

CORPORATE PROFILE

**OF THE AFRICAN COUNCIL OF NON
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS**

NGO VOICE

CORPORATE PROFILE

African NGO Council

African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations

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Abstract

The African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations 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 nationally and regionally; to contribute to governance and sustainable development processes across Africa.

AFRONGO HQ

English Version

LAST UPDATED

March 2020

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1.0 BACKGROUND: WHY AFRICAN NGO COUNCIL?

It is widely acknowledged that positive change can be realised when organisations come together to collaborate to influence policy and achieve common goals; through enhanced coordination, collective thinking and action in areas of mutual interest. The African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations ('AFRONGO' or 'the African NGO Council') was formed in 2015, primarily for this purpose: to create a broad based pan-African body for NGOs 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 members and their ability to deliver high-impact, cost-effective, and innovative programmes for the promotion of environmentally sound, equitable and sustainable socioeconomic development across the continent.

AFRONGO is a representative regional NGO umbrella organisation 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 and key stakeholders.

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 Profile 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. This corporate profile is in line with membership provisions in the Constitution and By-laws of the African NGO Council.

2.0 PROFILE: ABOUT THE AFRICAN NGO COUNCIL

The African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations ("African NGO Council" or "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 nationally and regionally; to contribute to governance and development processes across Africa.

The Council is the pan-African umbrella organisation for NGOs operating at the national and regional levels. 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 regional NGO body and an office. The latter serves as a link between the AFRONGO Board and NGOs and governments, 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. The national, regional and international NGOs work with communities in different sectors, mainly in rural areas across the continent. 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. AFRONGO and its members work towards the reduction of poverty and the fight against social injustices geared to the improvement in the standards of living of the poor and marginalised members of local communities across the continent.

AFRONGO is a politically non-partisan, voluntary and non-profit regional organisation. The Council's primary obligation is to promote and enhance NGO operations through capacity building, and serves as a mouthpiece and advocate on behalf of NGOs operating at national and regional levels, in which respect AFRONGO assists NGOs to serve society better. AFRONGO is widely recognised at the national, 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 the 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 abject poverty, social injustice and human suffering at all levels of our society.

2.1 Our Mission Statement

To provide a networking, learning, sharing and reflection platform for NGOs to influence governance and development processes across the continent, and enhance their operating environment.

2.2 Our Vision Statement

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 marginalized.
- Gender Equality 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 global, regional and national 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.

- Leadership – We shall strive to provide leadership and strategic direction for the national operations as well as the Africa regional NGO community.

2.4 Our 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 the Council is focused on key areas namely: NGO capacity building, knowledge networking, advocacy and lobbying and coordination.

The Council'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 socioeconomic needs and rights.

2.5 Our Organisational Structure

AFRONGO, as a global mouthpiece for African NGOs, operates based on a unique principle of shared and participatory cooperation to encourage and promote mutual partnership and equality among its members and with key stakeholders across the continent and around the world. To this end, the Council maintains its executive secretariat in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which is one of the poorest countries in Africa as a means to bring its mission and mandate closer to the people and organisations it seeks to serve, and also to operate advocacy offices in key centres of Africa to be able to put NGO concerns on regional and international agenda and influence key decisions that impact NGOs and their operations across Africa. It also maintains liaison and representational or sub-regional offices in cities and sub-regions across Africa.

2.6 Governance and Leadership

A six-person governing Board of Directors, comprising both independent directors and African NGO Council members, and the President/CEO of the Council govern its own affairs. Board members contribute to the proper governance of and guide the Council in establishing a strategy and policy objectives through active participation in the Council's governance and decision making. Board members serve on the Board on a voluntary basis for a fixed term as specified in the Council's Statutes. The members of the Board agree to abide by the African NGO Council's Code of Professional Conduct and the Board Charter as set out by the Board in fulfilling their responsibilities. Also, a six-person Advisory Committee assists the Executive Board in decision making and policy formulation and implementation processes.

In addition, the Board is assisted by a secretariat team headed by the President/CEO and an Executive Director. Other key personnel, consultants and professional volunteers and core staff of the Council help implement the decisions of the Board and other key activity plans, strategies and policies.

