

CSO Engagement in Southern Africa

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Introduction

- There has been limited CSO engagement with the regional integration agenda
- Due to low awareness on the both micro- and macro-economic benefits of regional integration
- A need for mechanism for effective CSO engagement at the regional level
- What structures currently exist for Zambian CSOs to engage with RECs within COMESA and SADC?

CSO engagement framework in COMESA

- In COMESA there is no framework for CSO engagement and their participation has been almost non-existent (Article 18 of the Treaty)
- COMESA has found ways of issue-specific engagements with CSOs in the region e.g. COMESA Civil Society and Private sector engagement for the Peace and Security Programme

CSO engagement framework in SADC

- SADC: Entry points for CSO engagement

Regional

- SADC – CNGO
- Consultative meetings of SADC units
- Independent Regional Civil Society Forums

National

- SADC National Committees

SADC – regional level

- SADC Council of NGOs (SADC-CNGO)
 - Efforts have also been made to ensure that CSOs in different SADC countries operate in a coordinated manner
 - Facilitate meaningful engagement between CSOs and the SADC Secretariat and Member States at national level
- SADC Civil Society Forum
 - The SADC Civil Society Forum is held during the same time as the Heads of States Summit in an effort to enable CS input into Summit resolutions
 - Provides space for NGOs, donors, churches, trade unions, social movements and other civil societies to act collaboratively on a wide range of development issues affecting the region

SADC – national level

- SADC National Committees

- Article 16A of the SADC Treaty states:

each Member State shall create a SADC National Committee, which has to consist of key stakeholders which should (a) provide input at the national level in the formulation of SADC policies, strategies and programmes of action; (b) coordinate and oversee, at the national level, implementation of SADC programmes of action; (c) initiate projects and issue papers as an input to the preparation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan; and (d) create a national steering committee, sub-committees and technical committees.

- Key stakeholders = government actors; private sector; and civil society (including non-governmental organizations)
- At the SADC level, the framework has already been established for civil society participation in regional integration issues

Challenges with the CSO engagement at the regional level

Issues with the SADC CNGO

1. Parallel bodies

- Recognised by the SADC secretariat as its link with civil society in SADC
- There are also parallel CSO formations independent from the SADC CNGO e.g. Southern African Treatment Access Movement (SATAMU) and the Southern African Poverty Network.

2. Lack of structure

- In spite of the efforts of the SADC CNGO in building a systemised structure of civil society interaction with regional policy and institutional frameworks - structured CSO interaction in SADC is lacking

Challenges with the CSO engagement at the national level

Issues with SNCs

1. Awareness of SNC

- Low awareness of SNCs by CSOs
- While regional NGOs had a general knowledge of possible avenues to engage SADC, for national and regional focused NGOs, there is a general lack of awareness about the existence of the SADC National Committees (SNCs)

2. Requirements for functional SNC

- There is a lack of clarity in terms of standardized requirements for the operating of SNCs
- Who chairs SNC sub-committees on: **Trade and Industry and Finance and Investment (TIFI)**; **Infrastructure and Services (I&S)**; **Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources(FANR)**; and **Human and Social Development and Special Projects (HSD&SP)**?
- How often should these sub-committees meet?

3. Ad hoc nature of meetings

- Ad hoc, irregular, and largely issue-driven; they were convened when there was a need
- The Treaty stipulates that SNCs should meet quarterly. There is no provision however in respect of the regularity of the meetings of the sub-committees and the technical committees

Drafting a Framework for effective CSO engagement

Issues with SNCs

4. SNC secretariat have limited capacity

- SNC officials combine their SNC responsibilities with their day-to-day responsibilities in government (limited human resources – often single individuals)
- The institutional relationship between the various sub-committees and the SNC desk or secretariat is lacking
- Poor communication and co-ordination between the SADC secretariat and the SNCs
- Also, the relationship between the sectoral cluster sub- committees and the SNC secretariat at the national level should be clarified

5. Integrating SNCs in overall government systems

- SNCs seem to compete with other government-initiated consultative forums in the area of Trade and Finance and Security issues for instance

6. Financial Resources

- Funding has been a big challenge for SNCs Governments are expected to fund SNCs

Conclusion

- There are measures in place to enhance CSO engagement but its fruaght with a number of difficulties
- Main problem areas at the regional level
 - Parallel bodies
 - Lack of a structure
- Six specific gaps national level
 - Lack of awareness of SNCs
 - Unclear requirements for functional SNCs
 - Ad hoc nature of meetings
 - Limited capacity of SADC secretariat
 - Integrating CS in overall gvt system
 - Financial capacity

Thank you