakeholders (who are not members) to support or join the clusters become minimal.

The dearth of information can in some cases be indicative of low levels of cluster activity. This is understandable, as clusters are at different stages of their development and are not all equally or adequately resourced. However, even when a cluster is relatively inactive or less active, information on it should be visible and accessible. Expressions of interest by civil society or other stakeholders in a particular cluster -very difficult in the absence of information-, could be catalysts for lifting and revitalizing that cluster.

A second point that can be raised regarding some clusters, such as the curriculum cluster for example, is that the cluster's work is highly technical and that the relevant cluster information flows to the members or target parties through non-public channels. Such an argument assumes lack of technical competencies or meaningful contributions that civil society actors can make, which is very far from the truth[173]. It also misses the point that the technical and the political are not always in opposition. Curriculums are a case in point: their production is not a strictly technical effort, although it requires high inputs of expertise and know-how, but a significant negotiated process and piece in any national education system, which needs to be consulted on widely with different stakeholders, including civil society.

The AUC and the cluster coordinators are certainly aware of the need to publicize the work of the clusters. The recommendations of the April 2019 meeting of the Coordinating Agencies of the Clusters, for example, underlined the importance of publicizing the work of the clusters "to expand membership to include other relevant organisations and agencies" and "for promoting maximum use of available expertise on the continent". The same meeting also stated that the "AUC must play the critical role of ensuring that the work of the Clusters is publicised among Member States for greater visibility". The urgency of acting on those very important recommendations is clear and cannot be stressed enough.

For civil society participation in the clusters, both in terms of support and contributing to increasing awareness of the clusters, and formal membership in clusters of interest, this serious issue of information gaps must be addressed.

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172   Close to the finalization of this report, the AUC finally provided the researcher with information on the composition of the clusters and the contact details of their chairs and coordinators. This came after repeated requests which went unanswered. The readiness to share information is to the credit of the AUC staff person who was open and interested in dialogue with civil society. The problem, nevertheless, appears to be of an institutional nature, rather than the consequence of the good or bad fortune of which staff person is reached for information.

173   Tshimpani et. al. (2022, p. 251) speak of this view of civil society as political and non-technical in the SADC region: "cross-border civil society associations have been criticised by SADC elites for not being equipped with the necessary expertise and skills in technical matters to transform the region instead of claiming more political participation".

Recommendations:

- Create a dedicated, easily accessible site for the CESA clusters (https://AUCESAClusters.org of https://CESAClusters.au for example). Supplement the website with dedicated social media addresses.

- Provide essential information on each cluster, including the contact details of the cluster's Chair(s) and Coordinating Agency(ies).

- Be clear about who is eligible for membership in the clusters174. Even when membership is restricted for any reason, explain how those interested can access information and contribute to the work of a given cluster.

- Ensure that African civil society education networks, national education coalitions (NECs), and specialized groups are informed of the dedicated CESA website. Those groups are crucial to channel information on the clusters to their members and, when relevant, to their government / MoE contacts.

- Publish calendars of important meetings and activities of the different clusters.

- Encourage cluster coordinating agencies to organize regular information sessions to all interested education stakeholders, including civil society.

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174   The ToR for the Home-Grown School Feeding Cluster has a good section on eligibility for membership.

The results of a study conducted on behalf of the Association of African Universities (AAU), which focused on the higher education cluster, showed that 66.67% of surveyed participants were unaware of CESA. It concluded that multi-stakeholder interventions involving the African Union, African governments, partner organisations, researchers, web and media organisations, schools, and indigenous interventions, are necessary to foster awareness of CESA. The study recommended the following:

- major continental initiatives such as Higher Education Summits should become platforms for an annual Continental Education Strategy for Africa Summit or conference, to enhance awareness, foster stakeholder participation and build upon existing resources and dialogues spaces;
- resources should be enhanced for research and dissemination of research outputs relative to the Continental Education Strategy for Africa;
- education-related continental students and youth organisations should be mandated to support the awareness efforts of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa;
- the Continental Education Strategy for Africa should be translated into major African languages to ensure grassroots understanding and awareness of the strategy;
- conscious efforts should be made to enhance the coherency of the visibility of the strategy: the logo of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa should be widely promoted and there should be a common communications plan;
- widespread community/ local based publicity, advocacy and sensitization on the Continental Education Strategy for Africa through local education-related Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) is needed;
- conscious efforts should be made to sponsor studies related to the Continental Education Strategy for Africa at the bachelor, master and doctoral levels and making the research outputs available through Africa education research portals such as the DATAD by Association of African Universities (AAU);
- Continental Education Strategy for Africa clubs on African university campuses could be created to champion its awareness and ideals;
- an abridged version of the strategy should be circulated to relevant stakeholders, which provides clear and condensed messages;
- Rigorous campaigns supporting the awareness of the CESA at national and regional levels should be made;
- the AU should establish an independent digital television to serve member countries through which it can propagate the Continental Education Strategy for Africa;
- a CESA secretariat should be established with a major mandate of creating and disseminating research outputs relative to the CESA and its awareness;

Source: https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/are-africans-aware-of-the-continental-education-strategy-for-africa/?unappro ved=6948&moderation-hash=b23632eba618b818ea5001ca45892e80#comment-6948

2. **Clusters are Self-Managed:**   The CESA architecture is a voluntary one. While the CESA design is elaborate on different components of the architecture, the implementation of the CESA Framework clearly depends on the commitment, dedication, and actual time investments of a multitude of actors. The coordination of the clusters is such a voluntary undertaking, backed, naturally, by the professional, financial, material and knowledge resources of each coordination agency. The mandate page of the Early Childhood Cluster clearly states, for example, that "all partners will actively participate in mobilizing resources for the achievement of ECED Cluster coordination activities. In addition, partner members will be responsible for mobilizing funds, for specific activities within their work plans".

The AU does not provide budgets to the clusters. It provides them with expert and technical support from the Secretariat and provides the important inter-cluster coordination mechanism and structured access, when needed, to the high-level political leadership of the African continent. The AUC encourages clusters to report on their activities, particularly when specific clusters are seen as key actors in the work for the realization of specific CESA Strategic Objectives.

Lack of financial and human resourcing of clusters by the AU is seen by some actors as the determining factor of a cluster's functionality.   The Chair of one cluster summed this up by saying "I have a million ideas for activating the cluster, but all of them require funding, which the AU does not provide".

The important question, particularly for the AUC, which is mandated to oversee and ensure the implementation of CESA, is how to strike a balance between the self-managed and autonomous

operations of the clusters, on the one hand, and maintaining overall drive and momentum, as well as supporting the less active clusters to move forward, on the other. There are indications that the AUC plays such a driving role. The AUC post on the 2020 cluster coordination meeting it called for described its purpose as "to revitalize and reinforce the role of clusters in CESA implementation [...] to take stock of how the clusters are responding to and contributing to CESA implementation, and agree on 2020-2021 priorities, deliverables, and ways of working". The AUC also developed a CESA Monitoring, Evaluation an Implementation Platform (CESA-MERP), which it describes as "a tool for facilitating the coordination of CESA Clusters and streamline the approach for Coordinating agencies and Cluster members to report on activities carried out towards the implementation of CESA's Strategic Objectives". Regular reporting by the clusters against progress and performance indicators would certainly allow for the identification of significant gaps and challenges, and for corrective and supportive remedies and actions.

There is a view, expressed in some interviews, that the CESA architecture as a whole is "very loose" and that it "needs to be more structured". One interviewee said that "the role of the AUC must be strengthened...it must [become] stronger in the clusters. At the moment the only support is loosely allocated AUC staff members to the clusters".

The coordinating agencies can be divided into (4) groups:

I.   Professional and specialized African organizations (AU-related / inter-governmental / hybrid): (6) AU – CIEFFA*, Association of African Universities (AAU), African Curriculum Association (ACA), Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), AUDA/NEPAD, AIMS/CAMESTEA

II. Pan-African networks: (1) Africa Early Childhood Network, FAWE*

III. UN agencies: (2) WFP, UNESCO-IICBA

IV. International NGO: (3) Save the Children, IPPF, Global eSchools and Communities' Initiative (GeSCI)[175]

Lack of detailed information on all 12 clusters makes it difficult to assess the relative strengths and advantages that the different categories of coordinating agencies bring to their roles. This could be a question for the forthcoming CESA Evaluation to look at. Of particular interest to civil society is how each of those categories do -and can- reach out to them, and how they can facilitate access to the cluster spaces and to information about cluster activities. For the three clusters which are managed by INGOs, the important question is whether they are able to facilitate an increase in the meaningful participation of civil society in the clusters they manage, particularly organizations working at the national level, where these INGOs have chapters or programs[176].

3. **Clusters are at different levels of development and activity:** As in any complex organism, the CESA clusters differ from each other in many ways, depending on: the history of their formation; the capacity, inclusiveness and openness of the coordinating agency; resources at their disposal; the level of difficulty of the theme[177]; favorable factors such as the priority accorded to the theme by global agendas and funding agencies; and the coordinating agency's skill in convening and activating a broad membership. Most clusters were established and launched in the period of 2016 – 2018, but the similar start times do not mean that they work at the same pace or have achieved similar levels of progress in their work.

The Early Childhood Cluster, for example, has detailed objectives and an elaborate structure with clearly defined (4) sub-clusters (or working groups) which have designated chairs and coordinators, showing an internally developed and differentiated cluster which facilities the greater practical involvement of its members in the cluster's work, utilizing their strengths and areas of expertise. The (4) sub-clusters (Policy and Advocacy; Governance and Accountability; Knowledge Generation and Dissemination; and Access to Quality ECD Services) are chaired and coordinated by a mix of country representatives, UN agencies, knowledge centers, and international NGOs. Several national civil society early childhood networks participate as members in some sub-clusters, which shows that a highly developed internal structure can be conducive to greater civil society engagement in the cluster's work.

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175   The Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GESCI) defines itself as "an international non-profit organisation". It was founded in 2003 on the recommendation of the United Nations Task Force on Information Communication Technology (ICT). Since 2011, GESCI resides, as a full international organisation, in Kenya. Technically, GESCI is a non-profit organization, but is quite different from INGOs like Save and IPPF, as much of GESCI's work is with Government Ministries and related agencies responsible for education, science & technology, innovation, and vocational training.

176   IPPF states that it "leads a locally owned, globally connected civil society movement that provides and enables services and champions sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, especially the under-served". Save the Children works in 14 countries in Africa.

177   Difficulty here refers to themes which have to date been neglected or under-funded in national education systems, and where there is relative scarcity of expertise and data

As the AUC post announcing the Inter-Cluster Coordination [Meeting in 2020](#) noted, "the full potential of the clusters remains untapped as the clusters are in different stages of functionality and performance". From information and different documents posted on the AUC site, we know that the clusters should set yearly priorities and have key performance indicators (KPIs). The same AUC post described the objectives of the meeting "take stock of division of labour, scope of work, composition, functioning, coordination, and performance of clusters against Key Performance Indicators (KPI), and promote inter-cluster synergies", and to "agree on the 2020-2021 cluster and inter-cluster priorities, work plan, ways of working and reporting mechanisms and frequency". Information on what those KPIs are, and how cluster performances are assessed is not available for the majority of clusters. The School Feeding Cluster, which has detailed indicators and means of verification in its TOR, and which has [reported on its work](#) through a bi-annual report appears to be an exception.

4. **Memberships of Clusters Vary in Size and Nature:** The Early Childhood Cluster boasts a membership 1,800 strong, comprised of government representatives, academic institutions, UN agencies, civil society organizations, INGOs, and individuals (experts and researchers)[178]. (The very limited) Information available on the other cluster indicates that the norm is a much smaller membership. How active members are in the different clusters and whether their participation is meaningful and significant to them, and what information they receive, are all areas that are difficult to assess when membership lists of the clusters are argued by cluster coordinators to be protected under privacy or to be at the discretion of the AUC Secretariat.[179]

The sizeable membership of the EC cluster can be viewed in different ways: (i) it signifies a high-level of interest in this particular thematic cluster, which, as the AU described as having been long neglected, (ii) a deliberate strategy by the leading actors in the cluster to mobilize broad constituencies, including at the national level, and to build up strong political, technical, and popular support for the theme, (iii) that those leading actors have the requisite ability and resources to engage different segments of the cluster membership according to their levels of capacity and interest, and to ensure overall coordination and synergies.   As ECD is a multi-sectoral field, the EC sub-clusters cover not only education, but also health and nutrition, and child protection, which are convened by resourced INGOs (Save the Children, CIFF, and Child Fund).

Our interviews showed that there is a good level of participation by national civil society early childhood networks in the cluster in the Southern Africa region, who have strong relations of collaboration, information exchange and lesson-sharing amongst themselves. They also participate in SANECD, the Southern Africa Early Childhood Development Network, which is the umbrella for national networks advocating for policy, financing, and increased access to ECD for children in the region. This adds another layer of capacity for coordination and support to the EC networks at the national level, greater weight to their regional advocacy and to their inputs to the EC cluster activities, as those national networks are members of the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN) which coordinates the cluster.

The AUC appears to be encouraging clusters to expand their memberships, "for promoting maximum use of available expertise on the continent", as seen in the recommendation of the 2019 inter-cluster coordination meeting. Co-ordinating agencies were also urged to include members in their activities.

Despite these indicators, there's a prevailing notion highlighted in interviews that the AUC isn't actively fostering membership in CESA clusters, and therefore, a more purposeful and intentional approach is deemed necessary.

Cluster structures that are well-organized, such as the Early Childhood and the School-Feeding Clusters, provide enabling environments for the successful integration of members and the utilization of their expertise and networks, and builds on their interests. There are thematically well-defined sub-groups in the EC Cluster, as described above, while the [School Feeding Cluster](#) distinguishes between three levels of coordination: policy-level, technical-level, and implementation-level, with specific actors included in each[180].   Both early childhood and school-feeding are multi-sectoral in nature and require the participation of and collaboration with non-education actors and agencies, at the AU regional and national levels, which could be factors in explaining the more developed architectures of those two clusters.

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178   Personal communication from the EC Cluster's Coordinating Agency
179   Those were two responses the researcher received when asking two coordinating agencies for membership lists.
180   See pp. 26-8

Recommendations:

- The AUC, in agreement with the cluster chairs and coordinators, should make membership of the different CESA clusters public information[181]. This is important for expanding participation in the clusters and for accountability. The difficulty of accessing information on cluster membership is difficult to understand in a continental effort that requires the ownership of multiple stakeholders and collaboration between them.

- In each cluster, The AUC should identify the missing education stakeholders and work, together with the chair / coordinator, to ensure that those stakeholders are invited to participate in the cluster. The EC cluster shows that it is possible to combine large membership with structured and effective work.

5. **Civil society leads a third of the clusters, but the overall density of civil society in the clusters appears to be thin and their presence unevenly spread:** With information on the full memberships of the different clusters missing, it is difficult to establish the exact density and weight of civil society organizations in the CESA clusters. Information gathered for this research shows that the Peace Education Cluster and the Early Childhood Clusters are the two where the highest level of civil society participation can be observed. Nine National Education Coalitions (NECs) are members of the Peace Education Cluster.

As noted above, two international NGOs with extensive histories of work in Africa, Save the Children and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), coordinate clusters. Education International's Africa Regional Office chairs the Teacher Development Cluster. The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is joint-coordinator with AU-CIEFFA of the Gender Equality Cluster and participates in the Teacher Development Cluster. Those are significant leadership positions for civil society groups within the clusters and show the recognition and appreciation of their expertise in the given thematic areas. Additionally, EI's Chair position in the Teacher Development Cluster and FAWE's in the Gender Equality Cluster recognize their representative nature and the significant education actors they give voice to on the African continent. The EI Africa region is made up of 121 affiliates (unions and teacher organizations) in 53 of the 55 African countries[182], while FAWE is a membership-based pan-African network that operates through 34 National Chapters in sub-Saharan Africa. FAWE's unique contributions can be seen in its development of CESA's Gender Equality Strategy and the role it plays in promoting and technically supporting the work on gender-responsive education systems and pedagogy in Africa.

