

East African Civil Society Organizations' Forum





About us

The East African Civil Society Organizations' Forum, (EACSOF), was founded in 2007 as an autonomous umbrella body of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, (CSOs), in East Africa. Since its founding, EACSOF has been working to strengthen the institutionalization of the relationship between East African CSOs and the Community, (EAC); build a critical mass of knowledgeable and empowered civil society in the East African region, in order to foster their confidence and capacity in articulating grassroots needs and interests in the East African Integration Process; and ensure that East African citizens and their organizations work together to play a more effective role in the integration process through building stronger citizen organizations that respond to citizens needs and hold duty bearers to account.

EACSOF's role is also anchored in the provisions of the EAC Treaty. Article 1 of the Treaty defines civil society, and the definition is consistent with the character and ethos of EACSOF, Article 7 elaborates the operational principles of the Treaty by clearly highlighting that the principles that shall govern the practical achievement of the objectives of the Community include – people- and market-driven cooperation.

Article 128 enjoins the Partner States to provide an enabling environment for the private sector and civil society to take full advantage of the Community. Furthermore, consistent with Article 124 (4), which highlights that the Secretary General shall provide a forum for consultations between the private sector, civil society organisations, other interest groups and appropriate institutions of the Community, EACSOF is currently the official CSO representative in the EAC Dialogue Framework, which is a tripartite arrangement comprising CSOs, PSOs and the EAC.



Objectives

- Strengthen the citizens' civic competence and confidence by enabling citizens to know their rights and obligations- and to support them to organize in effective CSO as well as national platforms through which they would be able to assert those rights.
- Ensure Citizen Centered Policy Development and Implementation at National and Regional Levels regarding Democratic Governance; Peace and Security; Social and Economic Justice; Agriculture, Natural Resources, Environmental Protection and Climate Change; and Mainstreaming Science and Technology.
- Support EACSOF's Institutional Capacity building at national and regional level.

Our Vision

An integrated community in which Citizens fully participate in all processes that affect their lives.

Our Mission

To provide an inclusive platform for civil society to promote good policies and democratic governance for the wellbeing of East Africans

Our principles

Regionalism.

Autonomy.

Centrality of citizens in the EAC integration process

Our values

- Honesty and openness.
- Transparency and personal accountability.
- Social Responsibility and caring for others.
- Inclusiveness and equal participation.
- Respect and tolerance.
- Capacity Building – for self-determination and sustainability.
- People Centeredness – citizen focused institutions and service delivery systems.





Institutional Profile

EACCSOF draws its membership from Civil Society Organizations including Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, and Networks and Coalitions of such organizations situated within the East Africa Community Member States.

The Governing Council of EACCSOF chapters has two seats on the Governing board of EACCSOF. It is important that each country sends persons who have a mix of expertise to provide strategic guidance and to foster public confidence in the institution. EACCSOF works to ensure that it builds a strong but 'hands off' Governing Council that effectively oversees the Secretariat and ensures that it delivers efficiently and effectively on agreed policies and programmes. At the country level, the Country Chapters will develop a strong governance system that allows for accountability and oversight so that there is strong linkage between the regional and the national governance mechanism.

The EACCSOF secretariate is based in Arusha Tanzania. It is led by an able Executive Director who oversees the secretariate operations, resource mobilization and implementation of programs. The team at the secretariate

consists of a program officer, administrative officer, and finance officer.

At the national level, the EACCSOF Burundi chapter is hosted by ACOPA Burundi; the Kenya chapter is hosted by Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCDG); the Rwanda Chapter is hosted by Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP); the Uganda Chapter is hosted by Uganda National NGO Forum; and the Tanzania Chapter is hosted by NACONGO. The national chapters are independently registered as autonomous EACCSOF chapters linked to the regional Secretariat through the Governing Council.

