

MEMBERSHIP CHARTER

OF THE AFRICAN COUNCIL OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS



NGO VOICE

MEMBERSHIP CHARTER

African NGO Council

African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations

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Abstract

This Charter builds on this appreciation and outlines the principles of the membership as well as the guidelines for the relationship between AFRONGO and its members. It underscores the rationale of being a member and the process involved. It also outlines some of the benefits members can expect from participation; and the obligations expected of them. The Charter is in line with membership provisions in the Constitution and By-laws of the Council of NGOs in Africa.

AFRONGO HQ

English Version

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1.0 ABOUT THE MEMBERS' CHARTER

It is widely acknowledged that positive change can be realized when organisations come together to collaborate to influence and achieve common goals; through enhanced coordination, collective thinking and action in areas of mutual interest. The African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (AFRONGO) was formed in 2015, primarily for this purpose: to create a broad based national body for NGOs across Africa to come together in pursuit of collective agendas and to engage with governments and other actors in the development process. The Council's primary role is to enhance the performance of its network members and their ability to deliver high-impact, cost-effective, and innovative programmes for the promotion of environmentally sound, equitable and sustainable socioeconomic development in Africa.

AFRONGO is a representative pan-African NGO umbrella organisation based in Sierra Leone structured as an interactive network of equal and committed member organisations. It derives social legitimacy from maintaining high levels of internal democracy and participation, and by providing relevant and high-quality services to its member organisations.

As an inclusive regional platform for NGOs and other eligible civil society organisations, AFRONGO believes that membership that is actively engaged will ensure that the organisation achieves its mission and ambitions. This Charter builds on this appreciation and outlines the principles of the membership as well as the guidelines for the relationship between AFRONGO and its members. It underscores the rationale of being a member and the process involved. It also outlines some of the benefits members can expect from participation; and the obligations expected of them. The Charter is in line with membership provisions in the Constitution and By-laws of the Council of NGOs in Africa.

2.0 ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF NGOS

The African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (AFRONGO) is an inclusive membership organisation of NGOs and their networks as well as 'un-networked NGOs', which subscribe to and support the organisation's vision, mission and values. It provides a regional platform for NGOs in their diversity, active in African communities; to contribute to governance and development processes across the continent.

The Council is the umbrella organisation for NGOs operating in Africa. It was founded by a group of NGOs out of their concern to avoid duplication of NGO efforts, and to minimise conflict and competition between NGOs. The founders were also interested in ensuring maximum use of resources mobilised by NGOs for relief and social development purposes through collaboration, networking, and mutual reinforcement of each other's activities.

The Council is made up of the NGO Members' Assembly, a Board of Directors elected every year by the NGO body and an office. The latter serve as a link between the AFRONGO Board and NGOs and government, donors, and the public, and allows the dissemination of information on NGO activities through a quarterly newsletter to members and the public at large. AFRONGO has a membership of national, regional and international NGOs. Both the national and regional NGOs work with communities in different sectors, mainly in rural areas of Africa. AFRONGO's members play key roles in areas such as health, education, women's empowerment, agriculture and credit, as well as small enterprise development projects such as vegetable gardening, food processing and similar activities. The Council and its members work towards the reduction of poverty and the fight against HIV/AIDS geared to the improvement in the standards of living of the poor and marginalised members of the African continent.

AFRONGO is a politically non-partisan, voluntary and non-profit organisation. The Council's primary obligation is to promote and enhance NGO operations through capacity building, and serve as a mouthpiece and advocate on behalf of NGOs operating in Africa, in which respect it assists NGOs to serve African civil society better. AFRONGO is widely recognised at the sub-regional, regional and international levels as an NGO collective, and has established and maintains collaborative relations with numerous NGO consortia and networks with international organisations.