Looking at the other clusters, when there is some information available, one thing to note is that there is a degree of recognition of civil society as a stakeholder, as can be seen in the School-Feeding Cluster's ToR (where ANCEFA and FAWE are mentioned as being eligible for membership, by invitation), and the Higher Education Cluster's concept note for the 2019 COREVIP Conference[183] (where it lists students' unions, women's organizations, civil society, and professional associations among "major stakeholders, who are pivotal to and have crucial roles to play in the promotion and implementation of CESA 16-25" and who AAU was "expecting to attend and fully engage" in the conference). However, ANCEFA, for example, was not invited to and does not participate in the SFC (where it is mentioned), nor in the HEC. What these examples show is that the nod to civil society as a significant education stakeholder does not always translate into actual engagement with civil society or a deliberate effort to bring them into the cluster. The onus here is on both (i) the AUC, as the official AU body which oversees the implementation of civil society, to urge the clusters to include civil society in their expansion plans, and to monitor their progress on this, and on (ii) civil society organizations themselves to press forward their claims to the cluster spaces, and to mobilize thematic interest groups within civil society (groups that are working on TVET, or on informal education, or on learning assessments) so that they can engage with the cluster closest to their areas of interest. A few civil society initiatives funded by the GPE's Education Out Loud (EOL) program, for example, aim to improve the access of girls in rural areas to education opportunities. Such initiatives would benefit in connecting to and engaging with an important AU initiative that forms part of the Africa We Want agenda: agricultural technical and vocational training (ATVET) and ATVET Women[184].

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181   After repeated requests over a three-month period, the AUC's Education Division provided this research with the data base of cluster coordinators and key members as the research was being finalized. The openness of the specific staff persons who shared the information is noted with appreciation. The difficulty of accessing information, nevertheless, at this stage, appears to be more of an institutional nature rather than being totally dependent on not reaching friendlier staff members.

182   These numbers include EI members in the Middle East and North Africa region, which the Africa Regional Office covers.

183   Conference of Rectors, Vice-Chancellors, and Presidents of African Universities. The 2019 conference was held under the theme 'The Role of Higher Education Institutions in Promoting the Continental Education for Strategy for Africa' (see: https://eua.eu/component/attachments/attachments.html?task=attachment&id=1875)

184   Strictly speaking, ATVET and ATVET for Women fall not under CESA, but under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). NEPAD manages ATVET as it does the coordination of the CESA TVET cluster. As in any holistic and multi-sectoral approach, the TVET-focused education groups in Africa would also be looking at ATVET and seeking dialogue and synergies with all TVET-related initiatives / programs.

Recommendations:

- To ensure an inclusive CESA architecture, the AUC should direct all clusters to reach out to civil society and to include civil society organizations, including teachers' unions, in their membership. Pan-African and regional networks can play an important role, given that they are membership-based, and their participation should be supplemented by including civil society from the national level when there is a strong case for this.

- In their reporting, CESA clusters should include progress in expanding their membership with civil society representatives, including teachers' unions, and progress in facilitating meaningful participation for civil society groups.

- The forthcoming evaluation of CESA 16-25 should include specific questions on civil society participation in the clusters. It should also recommend targets and practical steps for expanding civil society participation in the next operational phase of CESA (26-35).

6. **Governments (Ministries of Education) should be in the driving seat, are they?** We have counted (6) governments that have volunteered to play a leading role within CESA clusters, either as (co)Chairs or as (co)Coordinators (as well as being in either of those positions at the sub-cluster levels) (Kenya, South Africa, and Mauritius as Chairs, and Zambia and the Seychelles as chairs of sub-clusters in the EC cluster). The Ministry of Education of Mauritius, for example, is heavily invested in the Early Childhood Cluster, co-chairing the cluster, with its Institute for co-coordinating the Knowledge sub-cluster.   Zambia recently hosted the Southern Africa Early Childhood Conference, as a demonstration of its commitment to advancing the theme. We assume -in the absence of detailed lists of cluster membership- that the involvement of African governments in clusters, through their Ministries of Education, goes beyond the ones we listed above. Whether the governments' participation in the clusters is at a sufficient level is debatable, but the value of the participation per se of those countries, which are active in the CESA clusters, for closer national level alignment with CESA objectives and targets is obvious.

7. **Where are the RECs:** The set of actors whose participation in clusters is not clear are the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). In the initial CESA architecture design, RECs were afforded an important role, alongside member states, in linking the continental strategy to the national level of member states, through regional programs and thematic networking, and through setting and scaling up centers of excellence. RECs were also tasked with sensitizing member states, civil society and the private sector to CESA, and also with supporting member states to develop national strategies for achieving CESA goals. Available information on the clusters shows that RECs are always mentioned as an important actor and are invited to attend cluster meetings, but there is no trace of their actual, active participation in any of the clusters. The inter-cluster coordination meeting of April 2019 was that "Regional Economic Communities should be on board to ensure coherence and added value of work with Member States", in what could be construed as an affirmation that such a role is aspired but is not played by RECs. As previously highlighted, the education desks and arms of the RECs are severely under-staffed, and the expectation that they can be fully active in the clusters, when their capacity is constrained, is not realistic. Nevertheless, other stakeholders who are engaging in the clusters, including civil society, should seek to keep the REC Education Desks informed of developments within the clusters and to solicit their feedback and input.

An opinion voiced during the interviews suggests that replicating the 12 CESA clusters at the REC level could establish essential connections between the RECs and the AU. This approach would ensure the genuine implementation of CESA mandates across the different levels.

8. **A special role for the Gender (Girls and Women) Cluster:** In addition to being a stand-alone cluster, the Girls' and Women's Education cluster, coordinated by FAWE and AU-CIFFA, plays an additional role of providing technical support to other clusters on integrating gender into their work. FAWE formally participates in four clusters (Teacher Development, TVET, STEM, and Early Childhood) where it plays this role of technical support to those clusters to integrate gender into their work, especially as FAWE itself works on those very same areas too.   In addition to this formal participation, the Cluster is involved in the work of all the other clusters[185], responding to their requests for support and following their work from a gender perspective. FAWE authored the CESA Gender Equality Strategy (see previous chapter), which put forward gender-specific objectives and indicators for each of the CESA SOs.

Engagement with the other clusters partly explains why the Girls and Women's Education cluster has not developed its own membership as a stand-alone cluster. Work is underway (at the time of writing this report) to convene a planning meeting to reactivate the cluster through establishing a multi-stakeholder membership and agreeing a work plan for the cluster.

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185   Interview with AU-CIEFFA

9. **Inter-Cluster Coordination is Encouraged, but the extent to which clusters coordinate is difficult to assess:** As the different clusters are dealing with priority themes within the CESA strategy, coordinating their work to ensure that there is cross-fertilization and mutual learning, and steering the different clusters to serve the overall CESA strategy and its operational framework 16-25, is the task of the AUC's ESTI.

Information on the AU website, particularly items announcing or reporting on the CESA Inter-Cluster Coordination meetings, show that there are constant efforts to discuss individual cluster coordination and collaboration between clusters, seeking practical ways to ensure progress on these two fronts. The 2020 inter-cluster meeting, according to the AUC, highlighted the need to "promote inter-cluster synergies". The meeting's agenda was driven by the urgent need, in the aftermath of COVID and the pandemic's disruptions to education systems in Africa, to "revitalize and reinforce the role of clusters in CESA implementation", and to "agree on the 2020-2021 cluster and inter-cluster priorities, work plan, ways of working and reporting mechanisms and frequency". These points of emphasis follow the recommendations of the inter-coordination meeting of a year earlier, in 2019, which included "enhance[ing] documentation of best practices in Cluster Coordination and create[ing] the avenue[s] for Clusters to share their lessons in their coordination work", with the CESA-MERP tool to be utilized for ensuring more and better-quality information flow within and across clusters.

There is emphasis then on improving coordination and learning between clusters. As public CESA reporting of any kind is missing on what is being achieved in this direction, anecdotal evidence gleaned through interviews for this research shows that there is a long road to go. The forthcoming CESA evaluation, we surmise, will be looking at these questions of coordination carefully.

The twelfth strategic objective of CESA is about inclusive partnerships, generating collective efforts, and mobilizing the broad political participation and support of the various education stakeholders, at a scale commensurate with the aspirations laid out in the continental education strategy.   SO12 is to:

Set up a coalition of all education stakeholders to facilitate and support initiatives arising from the implementation of CESA 16-25

The immediate action points following from this are summed in four areas:

a. Map out key stakeholders on the basis of their comparative advantages

b. Jointly identify and develop strategic initiatives

c. Identify and mobilize champions to leverage priority areas of the strategy

d. Recognize champions and publicize their achievements

The CESA Indicators Manual, which was launched in 2018, came up with four indicators to measure progress[186]:

12.1   Existence of School Management Committee Policy

12.2   Existence of National Education Cluster

12.3   [Government provision of] financial or political support to the CESA Implementation cluster on Education Planning

12.4.   Evidence of communications and advocacy for CESA objectives at country level

What has been done since 2016, when CESA launched, to set up this multi-stakeholder alliance? This is an extremely important question from the African civil society perspective, as such an alliance that the CESA Strategy, would provide it with the means to participate -as a significant stakeholder with presence at the regional and national levels- in efforts to shape, review, refine, and help implement the strategy.

It is important to note here that the CESA strategy itself emphasized that one of its pillars is "strong partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector," which is detailed as consisting of "a. good governance, transparency and accountability; and b. a coalition of actors to enable credible participatory and solid partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector".

Civil society's role is taken up once again under the second indicator for S012, which looks at the existence of a national-level cluster (in the AUC language) or a national education policy coordination and dialogue forum, often called the Local Education Group (LEG) (the language used by GPE). In defining what these national-level forums are, the CESA Indicator Manual points out that they are often composed of different education stakeholders, including civil society and teacher unions. Interestingly, though, it sees the function of such forums as coordinating the "education efforts that are being run in parallel with government activities", which is a narrower role, where other stakeholders subject themselves to be coordinated. A broader and more democratic role is envisaged by the LEGs as participatory and inclusive dialogue and coordination platforms, led by governments. LEGs provide information and a formal role for education stakeholders to input into policy discussions and to hold the government and themselves to account. Increasingly, the national level education platforms in which civil society participate approach the broader and more democratic roles expected of them.   Civil society groups, often represented by National Education Coalitions, are members of (?) Local Education Groups in Africa.   They play a leading role in a number of cases, such as in Eswatini, where the NEC is the Coordinating Agency of the LEG, or in Malawi and Zambia where the NECs are co-chairs of the LEG.

The list of the indicators proposed by CESA for detailing expectations and monitoring progress on SO12 follows a logical progression from the school- or local-level (School Management Committees), to the national-level (National Education Forums) to operationalize structures for the convening and participation of different education stakeholders. But it recognizes the limitation that such structures operate at the national level and that the proposed indicators offer no information or insights on how they engage with CESA (and SDG4).   The question of how those forums can take up CESA issues and define a role for themselves in articulating national education policies with the CESA objectives is not taken up, but it is posed, particularly when speaking about the indicators' limitations.

The next two indicators focus on governments' engagement with CESA, both in offering political and financial support (Indicator 12.3), and in raising awareness about CESA within their countries (Indicator 12.4). The CESA cluster architecture is seen as the locus of the government-CESA engagement.   Taking up leadership positions within CESA clusters (chairing or coordinating the cluster), or participating in the cluster at a lower level, are direct forms of engagement with CESA and are construed as expressions of political support.   Governments are expected to raise awareness of CESA and its objectives, and to demonstrate this through communications activities that give more visibility to CESA and help it becoming more known and, consequently, "build social capital for CESA at the grassroots level", as the explanatory text on this indicator emphasizes.

INDICATOR	DEFINITION	PURPOSE	SOURCES OF DATE / MEANS OF VERIFICATION	LIMITATIONS
School Management Committee (SMC) Policy	SMCs: local-level education coordination bodies composed of various stakeholders, most often the Government, school administration, and local communities (parents).	Determine whether i) involvement of local-level stakeholders is formalized ii) there is government support for SMCs	-Legislation -Legal Instrument -Policy documents on SMCs	-Looks at policy only, not actual number of SMCs and their effectiveness -Does not clarify how SMCs engage with CESA and SDG4 goals
National Education Forum (NEFs)[187] (or Local Education Groups / National Education Sector Coordination and Dialogue Platforms)	Membership of the multi-sectoral NEF includes CSOs, Teacher Unions and Development Partners	-Determine whether the involvement of education stakeholders is coordinated at the national level. -Determine existence of partnerships for achieving "quality and relevance in education", as well as CESA and SDG4	-Official recognition of the NEF and its formal status -Documentation of the NEF's work	-Does not look at qualitative aspects of participation and coordination in the NEF (inclusiveness, quality of participation, effectiveness of the NEF) -Does not investigate whether / how NECs engage with CESA and SDG4
Government's financial and political support to the Planning Cluster of CESA	Support forms can be "attendance of cluster meetings, execution of CESA Education Planning directives, or sponsorship of cluster objectives".	-Measure how many countries are supporting the CESA clusters -Aggregate the different forms of support	-Proof of financial support - This indicator must be cross-referenced with the agreed needs of CESA, as per yearly work plans and Terms of Reference of CESA's different clusters.	-indicator language seems to imply that support will be to one single cluster (Planning), but the explanation makes clear that this is about supporting the cluster architecture as a whole -

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187   The CESA Indicators Manual uses the term National Education Cluster (NEC). We replaced that with National Education Forum (NEF), so that the acronym NEC is exclusively used for civil society National Education Coalitions (NECs).

(Evidence of) communications and advocacy for CESA objectives at country level	National level initiatives to Support CESA objectives.	- Measure how many countries are using communications and advocacy to support CESA objectives. - Build social capital for CESA at grassroots level	-Compile evidence and proof of communications and advocacy activities	

The indicators for SO12 help understand what the AUC (and key actors in conceptualising CESA's operational design and architecture, most notably ADEA) see as the crucial building blocks of CESA's "coalition of all education stakeholders".   There are some elements of multi-level governance in the proposed indicators; there is a listing of key education stakeholders at the national level which includes civil society and teacher unions; and a clear role assigned to governments to publicize and popularize CESA in their countries.

But all this does not add up to an inclusive governance structure for CESA that effectively convenes and links education stakeholders at the different national, sub-regional, and continental levels, and which guarantees broad participation in and accountability within CESA.   Civil society's participation at the national level is seen as needed so that the government can coordinate education activities other actors are carrying out. There is no recognition of civil society's role as a contributor to policy formulation and to accountability mechanisms.   At the regional and continental levels, the task of defining civil society's roles are left to the RECs and to the C10, without acknowledging civil society as an education stakeholder with a shared responsibility for policy formulation, implementation review, and accountability in CESA.

The connections between the different levels of CESA (national, regional, and continental) are not clearly defined and are tenuous at best. The Governance Chapter[188] of the CESA strategy document says the following about the different levels (continental, regional, and national), which should be interacting and working together to ensure the implementation of CESA and the uptake of its strategic objectives at the national level:

CONTINENTAL

Committee of **10 Heads of State** and government (two from each geographical region) [**the Champions**] to defend and promote the development of education, science, technology and innovation [ESTI] on the continent.

Responsible for engaging governmental peers; engaging enterprises from the public and / or private sector, civil society and philanthropies, to involve them in the development of ESTI.

Oversees an *Annual Continental Activities Report*

The Specialized Technical Committee of Education and Science and Technology (STC /EST): Responsible for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, and for drafting the *CESA Report.*

REGIONAL

Statutory **meetings of REC Education Ministers** [e.g., SADC Education Ministers' Meeting]: Responsible for coordination and cooperation in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of CESA at the regional level.

RECs to contribute to the annual continental report and functioning of the coalition for education at the regional level.