Thematic areas

EACCSOF engages in policy advocacy in the following strategic thematic areas:

1. Democracy and Good Governance Policy Engagement
2. Peace and Security
3. Extractives in East Africa
4. EAC and Africa Common Market Free Trade Area
5. Technology and Digital Policies in East Africa
6. Climate Change Policy Advocacy in East Africa
7. Social Development and Inclusion Policies for Marginalized and Vulnerable Groups





Achievements

Since its founding in 2007, EACSOF has registered several significant achievements:

- Advocated for the Consultative Dialogue Framework (CDF) for engagement between EAC, civil society organizations, private sector organizations and other interest groups, whereby EACSOF has been mandated as the focal point for CSO voices in the integration process.
- Spearheading the engagements on the CSO Operating Bill with an aim to improve the CSOs Operating Environment in East Africa
- High level advocacy on issues pertinent to regional integration including the civic space, business operating environment, trade.
- Delivering strong statements on pertinent issues.
- Development of policy briefs on Governance practices in the EAC Partner states.
- Formation of strong and varied networks, partnerships and alliances with organizations including PALU, EALS, EASSI, African Child Policy Forum, EASAFF, Tax Justice Network, and SEATINI among others.
- Skills building on various topics including but not limited to human rights, good governance and policy engagement, civil society participation in trade negotiations.





- Public interest litigation
- Awareness raising through development of IED materials and media engagement.
- Engagement and participation in the EAC Secretary Generals Forum
- Establishment of the Annual CSO Conference

Challenges

The various legal frameworks particularly targeting CSOs, such as the NGO Acts and Media laws in East African States constrain CSOs abilities to deliver their mandates. This could be in areas of limiting their freedoms of speech and or assembly e.g. on issues such as human rights, democracy and corruption.

Fear of competition/sabotage may deter EACSOF's ability to create linkages with other bodies. Hostile political environments.

Delays in registration of some national chapters.

Weak linkages with other bodies e.g. Trade Unions, faith based organizations.

Inadequate staffing at both National and Regional levels in terms of the technical support and resources.

EACSOF is heavily dependent on external donors to fund its work. This raises questions on its sustainability.

Lack of clarity of the benefits of paying up membership fees hence low payments

Opportunities

Bring on board other bodies, e.g. Academic Institutions, Faith Based Organizations, Private Sector Organizations, Trade unions, etc. and strengthening of partnerships and linkages. For more meaningful engagement in the EAC integration processes.

Member organizations encouraged to include EACSOF or EAC issues as part of their own strategic plans to booster their commitment to the process.

There are opportunities for inter-regional networking, e.g. EACSOF with WACSOF;

Establishment of the East African Civil Society Academy to boost capacity building among CSOs in the region.

Increased membership, participation and joint resource mobilization.

Expedite the ratification of African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) and develop a monitoring and reporting mechanism on good governance.



Key Stakeholders and relationships beyond the East African Region

Citizens and CSOs.

Marginalized groups.

Partner States' governments.

The EAC with all its Organs and Institutions.

The business sector.

Professional groups

Wider Relationships and Affiliations

The Centre for Citizen Participation at the African Union (CCP-AU).

The African Centre for Civil Society (ACCS).

The West Africa Civil Society Organizations' Forum (WACSOF).

Southern African Development Cooperation Council of NGOs (SADC -CNGO).

The African CSO Platform on Principled Partnerships (ACPPP).

The African Union ECOSOCC

Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU)

Membership Services and Benefits

Exchange of ideas, information and networking with likeminded CSOs in the region through association & networking with prominent CSOs beyond East Africa and other stakeholders in their fields of expertise.

Robust knowledge networks, information, education and communication strategies.

Opportunities to participate in EACSOF Conferences, workshops, seminars and trainings which facilitate up-take of knowledge and its management.

Participatory and inclusive agenda setting for EACSOF and influencing of EAC integration.





Empowering of active citizenry through policy advocacy for sustainable growth and development

Opportunity to contribute to specific thematic advocacy by joining existing thematic clusters and platforms at national and regional levels respectively. Access to a monthly e-newsletter (and e-bulletins) detailing happenings around EAC and CSOs in the region.

Opportunities to attend and participate in EACSOF meetings that discuss critical regional integration issues on development and human rights. Subsidized costs on purchase of EACSOF publication; upon marketing & advertising in our media.

Opportunities to participate and engage in the famous EACSOF Annual CSO Conference & General Meeting.

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