AFRONGO provides the opportunity for NGOs to meet regularly and periodically to discuss issues that are of relevance to the African NGO community, exchange ideas, and share information about their respective activities, achievements, difficulties, and promote NGO solidarity for the benefit of the communities they work with. NGOs meet regularly at AFRONGO events where sectorial and thematic taskforces have been constituted to allow NGOs to discuss, exchange information and field experiences. Through strategic partnerships with some of its core members, AFRONGO applies a participatory approach in its overall operations. It aims as part of its strategic direction, is to strengthen the capacity of its member organisations in strategic planning and strongly advocate for the fight against poverty, social injustice and human suffering at all levels of our society.

2.1 Our Mission

To provide a sharing and reflection platform for NGOs to influence governance and development processes in Africa, and enhance their operating environment.

2.2 Our Vision

A coherent, respected and well-informed African NGO sector, actively contributing to citizens' wellbeing and safeguarding their rights.

2.3 Our Core Values and Principles

AFRONGO embraces the following set of core values that guide the work of the organisation:

- Social Justice and Equity - We promote equality, dignity and a more just society, especially with regard to the poor and marginalised.
- Gender and Diversity - Our work will reflect and promote respect for gender and diversity issues.
- Autonomy – We shall strive for and safeguard the rights for NGOs to existence and independence at all times.
- Accountability – We shall hold ourselves accountable to the highest level of ethical behaviour and responsibility for our actions, while maintaining integrity in our performance.
- Collective Action and Solidarity - justified by our mission, We shall stand with and by other NGOs and CSOs when they are faced with challenges in their work.
- Unity in Diversity - We celebrate diversity in the NGO sector but strive to achieve unity amongst NGOs and with other like-minded actors and disciplines.
- Self Sufficiency – We shall work towards sustainable development outcomes.

2.4 Strategic Objectives

As an indigenous pan-African civil society association, AFRONGO's corporate theme: "the global voice for African civil society," truly demonstrates its purpose and being. In addition, the Council's fundamental objectives are to:

- Facilitate the establishment of best practices in advocacy, training, resource use, safety and security;
- Be the repository of data and its analysis focusing on key issues in the NGO/civil society community;
- Provide a platform for consensus building among AFRONGO members and key stakeholders, both across Africa and overseas;
- Actively contribute in human capital development through offering members capacity building, continuing education, training and learning opportunities;
- Interact with the regulatory bodies to support and protect the common interests of all African NGO practitioners and civil society actors;
- Provide forums for members and civil society partners to enhance their knowledge base and enhance mutual cooperation;
- Facilitate the development of environmental policies in keeping with best practices;
- Reflect the positive image of African civil society actors and their services worldwide;
- Assist members with fundraising, advocacy, strategy mapping, marketing and promotions;
- Present opportunities for members to market and showcase their products and services;
- Help members increase business and generate revenue through exposure, networking and referrals;
- Organise events where civil society stakeholders meet to discuss issues of common interest and concern; and
- Conduct research with partner organisations on socioeconomic development issues and civil society matters in Africa.

3.0 AFRONGO's STRATEGIC DIRECTION

AFRONGO is committed to consolidating its position as a strong, dynamic and viable NGO consortium and to enhance the performance of its members as envisaged in its vision and mission statements. Hence the strategic direction of AFRONGO is focused on key areas namely: NGO capacity building, knowledge networking, advocacy and lobbying and coordination.

AFRONGO's new strategy places a lot of emphasis on building the capacity of its members to more effectively take on advocacy and lobbying roles in addition to their routine programme implementation activities. This is deemed quite important given the changing roles of NGOs and

other civil society organisations in the fulfilment of their political and socio-economic needs and rights.

4.0 MEMBERSHIP IN AFRONGO

4.1 Membership Profile

As a member of AFRONGO, you will be joining a community of national and regional development, humanitarian relief and public engagement practitioners and advocates with whom you can share ideas and opportunities.

Members are invited to take part in a variety of professional development opportunities, receive pertinent research on emerging issues, and have access to sample organisational policies and examples of good practice. Additionally, we have many face-to-face opportunities for our members and a host of online opportunities you can join.