NATIONAL

Ministers of Education and Training: Responsible for ensuring the ownership, domestication and implementation of CESA; and for involving other development sector ministries in accord with national strategies.

Closely cooperate with bi- and multi-lateral development agencies.

Establish **Working Groups** to evaluate, monitor and assess the implementation of CESA at the national level by involving national experts and representatives of development agencies and joint follow up missions.

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188   See page 28 of CESA

What is noticeable in CESA's governance scheme is how state-centric[189] the continental and regional levels are, with no clear recognition of the important role other stakeholders do and can play in the education sector.   The Committee of Champions (the 10 Heads of State) is assigned the responsibility to invite other stakeholders -including civil society- to become involved in the development of Africa's education, science and technology sectors, but the involvement of those actors is implicitly seen as secondary and irregular, rather than essential and institutionalised. The same approach can be seen at the regional level where RECs and statutory REC-level Education Ministers' meetings are not open or accessible to the participation of other stakeholders or, minimally, to institutionalised forms of interaction between the formal Ministerial meetings and non-state actors.

It can be said that the CESA strategy deliberately left those details sketchy so that the appropriate structures and forms of interaction could develop and evolve through piloting and practice, rather than present elaborate governance structures which are untested and could therefore prove to be unrealistic.

This could be the case as far as intentions are concerned, but the weak reflection of the CESA pillars, which highlight the value of strong partnerships between governments, civil society (and the private sector), in the governance arrangements as outlined for the different levels, is consequential. At best, the implicit understanding of civil society's role in the CESA Governance section is akin to "nonstate actors are appendages to a state-centred multilateral regulatory apparatus"[190].

Practice since CESA was launched shows that the insufficient role allocated to civil society and other non-state actors, and the lack of institutionalised and regular access for those groups to CESA's higher level governance platforms, lead to significant gaps in participation.

Civil society has no recognized and institutionalised (as in formalised) access channels to regional Education Ministers' meetings or to the RECs, nor does it have such access at the continental level to the Committee of 10 Champion Countries, or to the Specialized Technical Committee of Education and Science and Technology.   As we saw in the previous chapter on RECs, in the absence of an established structure to civil society's participation, attempts to engage with the RECs are often frustrating and communicate an exclusionary tendency, rather than one committed to facilitate inclusive dialogue and broaden participation.

As we have shown in Chapter 4 on CESA clusters, civil society's participation in this mechanism is also secondary, partial, and often faces hurdles of lack of information. Effectively, CESA clusters are closed, non-inviting entities with limited memberships. They are not transparent, rarely publish information on their work, and are in many cases unreachable.   All those hurdles exacerbate the participation gap and point to deficiencies in CESA's current mode of governance practices[191].

The CESA architecture is unfinished, and next stages in its construction should focus on making progress on inclusiveness and clear connections between the continental and the other levels.

Education Governance

What does governance mean in education, and how can we benefit from the theories, practices, and different applied organizational models in multi-stakeholder arrangements, when we speak about CESA's governance and think of possible improvements to it?

An often-used description is that education governance is concerned with "how the funding, provision, ownership and regulation of education and training systems is coordinated, and at what level; local, regional, national and supranational"[192]. The "how" here also includes which actors participate in making decisions around those very issues, and at what level.   Governance is about how decision making happens in education systems: what institutions are involved and what dynamics characterizes the relationships between the different actors to arrive at decisions regarding priorities, policy choices, and allocating roles and responsibilities in the implementation of policies and programs.

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189   By state-centric, we mean governance models where the state is the center of power and control, and where the state governs society with only very limited interactions with other societal actors, such as civil society. As Peters et. al. (2022, p.17) explain, "the political culture of this model of governance is that the state assumes a strong leading role, as could be seen for instance in Japan during the postwar period or in France in the early decades of the Fifth Republic. Thus, in this model of governance, control is the standard mechanism of governance and state-led societal development. While societies in state-centric governance may have a rich civil society, those organizations submit to the authority of the state".

190   This is how Scholte (2020) describes the role of non-state actors in ancillary forms of multistakeholderism (p.4)

191   The session dedicated to CESA governance at the 2018 Pan-African Conference on Education (PACE) concluded that "The reality is that coordination in education at continental level is inadequate".   The summary report on this particular session is one of the very few public discussions of CESA governance we have seen.

192   http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/activities/research-mapping/educational-governance

According to the OECD, education governance can be analyzed by looking at the formal structures and processes in place to deliver education policy and the stakeholder engagement process for policymaking. Effective systems have a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities and find the right balance between central and local direction, set concrete objectives and policy priorities, and engage stakeholders in the process.

The important feature of education governance to highlight here is the increasing involvement of multiple actors, operating at different levels, in addition to the Ministries of Education (governments).   Those actors engage with and shape education policies, processes and outcomes.

Looking at Europe, for example, NESSE contends that while in many countries governments play the most significant role in coordinating education,

> "the distribution of these responsibilities has been changing in response to calls for greater efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and democracy. Households, communities, and new kinds of private actors, are increasingly involved in many different aspects of education and training governance, raising questions about equity, participation and transparency"[193].

At the national level, the Local Education Group (LEG) can be seen as a governance structure that seeks to broaden participation and be inclusive, where national actors other than government play a role in shaping education choices that the country makes and engage in discussions on educational processes and outcomes.

GPE's work on Principles for LEG Effectiveness (see box below) is important in looking at what a multistakeholder platform for education dialogue and coordination should have in order to be effective. Learning from different models of governance, the principles emphasize the clarity of the mandate of the LEG; having a clear governance structure for coordination; generating inclusion and engagement; flexible and well-communicated working arrangements; regular monitoring; demonstrating ownership and leadership in practice; and the contribution of all actors to a healthy partnership.

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193   Ibid.

> **Box x: GPE's Principles for LEG Effectiveness**
>
> **1. The LEG mandate, functions and objectives are clear**
>
> A clear mandate and core policy dialogue functions are agreed by key education stakeholders, based on a shared understanding of focus areas the sector dialogue can add most value. Specific objectives are aligned to the whole policy cycle, with partners regularly reviewing key priorities.
>
> **2. The partnership framework generates inclusion and engagement**
>
> The LEG engages stakeholders at key junctures - including plan development, joint review and monitoring of sector progress and key reform areas, evaluation and learning - with different forms of targeted engagement linked to partner interests, capacities and resources.
>
> **3.** There is a **clear governance structure for coordination**. The governance arrangements clarify relationships between the LEG and other bodies (including with other sectors), recognizing authorities over different types of policy dialogue and decision-making and establishing clear leadership roles and responsibilities.
>
> **4. Working arrangements are flexible, 'fit-for-purpose', and well communicated**
>
> The working arrangements for core and technical working groups are flexible, adapted to context, and fit for taking priorities forward. They are also well communicated to ensure that members are informed about LEG activities, wider modalities for collaboration, roles and responsibilities.
>
> **5. Regular monitoring contributes to learning and improved performance**
>
> The LEG has clear milestones for what it wants to contribute to the sector through policy dialogue. Review arrangements look at whether sector dialogue and partnership dynamics are getting stronger over time and support adaptive learning in the partnership.
>
> **6. Leadership and ownership are demonstrated in practice**
>
> Leaders, decision makers and education champions demonstrate a willingness to support participatory policy dialogue through active participation in the LEG and communicate clearly on the level of stakeholder engagement expected.
>
> **7. Key actors contribute to healthy partnership dynamics**
>
> The partnership is built on a genuine willingness and commitment of all partners to cooperate in accelerating education sector progress, with recognition of the influence of healthy partnership dynamics on LEG performance and realistic strategies for overcoming obstacles.
>
> *Source*: GPE (2019) Principles Toward Effective Local Education Groups

Those very same principles can be applied to governance arrangements at a regional, or continental level[194]. Using them to help identify weaknesses and areas that require attention in the CESA model and at each of its levels, can be integrated into the planned evaluation of CESA. The envisioned CESA governance is defined as a multistakeholder partnership platform operating at different levels, connecting the national to the regional and both of those to the continental level. The GPE's Principles are generic allowing them to be applied to the different parts of the CESA governance architecture.

> *The path to a true Alliance of All Stakeholders can only be realized through an inclusive CESA governance structure*

There is a proliferation of multistakeholder initiatives (MSIs) at different levels, from the local to the global, in different sectors and settings, including education.[195]

As the name indicates[196], those arrangement most often bring together governments, business (private sector), and civil society. In many cases, representatives of other constituencies, such as academic and research institutions, technical experts, and private foundations, also participate. At the regional, continental, and global levels, inter-governmental organizations usually constitute a prominent constituency in MSIs. The rationale for bringing all those actors together is that they have a stake in

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194   Also see GPE's Tools for Strengthening the Effectiveness of Local Education Groups (2021)

195   See, for example, GDI (2015), GLOBE (2021), Hazlewood (2015), and Scholte (2020). The GDI and Hazlewood papers cover GPE. For critical civil society perspectives in sectors other than education, see: FIAN (2020) and MSI Integrity (2020)

196   Scholte (2020) argues for simply calling those initiatives multistakeholder, because of the neutrality of the term: "Multistakeholder arrangements go by a host of other names: one source counts 21 common descriptors in the English language alone. Common alternative labels include 'partnerships', 'public-private partnerships', and 'global public policy networks'. However, the term 'multistakeholder' better conveys the principle of gathering actors from several sectors of society. 'Multistakeholder' also avoids the implicitly appreciative and promotional tenor of 'partnership', 'collaborative governance', and 'global solution networks'. 'Multistakeholder' provides more neutrally descriptive language that is open to a full spectrum of evaluations, ranging from evangelical promotion to virulent critique". (p.4)

addressing the challenge(s) or task(s) the MSI is set to tackle. They are affected by the issue and similarly affect it by their very mandates, interests, activism, and practical interventions. MSIs aspire, in their statements of intent, to create settings and relations between different actors to share information and arrive at negotiated participatory decision-making.

As Scholte (2020, p.4) writes, such multistakeholder initiatives "integrate different mindsets and experiences, bringing together the activist, the bureaucrat, the engineer, the entrepreneur, the funder, the journalist, the researcher, etc. The motivating intuition is that blending diverse pools of information and insight can yield more effective global problem-solving".

The set up is not in itself a guarantee of horizontality or equality between all participants in the MSI, nor does it eliminate power relations and pre-existing inequalities in access to information and resources. But in bringing the different actors together in structures that meet regularly, and by providing the same essential information that enables higher degrees of meaningful participation of those actors, MSIs extend recognition to different constituencies and facilitate possibilities for them to influence and shape key decisions in the MSI's domain. They are, in this sense, potential democratic spaces open to expansion and enrichment. How they actually evolve and manage inequalities between actors and the powerful counter pulls of constituency interests is not something that can be prejudged. But how far they go to be inclusive, in their design and definition of mandates and internal arrangements, sends strong signals about intentions, including the openness of powerholders to share some of this power and authority.

GPE (2020, p.11) takes this up in what it describes as "the political economy" in which multistakeholder partnerships, such as the LEG, are nested:

> (…) country and international stakeholders can be resistant to (too much) coordination. It is not even so much the formality or informality of the arrangements established for multi-stakeholder coordination that poses a problem, but rather the authority vested in that arrangement and the demands of the governance process. Education partners may quietly resist if they feel there will be a loss of sovereignty, ownership or leverage over decision-making processes. Donors and technical partners, seeking to maintain their visibility and attribute impacts to their funded activities, may also be less keen to relinquish their control within more participatory coordination structures (p.11)

All MSIs are nested in political economies. Dialogue and coordination within MSIs are not antithetical to divergence of perspectives, disagreement and contestation. It is important to acknowledge that MSIs are living organisms, to be conscious of and deliberate about challenges that arise in MSI settings and to find ways to structure the discussion of disagreements and to negotiate and broker compromises.[197]

Many different models of MSIs exist. Some work better than others[198]. Some have been written off by critical constituencies as not being fit for purpose. Questions about state sovereignty, accountability and legitimacy have been and continue to be raised in the different MSIs, including the legitimacy and representativeness of civil society actors.

Civil Society in Different Education Platforms

A comparative look at some of the governance arrangements in global and multi-stakeholder education structures are useful here. The SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee[199], the apex body for global education cooperation, is a multi-stakeholder consultation and coordination mechanism for education in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The Steering Committee is "representative of the global education community", with a 'leaders Group' of 28 members, composed of Ministers, Heads of Agency, and organizational leaders, including civil society, teacher organizations, and private foundations.[200]

The constituency-based governance model of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is another example of a multi-stakeholder education body where civil society and teachers' organizations participate as one key constituency. Civil society has three out of the total twenty constituency seats on the GPE Board and participates in the Board's technical committees.

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197   See for example Zimmerman, Albers and Kenter (2022)
198   The GDI report (2015) looks at the experiences of 17 MSIs.
199   See https://www.sdg4education2030.org/high-level-steering-committee-members. For the Terms of Reference, see: https://www.sdg4education2030.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/HLSC%20Terms%20of%20Reference.pdf
200   Civil society is represented by CCNGO, and teachers' organizations by Education International (EI)

The same care for the structured participation of civil society can also be seen in the composition of the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM)'s Advisory Board.[201]

It is important to provide such a place and role for African civil society in the proposed CESA Governance Platform that would be the vehicle to move towards realizing the "alliance of all stakeholders" championing education in Africa.

Towards an Inclusive CESA Coordination Platform

Seven years after the launch of CESA, and on the eve of Africa's Year of Education in 2024, what is clear is that the CESA architecture is unfinished. The Alliance of All Stakeholders has not been established. There is no single, fit-for-purpose, inclusive continental platform that brings together the different education stakeholders in Africa.

CESA clusters were launched in 2018 and were envisioned as practical vehicles for expanding the engagement and direct participation of stakeholders and actors from different sections of African institutions, sectors, and civil society.   That vision has not materialized, as we concluded in Chapter 4. The pandemic's devastating interruption of all processes, including the building of CESA's architecture, cannot be ignored.   The AU, RECs, existing CESA clusters -whatever their level of development- together with Ministries of Education, adjusted their priorities and directed their energies and resources to deal with the immediate challenges education systems faced.   As the pandemic receded, African institutions could pick up their disrupted agendas and tasks again, including continuing with the construction of CESA's architecture, with the lessons learned from COVID-19's impacts on education systems.   Renewed efforts to reactivate the CESA clusters and to improve coordination between them could be seen in the least three years, but those efforts, we argue, remained hampered by the limitations of the state-centric approaches to governance implied by the language of the CESA strategy. With the exception of one particular cluster, CESA clusters effectively remained closed, without visible efforts to reach out to civil society.   The clusters are not, in this sense, microcosms of the aspired "alliance of all stakeholders".

In the meantime, the AUC's Education Division and the RECs' Education Desks, together with ADEA, which was accorded a special role in the overall coordination of CESA and reporting on its implementation, continued business as usual, without concrete plans or practical steps to establish bridges to civil society and other non-state actors.   Awareness of CESA at the national level remained low, with many civil society coalitions and organizations across the continent lacking fluency in what CESA is and how it can be made relevant to national education plans and goals.

African civil society organizations share part of the responsibility for the limited engagement between them and the different institutions tasked with operationalizing the CESA strategy, primarily the AUC and the RECs.   Civil society's participation is not only dependent on the openness and receptiveness of government or inter-governmental-led structures, but on their claim-making as well and their demands to participate. There are shining examples of pan-African networks and civil society organizations that not only energetically and actively participated in the CESA architecture, including leading certain clusters, but also played intellectual leadership roles in their sectors. The Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN) are two such networks. FAWE formulated CESA's Gender Equality Strategy and developed gender-specific indicators for all the CESA objectives. AfECN played an important role in elevating the vision of integrated early childhood care, education and development to policies increasingly taken up by national governments, while building the Early Childhood cluster into an inclusive platform. Their examples show the energy, vision, leadership, and connections to national realities that civil society groups can bring to CESA.