4.2 What We Do for Our Members

a. Building Awareness

✓ Communications

AFRONGO amplifies the voice of our members, to influence key global, regional and national decision makers, and to engage the people of Africa as active global citizens.

Access an extensive network of supporters through our various communications tools, including our E-zine and Social Media platforms. We help get the word out about member events and projects, and share stories to build empathy and compassion, and inspire people to take action!

AFRONGO has found that our use of innovative methods to reach people including our website, blog, documentaries and the arts are very successful in conveying the message of change.

✓ Public Engagement

Public engagement is the practice of inspiring, supporting and challenging people and groups in dynamic cycles of learning, reflection and action on issues of concern to Africa and the world.

AFRONGO members benefit from our expertise in carrying out meaningful, impactful public engagement. From knowledge sharing and awareness building with the general public, leadership training for youth and working with teachers and students through our Global Citizenship Education program, AFRONGO's public engagement is a transformative process that works towards more equitable social, economic, environmental and political structures.

As a member of AFRONGO you will be encouraged to attend meetings of the membership, issue-specific networking groups and sector consultations, where you can participate in member discussions, decisions, networking and information sharing opportunities, and provide input on emergent issues.

b. Building Connections

✓ Networking & Collaboration

Membership in AFRONGO will allow you to increase your reach to a diverse and international, regional and national civil society network of NGO leaders and practitioners, government funders and community based social innovators.

Membership in AFRONGO provides access to people and organisations that are working for social, economic and ecological justice and provides the opportunity to coordinate efforts with other CSOs. The Council shares information, skills and knowledge, which strengthen our ability to improve our impact in our communities and across the continent.

c. Building Capacity

✓ Skills Development & Peer Learning

From public engagement coaching to policy development, as a member of AFRONGO you will build your capacity to make a positive difference in African communities!

- a) AFRONGO provides a space for members to share ideas and opportunities to develop innovative solutions to abject poverty.
- b) AFRONGO develops policy to ensure our activities and communications align with our Development Principles. As a member of AFRONGO, you have access to our policies in areas such as Anti-Oppression, Public Engagement, Responsible Media and our Green Policy. Occasionally members are invited to contribute research on emerging issues.
- c) AFRONGO has many resources to share with members including Green Event Supplies, a small but growing library, and a button maker.

d. Building Momentum

✓ Representation

Members help shape the activities and priorities of the Council and the wider African NGO community. AFRONGO members have the opportunity to serve on AFRONGO Board of Directors, Committees and Working Groups. AFRONGO also represents its members on a global, regional and national level and as focal points or contact desks.

4.3 Why Become a Member?

When you become a member of AFRONGO you join an expanding community of national, regional and international development and humanitarian organisations (NGOs and CSOs) working in African communities for peace, equality, democracy, human rights, good governance, sustainable development and social justice. AFRONGO is a learning organisation with inclusive, cooperative and participatory processes that are accessible and accountable to all members.

AFRONGO's work, both internally and as a collective of members, is grounded in our shared vision of global social justice, human dignity, transparency and accountability and participation for all. While we do not necessarily support or endorse all activities or positions of our many and diverse members, we encourage all members to work toward ethical and anti-oppressive practice, and to engage in dialogue and critical reflection with the Council on issues of collective concern and importance.

5.0 BEING A MEMBER: CATEGORIES, ELIGIBILITY AND BENEFITS

AFRONGO brings together national, regional and international NGOs working in Africa. Its membership is open to any non-profit/non-governmental (non-political/non-partisan) organisations that comply with the eligibility requirement outlined in Section 5.3 below.

While the primary constituency and owners of AFRONGO are NGOs in their diversity, other organisations in the wider civil society which may not be defined in the narrow sense as “NGO” but which account for the overall strength of Africa’s civil society are also welcome. Being a member of AFRONGO will allow your organisation to further develop its potential and gain greater recognition. Membership will also allow your organisation to demonstrate its commitment to working collectively to contribute to the development of our communities.

5.1 Membership Categories

AFRONGO currently offers two Membership categories:

(a) Full Membership:

Full Membership is open to any international, regional, sub-regional or national not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation, civil society organisation, NGO fora and networks, coalitions and alliances, registered by law established in any African country and has operational office, programmes and staff in place; which fully subscribes to the Constitution, Regulations and Bye-laws, and the Code of Professional Conduct of AFRONGO and would like to participate in all its activities.

(b) Associate Membership

Affiliate Membership is open to organisations and institutions with similar objectives as AFRONGO, such as Research Institutions; Professional Bodies; Academic Institutions; Financial Institutions; and Members of the Private Sector operating in Africa or based outside Africa but want to affiliate or associate with the African NGO Council.

5.2 Thematic Membership Sectors

AFRONGO's membership is comprised of local, national, regional and international NGOs and other civil society organisations and academia and donor institutions engaged in but not limited to the following core categories:

- Education and Vocational/Skills Training
- Climate Change and Environmental Protection
- Child Protection and Development
- Human Rights and Rule of Law
- Democratisation and Governance
- Peacebuilding and Human Security
- Training and Capacity Building
- Private Foundations & Trusts
- Non-profit Grant Making
- Youth Empowerment/Development
- Media Development
- Gender & Women's Empowerment
- Relief & Humanitarian Services

- AIDS/HIV Support Services
- Agriculture and Food Security
- Health, Water & Sanitation Services
- Micro-finance & Enterprise Development
- Faith-based Organisations
- Academia & Professional Associations.

5.3 Eligibility and Requirements for Membership

Membership to AFRONGO is open to the following Organizations that subscribe to the Council's objectives:

- a) Any Non-Governmental (NGO) registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission or the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development or which is in the process of being registered as a Non-Governmental Organisation by the Ministry; which is registered with the relevant District Authority where (the country in which) it operates.
- b) Faith Based Development Organisations, which are registered under relevant laws in their respective countries and have development-focused activities.
- c) Other Representative Organisations such as Trade Unions and Cooperative organisations, and trade associations and professional groups which wish to become members of AFRONGO.

AFRONGO's membership is open to organisations that comply with the following:

- Completes a Membership Application Form, including a statement of interest;
- Acknowledges the principles embodied in the Vision and Mission statements of AFRONGO and agrees to act in conformance with and support both;
- You must be registered with a certificate from the Corporate Affairs Commission or from the NGO Unit of the Ministry of Finance or other Agency- a coloured photo copy must be presented;
- Well established with office premises, and a visible physical address anywhere in Africa;
- You must have an approved constitution/articles of association endorsed by the head of the organisation and stamped;
- Agrees to abide by this Members' Charter and guidelines and Code set forth herein;
- Stays current in its Membership Dues to AFRONGO (currently no membership dues are being charged);
- You must present your most recent annual report or strategic plan for new NGOs;
- Is approved for Membership by the AFRONGO Board, based upon the following requirements:
 - Registered, with a Valid Certificate, by the Registrar General's Department and/or with relevant Government Authorities;

- Payment of Annual Membership Fees and Subscription Fees as categorized in Section 5.8 below (currently no membership dues are being charged).

5.4 Requirements and Application for Membership

An organisation wishing to become a member submits to AFRONGO's Secretariat, a duly filled Membership Application Form together with the following:

- ✓ A copy of the Certification of Registration from Registrar General's Department and/or relevant Government Authority;
- ✓ A copy of the Organisation's Constitution;
- ✓ A list of the Organisation's Board Members and their contacts;
- ✓ A copy of the most recent Annual Report;
- ✓ Copies of your publications if any, including brochures, posters, etc.

Once the application and other documents are received, a staff of AFRONGO or our representative will visit your offices and then officially accepted into membership with a certificate.

5.5 Membership Benefits

We are proud to service our members and continually strive to better support their growth and development. As a member of AFRONGO, there are a number of unique benefits that accrue to your organization, including the following:

❖ **Collective Voice and Influence**

As a member, you will be joining other dedicated organisations, committed to working together to contribute to the development of the country. AFRONGO's ever growing influence is as a direct result of working with members and therefore as a member, your organisation will be part of a collective and united voice to engage and influence Government and other stakeholders on issues of concern to NGOs.