But overall, a combination of factors -lack of knowledge about CESA, funding challenges, lack of intermediaries to connect national civil society organizations to CESA processes -similar to the roles FAWE and AfECN play- and limited engagements by Ministries of Education with CESA- meant the absence of claim-making and demanding participation in CESA. Civil society in Africa, as our interviews showed, are unwavering in their political commitment to CESA and in subscribing to the view that it is the articulation of an African vision for education. What they struggle with is finding practical pathways to engage with CESA, to find the right entry points, and to know what is happening in the clusters and other parts of the CESA architecture.   They are also not seeing CESA-related institutions -the AUC in particular- extending invitations to them to become involved.

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201   For the Advisory Board's Terms of Reference: https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/06/TORs_GEM_REPORT_Advisory_Board_March2017.pdf

These are huge, missed opportunities for CESA as a continental strategy, for the different bodies implementing it, and for civil society. It is imperative to move forward. The time is right to move to establishing an inclusive, multistakeholder CESA Coordination and Policy Dialogue Platform at the continental level.   The launch of this Platform in 2024, the Year of Education in Africa, would be a fitting gesture to the occasion and an important practical step to mobilize all education stakeholders across the continent.

The diagram below shows existing institutions and actors at the national, regional and continental levels. Structured and formalized relations are designated by solid lines, such as the participation of civil society in LEGs at the national level, or FAWE's participation in a number of CESA clusters.   Where there are no connecting lines, as for example, between civil society at the regional level and RECs, this depicts the absence of formal relations, and, often, very limited interactions between the two.

The CESA Governance Platform, which appears at the continental level bordered with a dotted line, is what is missing in the current CESA arrangements.   There is no such platform that is inclusive of different non-state actors, including civil society and teacher unions.   Dotted lines extending between civil society at the continental level (ANCEFA and FAWE for example) and the proposed Governance Platform point out connections that will come into existence with the creation of the Governance Platform.
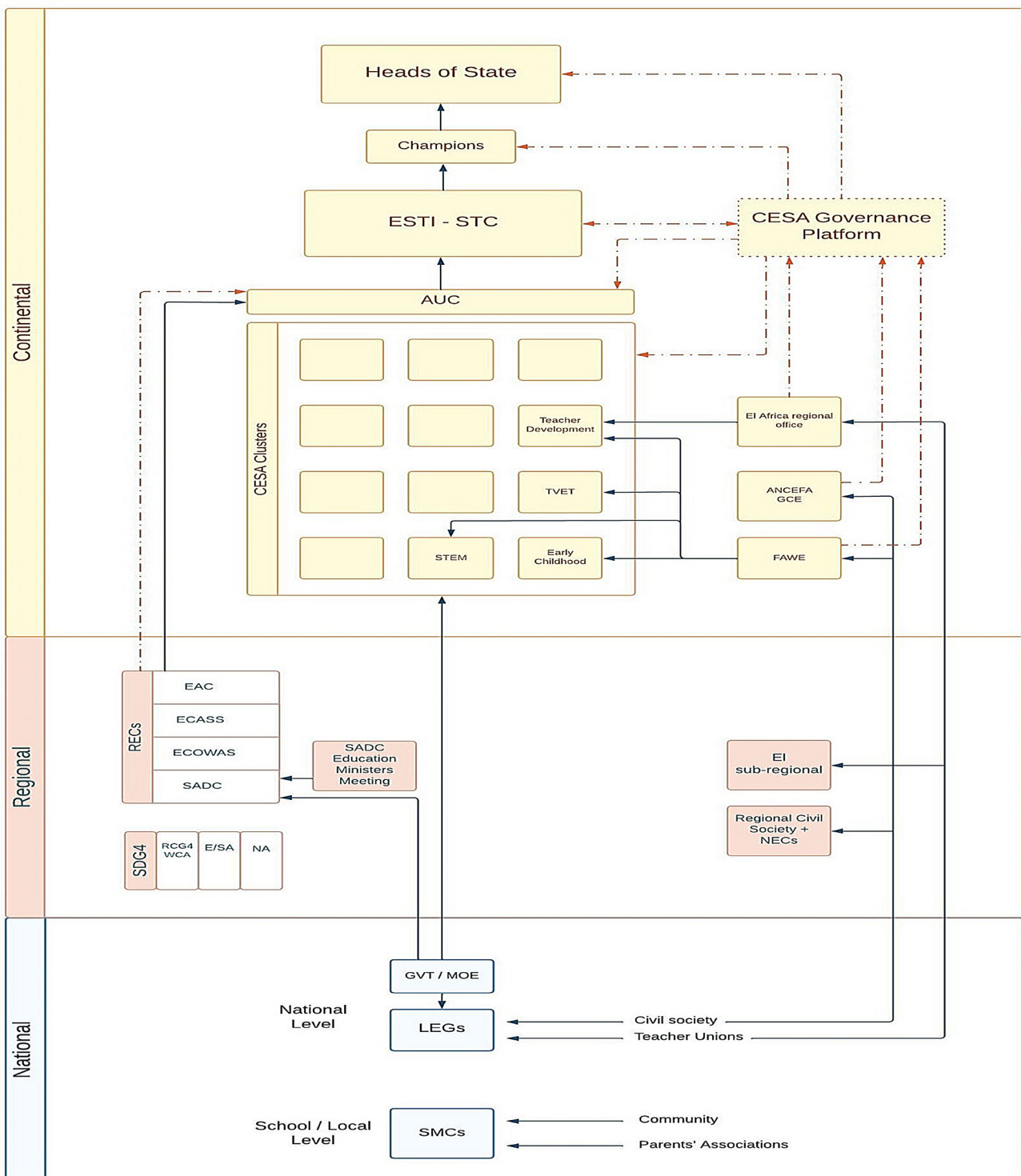
The Governance Platform itself will have connections to the 10 Champion Countries and to the African Heads of State.   A dotted line from the Continental Governance Platform to the regional and national levels is to stress the need to establish strong connections between the different levels.   A governance platform at the regional level can replicate the one at the continental level, with RECs playing the lead coordination / Secretariat role.   The SADC Education Division, for example, or another appropriate Directorate, would then be playing the Secretariat / Coordinator roles for the SADC-region CESA governance platform, in which regional civil society organizations (such as the Southern Africa Early Childhood Network) and EI at the sub-regional level participate.   The SADC CESA Governance Platform will have strong connections to the national level (through governments primarily, but also through civil society and others).   (See Diagram below, detailing this level of the proposed Governance Platform).

At the national level, the 2016 CESA strategy document had envisioned a dedicated CESA cluster or committee would be established. This would not be needed if there are existing, active, effective LEGs with formal status. Rather than separate, stand-alone committees dedicated to CESA, the more important task would be to ensure awareness of CESA within the LEG and that the integration of CESA and the monitoring progress towards the realization of its objectives are permanent items on the LEG's agenda and workplan.

There are a lot of details that need to be worked out for this proposed continental governance platform and its reflections / extensions at the national and regional levels. What can be emphasized at this point is that the CESA Governance Platform needs to work closely with the SDG4 architecture on the African continent, so that those are not competing frameworks and architectures, but complementary and tightly connected ones, preventing duplication of efforts or competing reporting burdens on national governments.   The significant work done to align the two frameworks and to agree joint CESA and SDG4 indicators are extremely important steps in that direction. The CESA Governance Platform's role in overseeing and guiding the Continental Report (for the joint monitoring of CESA and SDG4 implementation), together with UNESCO, is an integral part of this envisioned architecture as depicted below.

The adequate resourcing of the Continental Governance Platform is essential for it to function. To date, both the AUC and RECs suffered from lack of financing and insufficient staffing and capacity of their education arms. Transitioning to a multi-stakeholder governance structure with the same levels of financing and staffing is doomed to fall short.   The commitment to establish a well-organized alliance of all stakeholders must be matched with sufficient resourcing of the Secretariats that are crucial for the building of those platforms at the continental and regional levels.

African civil society education groups also face funding challenges.   Engaging with CESA and its different processes requires dedicated staff time and other costs. The resourcing and strengthening of the organizational capacities of pan-African and national education coalitions and networks should be seen as part of the requirements for building an effective governance structure for CESA.
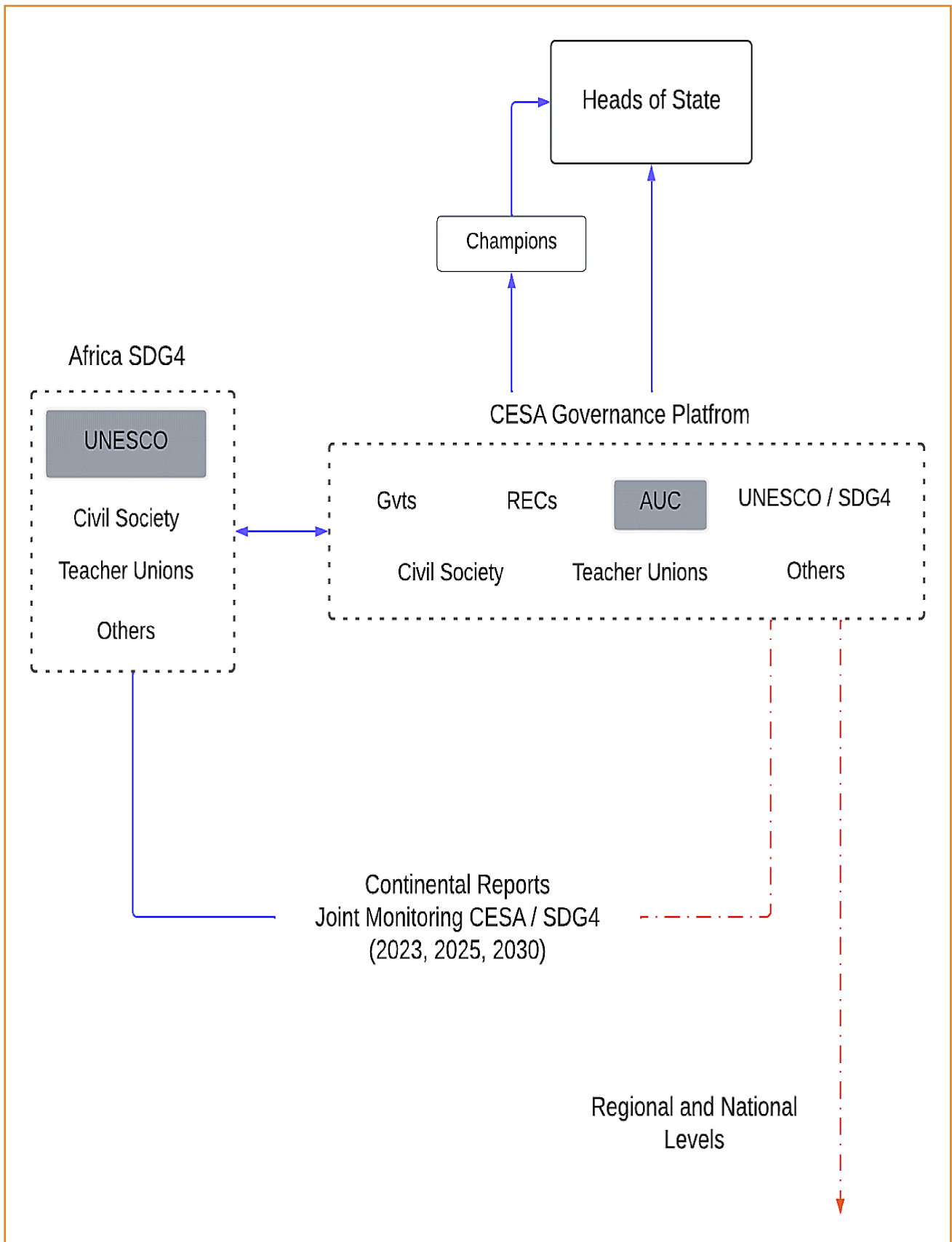
Chapter 6 | Recommendations

In this final chapter we present the research's key recommendations, which we have bundled in four clusters:

Inclusive participation at the regional and continental levels requires addressing shrinking civic space at the national level

For civil society education groups to engage effectively with AU and REC processes and policies, the first and most basic thing they need is to have unfettered access to the AU and REC spaces. This means the availability of information, access to education-related documentation, and the ability to organize meetings and calls with AUC and REC staff.

Whether the restricted access of education CSOs to key AU processes and high-level events, and in some cases even simple information about CESA clusters, mirrors the relations of mistrust characterizing several State- Civil Society relations at the national level, or whether the AU restrictions themselves encourage and legitimate exclusionary tendencies by governments is debatable, but it is certain that there is an urgent need to address the problems of shrinking civic space in many countries. The AU, as the pinnacle of the continental political integration project, has an important role to play in urging its member states to remove restrictions on civil society participation and to legislate for their freedom of operation. Moreover, the inclusive regionalism model the AU aspires to embody will not be accomplished without the participation and critical support of citizen groups and civil society that often amplifies these citizen voices.

Recommendation The AU, RECs and national governments should provide adequate legal, political, and social spaces for CSOs to operate freely. Enabling national legal and administrative frameworks are necessary. Evidence from different parts of the world and from different institutional settings show that the legal obligation to consult CSOs is conducive for civil society's ability to influence policy.

The Governance Structure of CESA, the Alliance of All Stakeholders, should finally be established

The Continental Strategy for Education in Africa (CESA) pledged to establish an inclusive governance mechanism, which creates an alliance of all education stakeholders on the continent. Whatever steps have been taken in this direction are far from being sufficient. This research revealed the many and serious participation gaps at all levels of the CESA architecture, from the AU level down to the REC- and national levels. Together these gaps form a considerable -and avoidable- governance deficit, which undermines the implementation of CESA and deprives it of the energies and inputs of key non-state stakeholders, including civil society.

Recommendation 1 The AU should, in the lead up to the Year of Education 2024, **prioritize the establishment of the continental governance structure for CESA that is inclusive, participatory, and deliberative**. Teacher unions and civil society groups are key stakeholders and their seats in such a governance structure are legitimate and essential for an AU and regional bodies of the people. The constitutive acts of the AU and its different bodies have provided for the participation of non-state actors, and it is time to translate these commitments into concrete realities.

Recommendation 2 As the AU starts its consultations and deliberations on the inclusive CESA governance mechanism, it should **work collaboratively with the different regional economic communities (RECs) so that they buy into the same principles** and reflect on existing engagement modalities between their

education arms (departments / directorates / high-level Ministerial meetings) and civil society.   There are huge participation gaps at the REC level, and they should be tackled as part of the broader efforts of the AU to expand spaces for civil society participation in the governance mechanisms of education at all levels. The AU in its full architecture is a multi-level governance system.   RECs are building blocks of African integration and should be key entry points for CSO engagement

Recommendation 3 The AU should **open participation in CESA clusters to interested and qualified civil society organizations**.   The rationale for CESA clusters is to maximise the contributions of all education stakeholders.   The reality is that the CESA clusters, with few exceptions, are closed, non-transparent, and uninterested in reaching out to civil society and other non-state actors.   Some appear to see themselves as highly technical, thus excluding civil society.   The example of the Early Childhood Cluster shows the strengths and power of broad membership and multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral participation from governments, academic institutions, civil society, and individuals.

Recommendation 4 Given the convergences and alignments that have been achieved between CESA and SDG4, which are continuing, it is important that joint CESA-SDG coordination and knowledge production mechanisms, such as the Continental Report, follow the same principles of inclusive participation of education stakeholders.

Civil Society Groups, including INGOs working in Africa, must increase their coordination, pooling of knowledge resources, and collective demands for more and meaningful participation

While the AU and the RECs restrict the access of civil society to many education policy-making platforms, particularly the high-level summits and Ministerial meetings, the lack of coordination between civil society education groups in Africa on matters related to continental and regional policy spaces are also responsible for reducing the effectiveness of civil society.   Pan-African and international organizations with privileged access granted to them through MOUs or CESA cluster coordination / chairing do not always take on the full responsibility of the intermediary and aggregator roles: feeding their members and the wider education constituency with intelligence, information, and actionable analysis.   There is lack of coordination between the pan-African civil society organizations that have access to the AU and REC spaces.   This is in some cases partly due to resource challenges that a number of those organizations face.