❖ **Sharing, Learning and Networking Platform**

AFRONGO facilitates networking among members, other NGOs and the wider civil society through its 'platform' character that fosters sharing, reflection and open debate on important issues for engagement. Through Members' Events including Membership Symposiums; Membership Days, etc. members have an opportunity to share, learn and profile their work through best practices, case studies, experiences, success stories, professional knowledge and materials with other members and partners.

❖ **Profiling your work**

We shall also document and profile our members' work to accompany our annual report.

Members can also access the Members Database and Directory, which is a great network of hundreds of NGOs. This would be distributed extensively and regularly updated.

❖ **Representation**

AFRONGO represents members' views and interests and lobbies for relevant change at national fora. In addition, all members are eligible and can be requested to represent the

AFRONGO family at national, regional and international fora on matters of concern to the NGO sector and development.

❖ **Participation and Involvement in Strategy Development and Decision Making**

Members have opportunity to participate in shaping the strategic direction of the organisation and to influence decisions on AFRONGO policies, priorities, and actions, and to raise issues of concern.

❖ **Information and Updates**

- Membership entitles you to access the Information Unit and Resource Centre for updated, accurate and current information, reports, briefings and feedback on news about AFRONGO, what is happening in the NGO sector, and on other key collective NGO concerns to facilitate action and participation.
- You are also notified from time to time of funding and capacity building opportunities as well as upcoming NGO Meetings and Events at national, regional and international fora. AFRONGO also acts as a conduit for members to receive current information, updates, publications etc. from government and other stakeholders; to allow them engage on the relevant issues.
- Receive a copy of the 'The NGO VOICE', the official newsletter of AFRONGO; which focuses on current issues and key activities undertaken by the Council, member organisations and other NGOs. Members can contribute to The NGO VOICE through submission of articles.
- Website Access: Through a password, members have free access to "My Forum," a special members' area on the AFRONGO website to share information and experiences and to interact with other members online. All Members are also recognized on the 'Wall of Members' on the website.

❖ **Board Governance Opportunity**

All members are eligible to stand for election to AFRONGO Governance Organs of the organisation such as the Board. Members can provide comment and offer recommendations to the Governance Organs on matters relevant to the activities of AFRONGO. This way, we provide opportunities to live and practice democracy.

❖ **Solidarity and Support**

- AFRONGO will support, mobilize NGOs to stand in solidarity with its members who may be illegally threatened in the course of their work and promotion of democracy and citizen's interests.
- Recommendation to development partners, other NGOs and Government for relevant support to your organisation.
- Membership allows you to receive technical and specialized advice and support on different aspects to enable your organisation grow and improve its work.

The Membership and Constituency Servicing Team will regularly review the above Member Benefits, identify new ones and create valued products for members.

5.6 Member Obligations, Roles and Responsibilities

- Members must subscribe to promote the aims and objectives of the Council; contribute to the realisation of the Vision, Mission and Values of AFRONGO, and participate in activities of the Council.
- Members should participate and monitor the success of AFRONGO programmes.
- Members should regularly report on their work to the Secretariat so it can be shared with other members, the wider civil society/NGO community and other stakeholders. At least one report every year.
- Members will abide by the NGO Code of Professional Conduct and strive to achieve the NGO Quality Assurance Certificate
- Members will remain in good standing through payment of annual membership subscription dues (currently no membership dues are being charged);
- Members shall pay annual fees as agreed upon by the Members Assembly by the end of the second month of each year (currently no membership dues are being charged);
- Members should be proactive and prompt the Council on important issues it needs to engage with.
- Continuously update AFRONGO of changes in the organisation and addresses.
- Actively participate in AFRONGO activities, including being responsive to online discussions and inquiries.
- Members shall submit to AFRONGO their annual work programme and budget before the start of the programme year, and an annual report together with the audited financial statements within four months of the end of their programme year.
- Members shall sign the Charter of Commitment and adhere to it and the AFRONGO Code of Professional Conduct.

5.7 Members' Code of Conduct

AFRONGO is committed to creating a space that is respectful, ethical, safe and mutually supportive. Members are expected to conduct themselves in keeping with these principles through adherence to the NGO Code of Conduct.

AFRONGO may refuse to renew the membership of any member/NGO that it determines, in its sole discretion, has engaged in behaviour that harms the collective effort of members and mission of the organisation.

5.8 Membership Involvement

AFRONGO offers opportunities for member involvement and participation in its programmes and activities. AFRONGO also recognizes that there are other NGOs that are not its members and will invite these organisations to attend open AFRONGO meetings and encourages opportunities for open exchanges with them.

AFRONGO Programmes offer a wide range of activities in which all members are encouraged to participate. The following are some examples of how you can participate:

a) NGO Sector Observatory and Profiling:

This Programme Area aims to build and update a comprehensive picture of Africa's civil society landscape, with a focus on the NGO sector, and to showcase the socioeconomic and political value of NGOs to Africa's development, in order to continuously articulate and influence policies and practices that contribute to the NGO sector's growth and nourishment.

Members are invited to participate in the following ways:

- Share information about the current state of your organisation and its contribution to society; for integration in an Annual NGO Impact Report.
- Provide information and any feedback on opportunities and challenges of the operating environment of your organisation and other NGOs in your area so as to inform AFRONGO's strategic response.
- Participate in events to build solidarity for NGOs confronted for their legitimate and pro-democracy work.
- Participate in the research agenda of AFRONGO by providing information, analyses, case studies to inform research outputs.

For further information, please contact: The NGO Forum Team, forum@afrianngocouncil.org.

b) Policy Engagement and Enhancement:

This Programme Area aims to offer interactive reflection spaces for the effective coordination of collective policy engagement by NGOs, on cross-cutting social, economic and political issues of interest to NGOs and relevant to Africa's development, as well as for long-term perspective planning.

Members are invited to participate in the following ways:

- Identify policies that may require collective engagement by NGOs;
- Contribute updates and analyses from your organisation, district or region; bringing issues to national level attention;
- Actively participate in policy engagement consultations organized by AFRONGO at national, regional and sub-national levels.
- Engage in national, regional and global-level advocacy on the issues that emerge from these consultations.
- Participate in various Platforms, Thematic and Working Groups and share ideas, experiences, lessons learnt; and to shape the policy engagement agenda of the organisation.

For further information, please contact the NGO Engagement on engage@afrianngocouncil.org.

c) Membership and Constituency Services:

This Programme Area aims to provide general and tailor-made information and other support services to a wide range of AFRONGO service subscribers to inform their work and enhance their capacities.

Members are invited to participate in the following ways:

- ✓ Share information, research, experiences, best practices and opportunities of your organisation through our e-platforms, discussion groups, regularly produced information briefs/newsletters and website.
- ✓ Mobilise other NGOs and participate in solidarity events in support of NGOs threatened and victimized by their legitimacy, transparency and democracy promotion work.
- ✓ Participate in the Membership Symposiums and other Membership events organized to profile and promote the work of members.
- ✓ Participate in Membership Surveys and propose value addition products for members for consideration by the MCS Team.
- ✓ When called upon, represent and advocate on behalf of AFRONGO and its membership at meetings and different fora.

For further information, please contact the Services team on services@africanngocouncil.org.

5.9 Membership Terms and Dues

Membership is renewed annually and members pay Membership and Subscription dues upon first becoming a member and then annual subscription by March 27th of each calendar year.

5.10 Membership Fees

The membership fees are structured according to categories. Currently, there are no membership registration and annual subscription fees.

However, this decision may be revised from time to time as circumstances dictate, and endorsed by all members at the General Meeting.

For more information, please contact:

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