International NGOs which have liaison offices with the AU and high staff capacity to deal with the continental or/and regional bodies do not always share their connections, knowledge, and political experience with the civil society education constituencies in Africa.   A few INGOs coordinate CESA clusters and occasionally support the AUC with resources to carry out certain activities.   They have reach and influence in specific policy areas, but this is not put to the benefit of the education movements of the continent.   The difficulty of accessing information on clusters which INGOs coordinate was at times of the same magnitude as that encountered when dealing with assumedly bureaucratic institutions that have no history of working with civil society.

The umbrella organization with privileged access to RECs, such WACSOF in West Africa, EACSOF in the EAC region, and SADC-CNGO in Southern Africa, organize their members in thematic clusters that mirror those of the RECs they work with.   Education is not a thematic cluster in any of those umbrella organizations, despite the prominence of the theme in the regional agenda, and -in the case of the SADC- a meeting of Education Ministers taking place annually.   The umbrella organizations are not immune to funding challenges and have been operating with constrained capacity, but they are able to work with education groups to form an Education Cluster within their body, and to help this Cluster build its relations with the relevant REC Secretariat.   This is particularly important in the context of the Africa Year of Education in 2024.

Recommendation 1 Pan-African education networks (particularly FAWE, ANCEFA and EI's Africa Regional Office) can increase their effectiveness and better serve their members and the wider education constituencies within civil society if they establish regular coordination between themselves.   Such coordination should not only be around exchanging information and sharing learning but also move toward strategizing together on the big issues relating to the governance of CESA, opening AU and REC spaces for civil society and teacher organizations, and promoting different agenda.   This core group should reach out to other pan-African networks (representing for example students, informal education sector, TVET sector, higher education) with the aim of broadening the African coordination platform of civil society

groups and teacher unions. Those coordinated efforts can more powerfully advocate for an inclusive governance mechanism for CESA.

Recommendation 2 Regional umbrella organizations with the status of officially representing civil society via the RECs (EACSOF, SADC-CNGO, and WACSOF) should work with education groups in their regions to establish civil society education clusters within their bodies. Education clusters will raise the profile of education as a theme in the umbrella organization's work, which, in turn, should support the education clusters with gaining access to REC policy and decision-making spaces.

Recommendation 3 Large and well-resourced international NGOs working on education-related themes in Africa (including child protection), which have liaison offices with the AU and the RECs, and which coordinate CESA clusters or actively lead sub-groups within clusters, should seek effective ways to share their knowledge, connections, information, and analysis with the broader education constituencies on the continent. They should see deepening the participation of civil society in AU- and REC-processes as one of their key roles. INGOs which coordinate CESA clusters should aim to make their clusters models for high-value civil society contributions to CESA's work.

Recommendation 4 Umbrella organisations engaging the AU and RECs should facilitate and support the engagement of national CSOs, not crowd them out of those spaces. They should be representative and not a substitute to the national level CSOs.

Recommendation 5 Funders working in the fields of education and governance should include the support of coordination platforms between education groups (as in Recommendation 1) in their priorities. Coordination is time consuming and requires dedicated resources.

Civil Society a Full Participant in the 2024 Year of Education

ANCEFA, FAWE and EI have been invited to the Steering Committee set up by the AU to provide overall guidance on implementation of theme of year 2024. This is a good sign and a statement welcoming civil society participation as a co-responsible party for a successful Year that would create momentum for increased investment in education, creating awareness of CESA, and building inclusive and democratic governance mechanisms for education at the continental and regional levels.

The expectation from FAWE and ANCEFA as two established pan-African networks, and from EI as the union representing millions of teachers on the continent, is that they would seek to inform and consult with their members on how citizen and civil society groups, teacher unions, and women's organizations, can most effectively engage and fully participate, as co-owners and as co-implementers, in all of the activities and events of the Year.

The responsibility for realizing such a high level of civil society participation does not however rest solely with the three umbrella organizations. The AUC and the RECs, together with national governments, should pro-actively involve civil society education groups, utilising the great opportunities that the Year of Education offers for all education stakeholders to work together. As the AUC's Concept stated, "Year 2024 dedicated to Education in Africa will be a **single opportunity** for the African Union to regalvanize Member States towards the achievement of CESA and SDG4 targets". Moreover, the focus of the Year will be "on development and implementation of effective, long-lasting, system-wide transformational strategies for education in Africa, recovery from COVID-19, and building resilience and transformation (…)". All of this is not possible without the maximization of the energies, inputs, ideas, and work-on-the-ground of all education stakeholders.

Recommendation 1 Civil society and teacher organizations should be part of the regional and national task forces to shape and support country-level action plans.

Recommendation 2 Barriers that have hitherto existed, leading to the absence of structured and institutionalized presence of civil society education groups at AU- and REC- high-level Summits and meetings, should be removed.   It is time that those spaces are opened up before civil society so that they can meaningfully dialogue and interact with the political and education leaderships, bringing the voices of their constituencies and their perspectives and proposals.

Recommendation 3 The AU, RECs, and the other African institutions and UN agencies organizing events and carrying out the activities planned for the Year of Education (see below), should provide space for civil society, as panellists and speakers in conferences, contributors to studies, and participants.

Recommendation 4 Civil society -including pan-African and regional networks such as EI, FAWE and ANCEFA- having become aware of what is planned for the Year of Education, should plan their own inputs and activities, and allocate as much staff and time resources as they have at their disposal

Recommendation 5 Civil society education groups in Africa face funding challenges. There is no escaping this issue if there is an interest in supporting civil society to fully utilize the opportunities offered by the Year of Education and to maximize their engagement at the national, regional, and continental levels. The AU should consider setting up a special Civil Society Fund to support civil society participation and engagement. Funders supporting education, governance, and democratic participation in Africa should also play their part in enabling civil society participation in the Year. There is a significant opportunity for broadening and democratizing education governance and policymaking at the AU and REC levels, which should not be missed.

PLANNED EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE 2024 YEAR OF EDUCATION		
High-Level Political Events	**Technical and Policy Conferences/ Events**	**Educational Exchange and Peer Learning / Knowledge Products**
Launch of the 2024 Year of Education at the AU Summit	Pan-African Girls and Women's Education Conference (under the #Africaeducatesher campaign)	Development of Country Peer Review Guidelines for the evaluation of CESA 16-25 Implementation
Extraordinary Head of States Summit on Transforming Education in Africa	Continental Conference on Financing of Education in Africa	Continental study on Financing of Education in Africa
Extraordinary Meeting of STC-EST (the Specialized Technical Committee of Education and Science)	Symposium on Technology and Innovation in Education (including the Annual Innovation in Education Awards)	Mid-Term Evaluation of CESA
RECs Summit on Transforming Education in Africa	Continental Symposium on Teachers and the Teaching Profession (and the AU Continental Teachers Awards)	Regional Studies on Teacher Training and Recruitment (by Education International)
AU-EU Summit and High-Level Dialogue	Continental Symposium on Foundational Learning[202]	Country studies on teacher's deployment / Continental Brief
High-Level Dialogue on Gender Equality in Education	Official launch and implementation of Campus Africa	Inter-Cluster Leveraging Education Analysis for Results Network (LEARN) - Country Spotlight Series
	Teaching and Learning of the General History of Africa (GHA) in Education.(in collaboration with UNESCO)	Country studies on Women in Learning Leadership
	Launch of AU Digital Education Strategy (and advocacy on implementation)	Technical Guidance on the Law and establishment of a National Teaching Council
	Africa Skills Development and Employment Week	Country-to-Country Peer Learning and Exchanges

Annexes

202 See: https://hlpdf.adeanet.org/

International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA)

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Head: Simone Yankey-Outtarra	**Facebook: www.facebook.com/AUCIEFFA**

Purpose

AU/CIEFFA's mission is to ensure that African women are fully empowered in all spheres, with equal social, political and economic rights and opportunities, and are able to fight against all forms of gender-based discrimination and inequality.

The Centre works closely with AU Member States and governments, civil society organisations, traditional and religious leaders, development partners and youth to achieve the objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–25 (CESA 16–25) and Agenda 2063 with regards to girls' and women's education in Africa. AU/CIEFFA's third strategic plan (2021–25) comprises the following four strategic axes: gender-responsive education policies; curriculum reform and teacher education; science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) and skills development; and education in emergency and humanitarian contexts.

Evolution

The Centre was originally established under the aegis of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It became a specialised institution of the AU following AU Assembly approval, in principle, in July 2004 (Assembly/AU/Dec.44(III)), and its Statute was adopted by the Assembly in February 2019 (Assembly/AU/Dec.735(XXXII)).

Structure

As a specialised technical institution of the AU, the Centre reports to the AUC Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI).

Fund for African Women (FAW)/Trust Fund for Africa Women (TFAW)

FAW was a mechanism for the implementation and mobilisation of resources for programmes and projects dedicated to the African Women's Decade (AWD) 2010–20, supporting a minimum of 53 projects per theme. In line with a decision in May 2018 by the Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment to align FAW with Agenda 2063, work has begun towards transforming FAW into the Trust Fund for African Women (TFAW) as a financial mechanism for the African Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion 2020–30 (Assembly/AU/Dec.793(XXXIII)). The TFAW strategy proposes a transitional process to allow the finalisation of outstanding business from the FAW, such as disbursement of grants to

beneficiaries. It also suggests operational models to ensure that the Trust Fund delivers to the aspirations of African women. In addition, an internal AUC committee on the FAW was established under the leadership of the Deputy Chairperson to support the transition process to TFAW.

FAW was launched by the AU Assembly in 2010 (see Assembly/AU/Dec.277(XIV) of February 2010, EX.CL/Dec.539(XVI) of January 2010, and article 11 of the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA)). Its five main goals are to:

- Mobilise financial resources to support development programmes and projects for women
- Support women's initiatives to fight poverty, close the gender gap and halt marginalisation of women
- Share experiences and best practices on economic, political and social empowerment of women
- Facilitate the dissemination of information on activities led by African women
- Strengthen the capacities of African women in leadership, management and entrepreneurship.

The 10 annual themes selected for financial support 2011–20 were: Women's Health, Maternal Mortality and HIV/AIDS; Agriculture, Food Security and Environment; Fighting Poverty and Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women and Entrepreneurship; Environment and Climate Change; Education, Science and Technology; Finance and Gender Budgets; Mentoring Youth (men and women) to be Champions of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; Peace and Security and Violence Against Women; Women in Decision-Making Positions; and Governance and Legal Protection.

African Union Scientific, Technical and Research Commission (AU-STRC)

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Tel: +234 (0) 9291 3271	Website: www.austrc.org
Executive Director: Ahmed Hamdy, Egypt	

Purpose

The mandate of AU-STRC is to implement the AU Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024) in coordination with relevant stakeholders; promote intra- African research activities; identify new and comparative priority areas for research; and popularise the scientific and technological research culture in Africa.

The AU-STRC's programmes and activities include STISA 2024 implementation; Pan- African Intellectual Property Organisation establishment; capacity building of scientists and technologists; science, technology and innovation (STI) for youth empowerment and wealth creation; STI for climate change; green innovation strategy development and implementation for Africa; African Pharmacopoeia series; African Union Network of Sciences platform; Gender and Women in Science programme; and the Inclusive and Social Innovation for Economic Prosperity programme.

Evolution

The AU-STRC developed from the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa, South of the Sahara, also known as CCTA, which was established in 1950 by the European colonial powers. The CCTA was transformed into the STRC in 1964.

Structure

The AU-STRC is a specialised technical institution of the AU, operating under the Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI).

African Scientific, Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC)

AU-STRC Secretariat Plot 114 Yakubu Gowon Crescent Asokoro, Abuja FCT Abuja, Nigeria	Email: austrc@africa-union.org Website: www.asric.africa
Tel: +234 (0) 806 589 1643	Chairperson: Ratemo Michieka, Kenya Executive Director: Ahmed Hamdy, Egypt

Purpose

The mandate of ASRIC is to promote scientific research and innovation to address the challenges of Africa's socio-economic development.

Its functions include: mobilising African research excellence to advance the African development agenda; building and sustaining a continental scientific, research and innovation policy nexus; mobilising resources to support scientific research and innovation activities and programmes in accordance with AU policy; promoting dialogue and providing a voice to the scientific community that expresses continental excellence; advocating for knowledge exchange and technology acquisition; and linking the scientific community with the view of building intra-Africa research and cooperation. See the ASRIC website for information about its activities.

Evolution

ASRIC was established through AU Executive Council decision 747 of January 2013 and launched in 2018.

Structure

ASRIC is a specialised technical advisory body to the AU Commission. The Secretariat for ASRIC is the AU Scientific, Technical and Research Commission (AU-STRC), under the Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI).

The governance of ASRIC, in accordance with its Statute, consists of the Congress, the Bureau of the Congress and the Secretariat, which is the AU-STRC. The Secretary of the Bureau is the Executive Director of AU-STRC and ASRIC.

African Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI)

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Tel/WhatsApp: +240 555 909749	Website: www.austrc.org
Acting Executive Secretary: Bi Irie Vroh, Côte d'Ivoire (appointed by the AUC in 2020)	

Purpose

The purpose of AOSTI is to measure science, technology and innovation (STI) in Africa in order to promote the use of STI in supporting evidence-based decision making for sustainable development in Africa. AOSTI is mandated to champion evidence-based policy making in Africa by serving as the continental repository for STI data and statistics and as a source of policy analysis.

AOSTI's role also includes: monitoring and evaluating the AU's STI policy implementation; supporting Member States to manage and use STI statistical information in accordance with the African Charter on

Statistics; assisting Member States to map their STI capabilities to address development challenges; strengthening national capacities for STI policy formulation,evaluation and review, as well as technology foresight and prospecting; providing Member State decision makers with up-to-date information on global scientific and technological trends; and promoting and strengthening regional and international cooperation.

Evolution

AOSTI was established through AU Assembly decision 235(xii) of February 2009. In July 2010, the AUC and the Government of Equatorial Guinea signed a hosting agreement for the observatory to be headquartered in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. Assembly decision 452(XX) of January 2013 formally created AOSTI; decision 589(XXVI) of January 2016 adopted the AOSTI Statute; and decision 750(XXXIII) of February 2020 adopted the staffing structure.

Structure

AOSTI is a specialised technical office of the AU operating under the AUC Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI).

Pan African Virtual and e-University (PAVeU)

This initiative aims to use information communications technology (ICT)-based programmes to increase access to tertiary and continuing education in Africa so as to accelerate development of human capital, science, technology and innovation.

The January 2018 AU Summit decided that PAVeU would be an open, distance and e-learning (ODeL) arm of the Pan African University (PAU), and would be hosted at the PAU rectorate headquarters in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The project was relocated to Yaoundé in 2018, and PAVeU was officially launched in December 2019. In 2020, PAVeU launched four course programmes: Introduction to Virtualisation; Entrepreneurship Knowledge and Skills and Digital Literacy with Cloud Computing; Skills for Employability; and Media and Information Literacy.

As of February 2022, 10 online courses, content and curricula had been developed; online information technology equipment procured; and the structure and cost implication of PAVeU reviewed by the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Structural Reforms, which was expected to lead to the adoption of PAVeU's structure.

Pan African University (PAU)

Pan African University Rectorate Bastos	**Email: paurectorate@africa-union.org** **Website: https://pau-au.africa**
Yaoundé Cameroon	**Facebook: www.facebook.com/pauafrica** **Twitter: @pau_africaunion**
Officer in charge (Acting Director of the AUC Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation): Hambani Masheleni, Zimbabwe	

Purpose

The aim of the Pan African University (PAU) is to:

- Establish continental institutions that promote high-quality training, research and innovation within Africa
- Ensure a steady nurturing of new ideas and a continuous injection of highly skilled human resources to meet the developmental needs of the continent.

The University is a network of post-graduate (master's and doctoral) teaching and research institutions within selected high-quality universities in the five geographic regions of Africa.

It promotes student mobility in Africa and facilitates intra-regional networking for academic researchers. Its guiding principles include academic freedom; autonomy and accountability; quality assurance; promotion of African integration through the mobility of students and academic and administrative staff; and the development of collaborative research linked to the challenges facing the African continent. The University comprises five thematic institutes:

- Institute for Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation (PAUSTI), hosted by the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya (Eastern Africa)
- Institute for Life and Earth Sciences (including Health and Agriculture) (PAULESI), hosted by the University of Ibadan in Nigeria (Western Africa)
- Institute for Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences (PAUGHSS), hosted by the University of Yaoundé II in Cameroon (Central Africa)
- Institute for Water and Energy Sciences (including Climate Change) (PAUWES), hosted by the University of Tlemcen in Algeria (Northern Africa)
- Institute for Space Sciences (PAUSS), to be hosted by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in South Africa (Southern Africa).

As of January 2022, four of the five institutes were operational. PAUSS was yet to become operational.

PAU students are admitted on a competitive basis from all African countries, with no more than 20 percent from the host country and with gender balance taken into consideration.

Full scholarships are offered and include an agreement with the AUC that recipients will work in Africa upon the completion of their studies for at least the same length of time as their scholarship. Students are awarded joint degrees from PAU and the host universities. Between 2012 and 2021, 2279 students had been admitted and a total of 1237 had graduated.

Evolution

In July 2010, the AU Assembly decided to establish the University (Assembly/AU/Dec.290(XV)). This followed the start of the Second Decade of Education for Africa 2006–15 (Assembly/AU/ Dec.92(VI)) and the Consolidated Plan of Action for Science and Technology in Africa 2008–13 (Assembly/AU/Decl.5(VIII)), as well as the endorsement of PAU as an academic network

of existing post-graduate and research institutions by the fourth Ordinary Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Education (COMEDAF IV) in 2009. The AU Assembly approved the PAU concept in July 2011 (Assembly/AU/Dec.373(XVII)), and in January 2012 requested the AUC to operationalise PAU (Assembly/AU/ Dec.391(XVIII)). The Assembly adopted the PAU Statute in January 2013 (Assembly/AU/Dec.451(XX)) and the amended Statute in January 2016 (Assembly/AU/Dec.589(XXVI)).

In January 2015, the AU Assembly designated Cameroon as the host country of the PAU Rectorate (Assembly/AU/Dec.552(XXIV)). An official relocation ceremony was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 31 July 2018.

The PAU Rectorate also hosts the Pan African Virtual and e-University (PAVeU), which was endorsed by the AU Executive Council in January 2018 as the open, distance and e-learning arm of PAU (EX.CL/Dec.987(XXXII)Rev.1).

Structure

The AU Assembly has the overall responsibility for overseeing the PAU. The AUC department working to support the PAU's establishment and operationalisation is the Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI). The revised PAU Statute provides that the major PAU organs are the:

- Council: the highest governing body comprising 33 members. In February 2020, the AU Assembly decided to delegate its authority to appoint the President and Vice-President to the AU Executive Council (Assembly/AU/Dec.760(XXXIII)). All other members are appointed by the Chairperson of the AUC for three-year terms, renewable once. The Council held its inaugural meeting in June 2015
- Rectorate: headed by the PAU Rector (the PAU Chief Executive Officer), who is appointed by the Chairperson of the AUC upon recommendation of the PAU Council for a five-year term, renewable once
- Senate: in charge of academic affairs, research and innovative activities. The Senate first met in May 2017

- Directorates of Institutes: headed by institute directors appointed by the Rector in consultation with the Council and the respective host universities
- Boards of Institutes: supervise, guide and support the Directorates in the management and administration of the Institutes.

Council

President: Kenneth Kamwi Matengu, Namibia (elected and appointed by the AU Executive Council in October 2021 for a three-year term)

Vice-President: Amany Abdallah El-Sharif, Egypt (elected and appointed by the AU Executive Council in February 2022 for a three-year term)

Pan African Institute for Education for Development (IPED)/ African Observatory for Education

49 Avenue de la Justice Kinshasa – Gombe B.P. 1764 DR Congo	Tel: +243 853 102 080
Coordinator: Adoumtar Noubatour, Chad	**Email: adoumtarn@africa-union.org or jajil@africa-union.org**

Purpose

IPED is envisaged as a specialised institution of the AU charged with the responsibility to function as Africa's Education Observatory. Its role is to promote quality, responsive and inclusive education development in Africa by ensuring a robust and functional Education Management Information System (EMIS) and sound knowledge-based planning. IPED is charged with supporting AU Member States to strengthen their national EMIS systems and enhance data collection using technology for effective monitoring and reporting. The institution also maintains the African Union Education Data Centre (AU-EDC), which will serve as a repository of education data to facilitate analysis and reporting by IPED.

IPED's programmes and activities include training and capacity building; research and policy analysis; statistics and indicator development; and monitoring and evaluation of AU education frameworks and strategies.

Evolution

At the second Ordinary Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Education (COMEDAF II), held in April 2005 in Algiers, Algeria, the AUC Chairperson called for a transformation of IPED into an African Education Observatory under the auspices of the AU.

IPED reports to the AUC Director for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI).

Annex 2: Concept to Implementation Process Cycle Flow in SADC

The Ten-Step Concept to Implementation Process Cycle in SADC

SADC Council and Summit Meetings are generally held in March and August of each year

Sectoral Cluster Ministerial Meetings should be held by June or by December if the issues are to be considered at the August or March Council meetings.

Implementation Stage
Implementation is generally at the Member States level but also at the regional level for regional programmes / projects

SADC National Committees
SNCs comprising Government, private sector, NGOs, civil society NSAs, should contribute through technical expertise at the national level

Stage 1 - _SADC Secretariat Directorates / Units_
Considers the concept, procures experts, develops background issue paper, consults key stakeholders / experts on the issue

Stage 2 - _SADC Sectoral Technical Committee_
Member States & Key Experts Consultations, Recommendations for consideration by Cluster Ministers

Stage 3 - _SADC Directorate / Unit_
Finalisation of Background Issues Paper & Preparation of Annotated Agenda for Cluster Ministers

Stage 4 - _SADC Sectoral Cluster Senior Officials_
Consideration of Background Issues paper via Annotated Agenda, Recommendations to Cluster Ministers

Stage 5 - _SADC Sectoral Cluster Ministers_
Consideration of Issues Paper via Annotated Agenda – Approval of Issue for implementation or Issue Recommended for approval by Council.

Stage 6 - _SADC Secretariat Executive_
Issues from Directorates / Units are consolidated into a Council Annotated Agenda

Stage 7 - _SADC Council Standing Committee of Officials_
Consideration of Issues Paper via Council Annotated Agenda – Recommended for Consideration and approval by Council

Stage 8 - _SADC Council of Ministers_
Consideration of Council Annotated Agenda is undertaken and approvals of SADC programmes of action granted. Matters recommended to Summit for Endorsement of final approval.

Stage 9 - _SADC Summit_
Consideration and Adoption for implementation of Issues recommended by Council

Stage 10
SADC Executive and Directorates (SADC Secretariat)
Coordination and facilitation of implementation of Council / Summit Decisions & Monitoring and Evaluation of implementation status / impact of strategic issue

Source: SAT Toolkit (2020), p. 43 SAT credits Martin Muchero.

Annex 3: CSO Position Paper – Malawi 2022

CSO's Position Paper Presented to the SADC Ministers of Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation, during their meeting in Lilongwe, Malawi, 13th -17th June, 2022

Introduction

In view of the joint meeting of SADC Ministers of Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation, 13th -17th June 2022, hosted by the Republic of Malawi, we, as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working in the education sector in the region, hereby present few key areas for the Education Ministers' consideration and action. We are aware that agenda for such short meetings cannot be exhaustive, hence, while commenting on issues which directly align to the meeting agenda, we also take this opportunity to raise some pertinent issues for the regional consideration in the quest to enhance quality, equitable and sustainable education. Therefore, this paper essentially builds upon SADC Protocol on Education and Development and the global commitments on education, which set out a universal rights-based agenda for a new social contract for education around lifelong learning for all through all strands of education.

1.0 Education and Skills Development - Teacher education and training

We, as CSOs working in the education sector, note that the achievement of SDG 4 and the transformation of education within the SADC region will depend heavily on teachers and education personnel from pre-school that are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems. Teachers, trainers and other education personnel are generally considered the single most influential variable in an education system for achieving learning outcomes. Based on our assessments in the region, currently teachers and education personnel are confronted by four major challenges:

I.   Teacher shortages across the board especially at pre-school and for special needs and inclusive education
II.   Difficulties in assuring the qualifications and professional development needs of teaching personnel
III. Low status and working conditions, and
IV.   lack of capacity to develop teacher leadership, autonomy and innovation.

We are aware that these are issues which the SADC Protocol on Education and Training had set out to collaboratively achieve through various co-operation, institutional arrangements and joint resourcing.

Noting, with great concern, that some of these issues remain key to the attainment of quality, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education for all in the region, we demand an empowered education workforce, professionalized, trained, motivated and supported:

Recommended Action Area 1: Ensure adequate number of qualified teachers

Our SADC country education systems need to recruit adequate numbers of teachers across the board starting (Pre-school and SNE and Inclusive education) and other relevant personnel with the minimum required qualifications to meet learners' needs. Since teacher attrition is highest in the first few years of teaching, hence more needs to be explored to deal with the vise. Measures to incentivize high-achieving graduates and those already teaching (but lacking qualifications) to look to teaching as an attractive career option in the region have to be explored. In the longer term, countries in the region need to invest heavily in improving teachers' salaries and working conditions and provide teachers with opportunities to grow and develop. Most of the SADC countries still lag behind in terms of the teacher to students' ratio, in some countries one teacher having over 100 students, especially at primary level. Further, we have noted that in

most member states we have a lot of trained teachers who are not recruited, thus:

- there is need for coordinated planning among sectorial education departments to balance the supply and demand for teachers
- there is need for recruitment and deployment of more female teachers especially in the rural areas.
- we strongly recommend that even though we talk about inclusive education there is still a need for specialized teachers in all the schools

Recommended Action Area 2: Ensure that all teachers have quality initial training and continuous professional development throughout their careers

We are of the view that educational processes should comprise identifying, developing, experimenting, assessing, evidencing, problem solving, critical thinking, versatility, competence based and scaling-up the most effective teaching process that combine in-person and distance online/offline provisions to ensure that all learners (inclusivity), regardless of age, gender, disability and location, can learn through blended pedagogies. We, as CSOs, opine that teacher development needs to innovate and transition from course-based training to a continuum of collaboration and exchange among teachers, schools, and education systems within the SADC region and beyond. Teacher involvement in the identification of training needs and in the design of training delivery is essential. Country budgets would need to clearly spell out allocations for teacher training and development. Specifically:

- there is need for concerted efforts to train teachers in competence-based teaching process and assessment.
- there is need for inclusion of a comprehensive inclusive education in teacher training curriculum so that the new graduates have adequate skill to support learners with diverse learning needs.

Recommended Action Area 3: Improve the status and working conditions of teaching personnel

Based on our joint experiences as CSOs working in the education sector within the SADC region, we are of the view that to ensure quality education, and to make the teaching profession more attractive for younger generations, decision makers need to ensure decent working conditions and an enhanced status of the profession. This ought to entail wages comparable with professions requiring similar levels of qualifications, so that teachers can assume an active role in the transformation of education processes. Therefore, teacher motivation and retention need to be more consistently taken into consideration at policy level. For instance, there is urgent need to improve the living conditions and environments for teachers in the rural areas, making them conducive and attractive. As CSO's we believe that as a region we need to learn from others like Zambia and South Africa where teachers are paid no less than $360 and $ 763 respectively per month. Thus,

- there is a need to have a minimum benchmark for teachers (including pre-school) salaries in the region.
- member states should ensure decent housing for teachers especially those in deep rural areas
- member states should ensure that teachers working in hard-to-reach areas are provided with a minimum of 20% of their salaries as a hard to reach allowance adjustable annually to inflation.
- there is a need to invest in inclusive school infrastructure including pre-school classrooms, outdoor play centers and resource centers to ensure that teachers have better working environment.
- for member states that do not have pre-schools and do not pay their ECDE educators there is a need to establish these ECDEs and budget for ECDE educators' payments.
- there is need for promotions based on competence and experience with a higher weighting on competence.

Recommended Action Area 4: Involve teachers in leadership and decision making

There is need to reshape the teaching profession to accommodate a career pathway, beginning with opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles as part of their professional development. We feel teachers' capacity for innovation is one of the keys to building resilient education systems. Since teachers are best placed to assess the conditions of their own classrooms and communities, governments need to promote their leadership to generate meaningful transformations. We urge our governments to:

- develop comprehensive national policies for teacher and teaching personnel
- develop standards and competency frameworks for teachers, including the integration of ICT into teacher education and practice.
- design certification mechanisms and continuous professional upgrading programs for leadership and decision making of in-service teaching personnel.
- promote robust social dialogue and teacher participation in educational decision making.
- Integrated a rights-based approach in teacher leadership program and decision making processes.

2.0 Digital learning and transformation

We, CSOs working in the education sector in the SADC region, would like to illuminate how technology can play a role as a part of the larger systemic efforts to transform education, making it more inclusive, equitable, effective, relevant and sustainable. We are convinced that technology alone cannot achieve our education goals, but it can be a catalytic component of education reforms that will prepare children, young people, as well as adults, to lead needed transformations. Therefore, we posit to the SADC Education leadership that technology can – and must – help advance our aspirations for quality inclusive education (From Pre-School) based on principles of social and economic justice, equity, and respect for human rights. We are aware that digital technologies in education can contribute to wider systemic efforts to improve learning for all by: leveraging technology that is fit to the country context, and foster parental engagement in the child learning process and noting the considerable promise of digital technologies to support positive change and transformations in education, its potential is regularly stymied by several interrelated challenges including insufficient access to electricity and internet connectivity especially among the rural communities as sited in the https://www.dw.com/en/can-africa-achieve-universal-internet-access-by-2030/a-59729090 and https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=ZG . Thus we urge our governments to ensure that:

- appropriate governance and regulation are in place to protect education as a basic human right and a public good while also leveraging the capacities of the private sector to accelerate and improve digital learning.
- member states invest in having electricity accessible to all schools and communities in rural areas; the region has untapped potential for solar power in areas not connected to the main grid
- member states should provide friendly and inclusive sensitive hardware to enable teaching and learning processes.
- member states must build and maintain robust, free public learning content and platforms that catalyze human-centered learning experiences.
- stronger effort is made to develop trusted online spaces that share quality-controlled, free, curriculum-aligned, easy-to-access, and contextually relevant digital learning resources.
- member states establish mechanisms to increase access to connectivity to schools.
- member states remove or subsidized teaching and learning hardware and assistive devices from the tax regimes.

3.0 Education Care and Support

Under education care and support we pay attention to the following critical issues: the environment, safe spaces for girls and boys in the school, gender based violence; sexual reproductive health rights issues, including menstrual hygiene management, disaster responses (i.e. Covid-19), nutrition, health assessments and early identification of developmental delays and disabilities.

Within the region, in some countries like Malawi, 30% of adolescent girls' report that their first sexual experience is forced. GBV is the least attended form of human rights violation. GBV is predominantly not reported as it happens in intimate spaces victims may not know where to report. Studies (https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/atlas/) have shown that some countries in the region have notoriously high rates of child marriage before the age 18 with Zambia 42%, Zimbabwe 34%, Mozambique 54% Malawi 42% and 17% before the age of 15, teen age pregnancies, low contraceptive use, and limited menstrual hygiene support. As CSO's we believe governments should ensure that there is a need for supportive re-entry policies https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/16/africa-makegirls-access-education-reality. Within the region, as it is globally, the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in massive disruptive to the education delivery and a steep increase of violence against women and girls. Data within the region show that the numbers of student drop out, child marriages and rapes of very young girls went high at the peak of the pandemic.

On education care and support, we make the following recommendations:

- There is need for harmonization of laws and policies in education and health. For instance, the age of prohibitive marriage in the region varies, in some countries it is under 18 years, while others 16 years. This is not even harmonized with the age of sexual consent.

- Develop and implement policies and strategies for creation of an enabling environment to work towards the reduction and eventual elimination of constraints to better and freer access to good quality education and training opportunities within the region.

- SADC Ministers of Education in collaboration with their disaster management departments invest accordingly in making schools/education institutions disaster ready, put enough contingency measures for responses and create credible systems for timely data capturing, processing and sharing when disasters hit.

- On responding to the Covid- 19 pandemic we recommend the following:

  ✓ Reduce transmission in schools by prioritizing teachers and age appropriate learner for the Covid-19 vaccination, providing, and using masks and hand sanitizers where appropriate, and improving ventilation.

  ✓ Member states should promote and enforce the school re-admission policy to recover the learners that drop out due to disasters including Covid-19 or unplanned early pregnancies.

  ✓ Governments should ensure that the protective gears are disability friendly to facilitate inclusive teaching and learning processes.

  ✓ There is a need for continuous early identification and assessment of learners especially in pre-schools and for learners with diverse needs.

  ✓ Member states where school feeding program is not factored in their national budget they should ensure there is a clear budget line for the program.

4.0 Financing Education as a cross cutting issue

We, as CSOs working in the education sector in the region, have sadly observed that despite significant increases in education spending over the last 15 years, reaching the SDG 4 targets will require significantly increased financial resources. Government are the largest funders of education in all country income groups. However, funding for education as a share of national income has not changed significantly over the last decade for our countries in the region. While some countries have attained the 20% of the annual budget allocated to education, some countries continue to straddle behind this target. Implementation of the protocol on Science, Technology and Innovation, Education and Skills Development, Care and Support for teaching and Learning, Establishment of Centres of Excellence, Development of School Feeding Programmes, Strengthening of Higher Education, realization of inclusive education, response to disasters, such as the Covid- 19 pandemic, among others key areas of concern, all depend on the resource basket allocated to the education sector.

We make the following calls to our governments:

- Member states should mobilize more resources towards education. Increase fiscal space for spending on education. We implore governments to adhere to the 15-20% of the national budget or 4-6% of the country's GDP allocation to education.

- Ensure inclusivity, equity and efficiency of allocations and spending on education. Members states are called upon to allocate not less than 5% of the education budget towards special needs and inclusive education.

- We recommend that Governments allocate a minimum of 10% education budget to ECDE

- We recommend that in every country, Ministries of education and Ministries of Finance must be supported to identify and address inefficiency and inequity in existing and new spending, which will ensure inclusive education, thus, leaving no one behind.

- Member states should ensure fair and progressive tax, with the emphasis on corporate tax.

- Member states should focus more on domestic resource mobilization by adopting proven and innovative financing models such as Cooperate Social Responsibility, Education Levy, Public Private Partnerships, Public Partnership, Education bonds, Diaspora Fund.

- Member countries should ensure that finance data is available for informed and accountable decisions

- Member states should ensure stronger emphasis on decisive action for accountable and transparent public finance management for improved learning outcomes.

- SADC governments must continue to invest in gender-responsive public resource management practices (which incorporate Gender Responsive Budgeting-GRB).

- Member states should ensure that there is no lackluster approach to dealing with abuses, misuse, and misappropriation of limited public resources meant for education.

- There is a need to update double taxation agreements (DTAs) to make use of the United Nations (UN) tax treaty model, which gives taxing rights to developing countries and the SADC model treaty, which provides a model to raise revenue.

5.0 Education and Training Protocol

We recognize that as a region, member states have prioritized education and training. However, the protocol is silent on ECD and inclusive education which are the foundation or the cornerstone for quality, equitable, lifelong learning for all. Hence, as CSO we believe that Early Child Development and Education (ECDE) is a human right in addition to being an enabling right. ECDE positively contributes to adult outcomes such as educational attainment, health, work productivity, and incomes.

Cognizance of the realization that ECDE and inclusive education was not on the agenda, we Nevertheless, as CSOs from the SADC region, note with concern the following:

- While most SADC countries have integrated ECDE strategies and policies with some countries having costed implementation strategies with a few having none (Zambia and Zimbabwe), at SADC level there is neither policy nor implementation strategy for ECDE while the sector is monitored through Education Information Management Systems.

- Very few countries have ECDE Directorates (exception of Zambia) as ownership of most ECD is in private hands with very few governments controlled (14.4%) despite member states being the custodians resulting in low ECD funding averaging 1.57% of the education budgets regionally with more than 70% of the budgets go towards salaries of staff with little left for infrastructure and learners needs provision.

- There is a large deficit of age appropriate and standard classrooms, outdoor play centres and teaching materials in all countries with consequent very low access to ECDE (i.e. Mozambique 6%, Zambia 25%, Eswatini 28%, Zimbabwe 46%, Malawi 47% and South Africa 59%) compared to primary and Secondary education

Having reflected on this status quo, we make the following recommendations:

- There is need for inclusion of ECDE and inclusive education in the SADC Education and Training Protocol and development of an implementation strategy which includes inclusivity issues or additional protocol for ECDE.

- There is need for establishing ECDE directorates at SADC Secretariat and country levels to take leadership in ECDE planning, financing, curriculum, regulatory and supervision and including establishing and or integrating ECDE in EMIS at country and regional levels.

- Member states need to increase and include ECDE and inclusive education budget lines into national public and education budgets with a threshold between 5-10% as recommended by UNICEF.
- There is need for governments to take affirmative action to make huge investments in ECDE infrastructure and facilities to comply with recommended 20:1 learner teacher ratio.

Submitted this 16th day of June, in the year 2022

Annex 4: The Results and indicators framework of the Gender Equality Strategy for CESA

The AUC framework expects Member States to incorporate gender equality in their Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks as a way of measuring differential effects on girls, boys, men and women. 1n line with this expectation, this proposed Results and Indicators framework expects member countries as a minimum to include both quantitative and qualitative data and indicators for monitoring progress, change over time and impact.

EXPECTED RESULTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
SO 1: Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels		
1. Gender Responsive Pedagogy in teacher training; CPD; NFTE and Literacy Programmes	Results Based Financing include Equity dimensions; Gender Responsive budget for teacher education, NFTE and Literacy; GRP, Gender responsive training, curricula & materials	Education budget and detailed budget lines within subsectors; Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS); Teacher training materials
2. Professional Development Programmes exclusively for female teachers of STEM	Increased proportion of female teachers against total trained and upgraded and deployed in STEM; Increased Ratio of female learners in STEM	EMIS data; gender specific data and FAWE Research reports
3. Framework for Quality Gender Responsive living standards and equitable compensation for both female and male teachers and other vulnerable groups	Teacher Quality & Status; Salary scales for female and male teachers & living conditions commensurate and linked with other Gender equity indices	Salary Scales and conditions of service for Female' and male teachers in context
4. Sufficient quantities of gender sensitive, relevant, qua1ity teaching and learning materials available and accessible to male and female teachers and to femall2 and male Iearners	Ratio of Teacher to teaching materials per level; Ratio of Learner to teaching/learning material by level /sub-sector	Teaching and Learning materials Review reports; EMIS data
5. A Gender Responsive data bank for Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning in core competencies. and which apply Gender in testing, in results, reporting and utilization	Improved Learning outcomes/performance on test scores for female learners against total	Assessment for Learning and Examinations/test Data Bank; SACMEQ reports; EGRA, EGMA reports
6. A gender responsive, inclusive and objective criteria and system for identifying dedicated and innovative female and male teachers in place	Increased innovators proportion of female teacher	Annual Publications/Reports; EMIS data; Research Reports

EXPECTED RESULTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
SO 2: Build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, so as to expand access to quality education		
1. A gender-responsive infrastructure investment plan and budgets for environmentally and Gender specific designed materials used for School Construction	Gender responsive budgeting in infrastructure development; Gender responsivl2 Learning Spaces provided in the norms, standard design and regulations; dimensions of exclusion for OOSC; measures of child functioning and inclusive Education.	Education budget as % of total public budget & national! infrastructure budget; IFMIS, EMIS & RALS data; OOSC study reports; child functioning and inclusive education reports
2. Gender responsive school safety and maintenance Legislative and policy framework available and accessible	Gender Sensitive application of school safety regulations at school/site level; Learner environment as per standard CFS checklist; Ratio of female teacher/female learners to safe Learning Spaces	Reports on Gender Assessment of School Design and physical environment; child functioning and inclusive education
3. Gender mainstreamed in Financing and Budgeting frameworks for ECD, Primary, TVET, General Secondary and Tertiary education	Results Based financing includes equity dimensions; Gender Responsive Budget for the Investment plan for the Education-Training continuum system; GER; NER; GPI for al sub- sectors	National and Education Investment plans and Budgets; IFMIS; EMIS data;
4. Gender responsive Out of School strategic plans based on evidence in place and being implemented	Improved reporting and targeting of OOSC; GER, NER and GPI for OOSC pool; Number of females and makes enrolled by age geographic location; lowest wealth quintile of the OOSC and youth pool annually; reduction rates; repetition rates; Exclusion rates	EMIS data; RALS data; OOSC study reports; FAWE Research Reports; Child functioning and inclusive education reports
5. Gender Responsive Rapid Assessment of Learning Spaces utilized for educational planning, management and decision making	Improved inclusive and gender disaggregated data reporting for underserved, fragile locations, and disadvantaged communities	EMIS data, RALS mapping; national GIS mapping data base; digitalization for EMIS

EXPECTED RESULTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
SO 3: Harness the capacity of ICT to improve access, quality and management of education and training systems		
1. Affirmative Action policies and regulations for building ICT capacities of female, male teachers and male and female learners in place	Gender responsive policies, regulations for ICT, Proportion of female teachers and female learners applying technology in teaching and learning; GPI for ICT	Technology and Learning Reports; Web based Reports; Reports on Gender Assessment for Technology and Learning
2. Existing gender Responsive Successful ICT driven initiative to enhance learning Scaled up	National and Regional ICT programmes for girls and young women in place	Gender Specific reports on Technology and learning
3. Sufficient quantities and quality Equipment, facilities, connectivity power and services are accessible and appropriate to girls, boys, youth, men and women	Gender Responsive national policy on telecommunication and Learning; Level of development for females/ males towards use of mobile technology and digitalization for Technology and Learning	Gender Assessment Reports for Technology and Learning; Web based platforms; FAWE Research Reports
4.Flexible and functioning mobile and online education platforms are accessible and responsive to both female and male trainees	Competency levels for young women and girls against total in Technology and earning	Learning Assessment data base; EMIS data; Web based platforms; Reports on Gender Assessment for Technology and Learning
SO 4: Ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonization processes across all levels for national and regional integration		
1. Evidence based, flexible and accelerated modalities of learning established for all levels within a gender responsive and inclusive multiple pathway framework	Contribution of ALPs; CGS to GER, NER and GPI.	EMIS data; FAWE Research Reports
2. A Gender responsive NQF, NCF and RQF for multiple pathways available, accessible, and reported on by each member state and Regional Community	Valid, functioning Research and Evaluation/ evidence-based Gender Responsive NQFs and RQFs	NQFs; RQFs; EMIS data; FAWE Research Reports
3. Gender responsive costed frameworks for quality assurance, Monitoring and Evaluation; financing and budgeting available, their implementation reported on for accountability	Increased Gender budget for Monitoring & Evaluation; Increased Human resources for M&E and integration of Gender Equality; Improved Learning Outcomes for female learners against total	Financing and costing studies; Budget tracking studies; CSO data National and Education budgets by Equity; EMIS data; Learning Assessment data base; Examinations data base;
4. Gender sensitive capacity building programmes and training for male and female educators conducted, reported on and evaluated.	GER, NER, GPI; child functioning levels and inclusive education for disability; Competency levels for girls and young women against total attributed to the Gender Capacity building programme	Training manuals; Evaluation Reports
SO 5: Accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity		
1. A Gender responsive social mobilization and communication strategy targeting OOSC and girls and boys (where applicable)	GER, NER,GPI from theOOSC pool and disadvantaged girls	EMIS data; RALS data; OOSC study reports; FAWE Research Reports;
2. A gender responsive strategic plan to address access, retention and learning	GER, NER, GPI form disadvantaged girls pool	EMIS data; RALS data; Gender specific research reports

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EXPECTED RESULTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
SO 6: Launch comprehensive and elective literacy campaigns across the continent to eradicate illiteracy		
1. A Gender responsive National Curriculum framework to advance Literacy available, accessible and being reported on	Increased Public expenditure on Literacy Programmes from at least 10% of Education budget to NFTE; Results Based Financing includes Equity dimension; Improved Literacy levels for over age girls, young women, women against total by geographic location and wealth quintile; GPI for literacy	Education and national budgets; Budget tracking studies; IFMIS, Literacy budgets across sectors; EMIS data; RALS data and Literacy Reports, EGRA,EGMA, SACMEQ reports
2. Languages, Social Sciences, Maths, Science, Art and ICT are Learning Areas in the National curriculum Framework and assessed in a gender sensitive assessment for Learning, and assessment of learning frameworks	Gender responsive curriculum framework and pedagogy; Language Proficiency levels; Literacy 1evets/rates for females—Reading, Writing, Numeracy and Other Literacies Such as Art and ICT	NCF to advance literacy, Learning Assessment data base, Facilitators guides, SACMEQ, EGRA, EGMA, Literacy, Art and ICT Reports
3. Age appropriate and gender sensitive African language reading materials available and accessible	Quantities and quality of Gender Responsive Reading materials; Availability of Libraries and reading corners	NCF, Language Programme, detailed Literacy Budgets by Equity, Literacy Reports
4.Gender sensitive national youth service corps established to support reading communities	Gender Budget for Youth Corps; Results based Financing includes equity dimension; Functioning volunteer for facilitators; GPI; National volunteer plan and programme	National & Education budgets; IFMIS; National volunteer plan and reports

EXPECTED RESULTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
SO 7: Strengthen the science and math curricula and disseminate scientific knowledge and the culture of science in the African society		
1. Evidence-based and documented innovations in Early Science and Math; in Parenting; Play to develop early maths and science culture; Early maths and science Readiness; Screen time for digital literacy; and Social Skills and gender socialization mainstreamed and reported on	Number of documented and scaled up innovations; Scale up strategy; Competency levels for girls and boys, adolescents, youth; Adults (M/F) in STEM	Reports on gender responsive innovations, good practices and scaling up; The scale up strategy; EMIS data, Learning Assessment Reports
2. National/Regional/Continental mentorship programmes set up to promote girls'/women's empowerment in STEM participation and also to put them in innovation pathways	Number of documented female mentorship programmes III STEM placed in innovation pathways	Reports on programmes placed innovation pathways
3. Costed and resourced strategies/ programmes to develop and continuously feed-in a continental data base on indigenous scientific knowledge and culture which will also feature gender specific indigenous knowledge	Costed and Financed gender specific indigenous knowledge feeding into the continental database on Scientific knowledge and culture	Costed strategy, budget for gender specific indigenous knowledge; Gender Specific report on indigenous knowledge
4.Gender Responsive Research programmes promoting indigenous knowledge developed	Gender Responsive Research plan	Research Reports

EXPECTED RESULTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
SO 8: Expand TVET opportunities at both secondary and tertiary levels and strengthen linkages between the world of work and education and training systems		
1.A gender sensitive national LMIS established	Gender disaggregated data, GPI, gender specific data and inclusive LMIS	LMIS, TVET & Polytechnic data base, EMIS data, UIS, ILO data base, Gender specific data and reports
2.Public Private Partnerships established for the expansion and development of a gender Sensitive TVET sub-sector	NQF, NCF, RQF for the TVET sub-sector	Gender Assessment Reports on NQF, RQF, and NCF.
3.Investment plan and monitoring of learning outcomes and opportunities for girls and young women established and monitored	Increased Budget allocation and Human Resources for a gender sensitive TVET sub- sector;	National, Education and TVET sub-Sector budgets, IFMIS and detailed Budgets by Equity
4. Improved Gender responsive TVET plans melting modern (21st century) and forward-looking quality standards with gender specific indicators and sex- disaggregated data	Gender Sensitive and Gender Responsive TVET plans	TVET plans and Programmes, NCF,NQF, RQF
SO 9: Revitalize and expand tertiary education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness		
1.Investment plans for Gender mainstreamed Research and Innovations; and Gender Responsive budgeting in Research	Gender Sensitive and Gender Responsive Research and Innovations	Research Reports
2. Integration of Gender Equality in centres of excellence as a major criterion measure of excellence	Assessment and Evaluation for Gender Equality in centres of excellence	Assessment and Evaluation Reports
3. A vibrant Gender Responsive African Network on Research and Development on Gender Equality into and through Education	Gender responsive budgets for quality Research and Reviews on Gender Equality into and through Education by young African females	Research budgets, Reports, Reviews, evidence based advocacy materials
SO 10: Promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups		
1.Gender concerns incorporated in peace building policies and legal instruments	Peace building polices and legal instrument's meeting Gender Quality standards	National policy and legal frameworks and plans
2.Gender responsive training programme and gender sensitive' teaching and learning materials available, being utilized and reported on	Gender Assessment and Evaluation Reports on programmes, teaching and learning materials and pedagogy	Assessment and Evaluation Reports
3.Gender Responsive Node of Peace education modelled at national/Regional community level, experience documented and scaled up	Evidence based documentation of modelling and scale up of innovations on peace building across sectors	Peace building initiatives reports, Scaling up strategies and reports

EXPECTED RESULTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
SO 11: Build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and improve the management of education system as well as the statistic toot, through capacity building for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and usage		
1.Gender Responsive and Inclusive Education Management Systems and Observatories functioning in every member state	Gender-disaggregated, efficient and effective management information systems; Gender in Research and Qualitative data, RALS GIS mapping; measuring child functioning and inclusive education to enhance EMIS; EMIS linked to National open data system	Enhanced EMIS data, Education Observatories
2. At least 30% of women participate in identified educational think tanks	GPI of identified educational think tanks	Research and Evaluation Reports, Publications
3. Improved regular gender sensitive publications disseminated and utilized for action	Timely dissemination, and utilization	Publications, Reports on utilization
SO 12: Set up a coalition of all education stakeholders to facilitate and support initiatives arising from the implementation of CESA 16-25		
1.Dirrctories of education stakeholders, including gender-oriented organizations produced, disseminated and utilized for partnership building	Directory of Quality Learning & Gender oriented organizations	The directory on Quality & Gender oriented organizatons
2. Analytical tools and champions identified to initiate and develop a partnership Agenda towards the implementation of Gender Equality for CESA 16-25	Existence of an "UNGEI/ FAWE" type chapter, partnering framework towards the implementation of CESA 16-25	Country specific Gender Equality strategy, work plans and Reports

Annex 5 – The 2018 Nairobi Declaration

Nairobi Declaration and Call for Action on Education Bridging continental and global education frameworks for the Africa We Want

Nairobi, April 2018

Preamble

1. We, the Ministers of Education of Africa, high-level government officials, representatives of the African Union (AU) and of the United Nations organizations, as well as Pan-African and sub-regional organizations, civil society, youth and teacher organizations, and international development partners, have gathered for the Pan-African High-Level Conference on Education (PACE2018) in Nairobi, Kenya, on 25-27 April 2018, setting out a harmonized vision for the educational transformation to meet our commitments to the 2063 Agenda for the Africa We Want and the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We thank the Government and people of the Republic of Kenya for their support and the Ministry of Education for hosting this important event.

2. We reaffirm our commitment to the 2015 Kigali Statement and to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)-Education 2030, a centerpiece of the global Sustainable Development Agenda aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, as well as to the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) aimed at reorienting Africa's education and training systems, Africa's response to and domestication of SDG4-Education 2030.

Building skilled African citizenry as agents of change

3. We commit to promoting quality lifelong learning for all at all levels, using diverse and relevant modes of learning with flexible pathways between formal, non-formal and informal education and training models, including strengthened systems of recognition and equivalence, to cater for all children, youth and adults in and out of school.

4. Recognizing that access to and quality of education and training at all levels remain critical challenges within the African continent with millions of children, young people and adults lacking foundational skills and relevant competencies needed for life and work in a globalized world, we commit to:

    a. Integrated approaches to early childhood development, care and education policies, programming and financing with an emphasis on holistic development including literacy and numeracy with particular attention to marginalized and vulnerable children, with the commitment to progressively ensure at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education and with the active participation of families, communities and local governments.

    b. Implementing and adequately resourcing diversified and appropriate learning policies and programmes, inclusive and gender responsive curriculum, promoting multilingual education, sign languages and Braille, to reach the unreached.

    c. Ensuring that education sector planning effectively addresses out-of-school children, young people and adults who never enrolled in formal schooling or dropped out early, as well as all forms of exclusion, including among others disabilities and albinism, and that data and indicator systems are adequately disaggregated and owned at continental, regional, national and local levels.

    d. Promoting teaching and learning in the mother tongue, especially in early years of education; and developing policies to safeguard and raise the status, esteem and value of indigenous African languages.

    e. Ensuring adequate recruitment and deployment, motivation and professional support of teachers, and to strengthening teacher training and professional development programmes at all levels including early childhood education and non-formal education; recognizing teachers as full-fledged professionals and agree on common qualification frameworks; and strengthening dialogue and partnership with teacher organizations.

    f. Developing and strengthening regional and national learning assessment systems ensuring their effective use for informing policies and teaching and learning practices and outcomes; sharing good practices across regions; and increasing investments for regional assessments.

g. Making our educational systems more responsive, flexible and resilient to include refugees and internally displaced people, and increasing investment for Education in Emergencies and Crises.

h. Making the learning and teaching environment more healthy, inclusive and safe through adequate responses to school-related violence and discrimination based on gender, disability, origin, race, ethnicity, religion or any other factor.

5. We commit to achieving gender equality through

a. Rendering all aspects of the education system gender-sensitive, responsive, and transformative.

b. Implementing the Gender Equality Strategy of CESA 16-25.

c. Providing sexuality education in schools and tertiary institutions and ensuring access for adolescents and young people.

6. We recognize the importance of improving the relevance of education policies and practices to strengthen skills and competencies for life and work, and to foster resilient, sustainable, healthy and peaceful societies in an interconnected global world, and commit to:

a. Increasing equitable access to quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in all its forms, and recognizing that TVET should be crosscutting and encompass continuous learning towards entrepreneurship, employability, capacity building, retraining and versatility.

b. Adapting programmes/curricula, qualifications and pathways offered and expanding labour market information systems to cover the informal sector and to better assess and anticipate changing skill needs, strengthening skills development to increase, reinforce and value the education and training in the informal economy, and further enhance Public-Private Partnerships (PPP).

c. Increasing provision of effective and relevant literacy programmes for youth and adults leading to functional proficiency levels, integrating skills development for decent work and livelihood, health and responsible citizenship.

d. Leveraging digital opportunities by strengthening the development of digital skills and competencies at all levels through partnerships in support of ICT in education, including adoption of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and Internet safety within curricula, and integrating ICTs into education policies, incorporating Open Educational Resources and assistive technology, and creating mobile and online education and training platforms providing equitable access to all learners regardless of their circumstances.

e. Improving the relevance of teaching and learning by integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in our education policies and practices at all levels and learning programmes, and ensuring critical youth engagement.

7. We recognize that the transformation of Africa requires strengthened efforts to move towards knowledge-based societies through the advancement of higher education and research in Africa with special focus on relevance and equitable access, strengthening of research, and teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). We commit to:

a. Ratifying the Addis Ababa Convention and strengthening national quality assurance systems, and allocating necessary resources.

b. Strengthening concerted, integrated, articulated and effective actions and partnerships to achieve the 2063 objectives for STEM, to develop and implement policies that promote STEM at all levels, especially among girls and women, and to develop STEM strategies for solving concrete problems such as food security, renewable energy, climate change, emergency response, epidemics, and calamities.

8. Recognizing the potential, strength and leadership of young people, we commit to the systemic inclusion of youth and youth led organizations in continental, regional and national education decision making, sector dialogue, and monitoring processes.

Building a conducive environment for education transformation in Africa

9.   We recognize the importance of ownership of the CESA16-25 and SDG4-Education 2030 at continental, regional and national levels, in congruence with wider development ambitions, and that their achievement requires more integrated approaches to education policies and strategies in a lifelong learning perspective, fostering truly system wide articulation and inter-sectorial collaboration.

10. Recalling the commitment of governments to progressively allocate at least 4-6 percent of national Gross Domestic Product, and/or at least 15-20 percent of total public expenditure for education, in line with the principles of size, share, sensitivity, and scrutiny, we undertake to:

    a. Mobilise additional funds for education including innovative financing, national education funds, and consideration of the proposed Africa Education Fund.

    b. Advocate for tax reforms to increase public revenue and the share of public resources for education and related social services.

    c. Ensure more equitable allocation of education resources taking into account diversity, inclusion, and contingency funding for emergencies.

    d. Allocate targeted resources for recruitment and professional development of teachers and other education personnel.

    e. Improve efficiency, transparency and accountability (including among other measures optimizing teacher allocation, budget tracking, public expenditure reviews/national education accounts)

11. We commit to strengthening National Assessment and Monitoring Mechanisms for CESA 16-25 and SDG4-Education 2030 targets and commitments and using the results of these assessments to improve the performance of education systems, to enhance equity, quality and relevance of educational outcomes at all levels, and to strengthen public accountability, transparency and responsiveness. We further commit to:

    a. Strengthening mechanisms, including EMIS, for data collection, analysis, dissemination and use at the national level and data reporting at the regional, continental and global levels for monitoring of progress toward CESA 16-25 and SDG4-Education 2030

    b. Expanding spaces for public participation including youth, teacher organizations, as well as media engagement in education dialogue and decision-making

    c. Further engaging with parliaments and parliamentarians at national, regional and the

    d. Pan-African Parliament levels to mobilise support for education

    e. Working with the AU/IPED and UNESCO/UIS/GEMR to produce a biennial report monitoring progress on achievement of CESA 16-25 and SDG4-Education 2030 implementation at continental level

    f. Reviewing legislation on the right to education so that they meet the CESA 16-25 and SDG4-Education 2030 commitments

12. We commit to improving and strengthening sector-wide and cross-sector coordination at continental, regional and national levels for lifelong learning through: a. Developing legal frameworks, policies and strategies

    a. Strengthening capacities to create and enhance delivery modalities to support flexible learning opportunities that are formally recognized, validated, and accredited

    b. Developing mechanisms and tools to operationalise national and regional qualification frameworks (NQF/RQF) for articulation across sub-sectors and mobility

Towards the Future

13. Recognising the importance of strengthening mechanisms for effective partnership and coordination at national, regional and continental levels and calling on international and regional organizations, in particular the AU, RECs, the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), UNESCO and SDG4 co-conveners, development banks and other multilateral and bilateral development partners, to work together to ensure coherence and coordination in support of national education development, we commit to:

    a. Establishing a joint CESA - SDG4 Education 2030 mechanism, to ensure coordinated consultation, joint action, capacity strengthening, review, monitoring and reporting on both the continental and global education commitments by extending CESA coordination structure to existing SDG4 regional coordination mechanisms.

    b. Promoting cross-national exchange and the dissemination of successful education policies and strategies, building on existing national and regional communication and knowledge-management platforms.

    c. Promoting education as a public good and in the public interest.

14. We commit to strengthening the global-regional nexus by ensuring that the voice of Africa is reflected in the deliberations of the global SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, the Technical Cooperation Group on Indicators, and contribution of inputs for the UN-led annual HLPF Review process.

15. We call for the strengthening of partnerships with and commitment of international development partners in supporting African education development around national priorities, including in low-income, fragile and conflict-affected contexts, and in promoting innovative approaches to education and training.

16. We agree to convene the Pan African High-Level Conference on Education (PACE) biennially to take stock of the progress made by Africa and support the implementation of CESA 16-25 and SDG4-Education 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want, and welcome the proposal of the Kingdom of Morocco to host the next PACE.

17. We adopt this Declaration and Call for Action, and agree to refer it to the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Education Science and Technology (STC-EST) for endorsement.

Annex 8 – Education International (EI)'s proposals on the future of CESA

EI Africa's Proposals for the Post-2025 Education Strategy for Africa

A. Introduction

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, including Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG) 4 on quality education, the following year the African Union adopted the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA): 2016 – 2025. CESA articulates the African Union and member states' education goals, in line with the vision and aspirations of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

CESA has 12 strategic objectives, focusing on revitalizing the teaching profession; providing educational infrastructure; harnessing the capacity of ICT; acquisition of knowledge and skills; achieving gender parity and equity; launching comprehensive literacy programmes; strengthening science and mathematics; expanding TVET opportunities; expanding tertiary education; promoting peace education; improving management of education systems; and building partnerships.

UNESCO data shows that, on current trends, the CESA objectives will be widely missed. Inadequate education financing, teacher shortages, poor infrastructure, insecurity and disease pandemics, in particular, COVID-19, have been the major bottlenecks to achieving SDG 4 and CESA objectives. Overall, CESA objectives remain relevant. Nevertheless, the African Union needs to develop strategies for addressing the major bottlenecks and accelerating progress towards the achievement of CESA objectives by 2025 and SDG 4 by 2030.

B. EI Africa's strategy and proposals for the post-2025 education strategy

Seriously concerned about the slow and uneven progress towards the achievement of SDG 4 and CESA objectives, EI Africa proposes the following strategies by the African Union:

1. To carry out an assessment of progress towards the achievement of CESA objectives, involving education unions and other key education stakeholders. The proposed assessment would help identify the major achievements, bottlenecks and lessons learnt in order to inform the development of the African Union's post-2025 education strategy;

2. To come up with a robust mechanism for financing the post-2025 education strategy, with a clear goal and financing targets for member states; and,

4. To convene an education financing conference to solicit domestic financing pledges from member states and external support from development partners.

   The post-2025 education strategy should focus the following priority areas:

1. Improving the supply, status and working conditions of teachers and education support personnel

   ✓ Teacher training, professional development, recruitment and retention

   ✓ Professional teaching standards

   ✓ Teacher motivation, salaries and working conditions

   ✓ Teacher safety and wellbeing

   ✓ Social and policy dialogue

2. Education financing (both domestic and external)

- ✓ Leveraging more domestic financing, including through fair and progressive taxation

- ✓ Increasing external support, particularly for the least developed and conflict affected countries

- ✓ Robust education financing mechanism

3. Provision of adequate and appropriate school infrastructure, teaching and learning resources

- ✓ Classrooms, libraries, laboratories, play areas, furniture etc.

- ✓ Textbooks and other teaching and learning resources

- ✓ Closing the digital divide, appropriate and safe use of ICT

4. Gender equality, equity and inclusion

- ✓ Human rights

- ✓ Education for girls and women

- ✓ Children with disabilities

- ✓ Children in rural, slum and other marginalized areas

5. Peace education, school safety and health

- ✓ Protecting schools and other education institutions from attack

- ✓ Global citizenship and peace education

- ✓ Psychosocial support

6. Climate change and environmental protection

- ✓ Quality climate change education

- ✓ Disaster preparedness and early warning systems

- ✓ Greening schools and other education institutions

7. Expanding educational opportunities at all levels

- ✓ Universal early childhood education (from zero to 8)

- ✓ Free and compulsory primary and secondary education of at least 12 years, in line with SDG 4 commitments

- ✓ Progressively free tertiary education, including Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education

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