2.7 Main Activities of AFRONGO

AFRONGO operates in the following strategic areas:

1. Networking and Strategic Alliance Building

2. Publications for Information, Education and Communication
3. Institute Researches and Surveys Dissemination
4. Facilitate Clearinghouse for Resource Distribution
5. Promote Best Practices in the African NGO sector
6. Advocacy and Lobbying on key priority issues
7. Profile and Provide Leadership for the African NGO sector
8. Fund Administration and Grant making on an Africa-wide basis
9. Organization Development of AFRONGO
10. Member Institutional Capacity Building
11. Stakeholder Engagement through consultations, occasional seminars, conferences, etc.
12. Leadership and Resource Mobilization across Africa and around the world
13. Strategic alliance building and networking with sister organisations in Africa and overseas.

2.8 Sources of Funding and Resource Mobilisation Efforts

Where and how do we raise our funds? AFRONGO mobilizes its funds and other resources from national, regional and international sources, such as:

- The Corporate Sector/Businesses
- Private Foundations and Trusts
- Embassies and Foreign Missions
- Government agencies and Bilateral Organisations
- Philanthropists/Individual Donors
- Sponsorship and in-kind-support
- Sales of AFRONGO's merchandise
- Any other legal means.

2.9 How to Support AFRONGO

You can support the work of the African NGO Council in several ways. Please contact us if you are interested in any of the following:

- Make a cash donation for general support. All support goes towards grant making and modest running cost. (Cheques should be made payable to the African NGO Council);
- Master Card, Visa or American Express donations;
- Make a donation in the name of a beloved activist, issue such as health, etc.;
- Make a one-off or on-going donation towards a specific issue close to your heart, i.e. Children orphaned by a particular crisis, disease outbreak, AIDS epidemic, etc.;
- Provide information on possible sources of funding;
- Gifts of equipment, i.e. computers, photocopiers, vehicles, etc.;
- Offer your services as a volunteer for AFRONGO.

3.0 WHAT WE DO

3.1 Strategic and Fundamental Activities

Guided by continual analysis of the national, regional and global civil society environment and in keeping with its agreed principles, the specific strategic activities of the Council are:

- a) Create a broad based pan-African body for African NGOs to come together in pursuit of collective agendas and to engage with governments and other actors in the regional development process;
- b) Foster a vibrant, sustainable, independent African civil society platform that supports global progress towards an open society;
- c) Promote the development of pluralistic civil society channel as a key information and accountability mechanism for democratic development Africa-wide;
- d) 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 socio-economic development across the continent;
- e) Foster thought leadership and information in the Africa NGO community and the critical issues facing it, and for the production of high quality research and information essential in strengthening the sector;
- f) Build leadership, management and professional capacity to enhance the quality, ethics and overall professionalism of NGOs across Africa, with a specific focus on gaps in planning, management, programming, funding raising and technical skills;
- g) Facilitate the establishment of best practices in NGO governance, advocacy, training, resource use, safety and security;
- h) Be the repository of data and its analysis focusing on key issues in the Africa regional and national civil society community;
- i) Support the improvement of the legal and policy environment for independent civil society, including needed reforms of national NGO/civil society laws and broader freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and access to information policies;
- j) Raise, mobilize and disburse funds and other resources for the promotion of the objects of the Council;
- k) Design, organise and conduct suitable training and educational programs, courses, seminars, study groups, workshops and other activities for individuals and groups;
- l) Provide a mechanism for cooperation among key national, regional and international civil society and development bodies, among others;
- m) Provide a platform for consensus building among AFRONGO members and key stakeholders across Africa and around the world;

- n) Actively contribute in human capital development through offering members capacity building, continuing education, training and learning opportunities;
- o) Interact with the regulatory bodies to support and protect the common interests of all NGO practitioners and civil society actors across the continent;
- p) Provide forums for AFRONGO members and civil society partners to enhance their knowledge base and enhance mutual cooperation;
- q) Organise events where civil society stakeholders meet to discuss issues of common interest and concern;
- r) Assist members with fundraising, advocacy, strategy mapping, marketing and promotions;
- s) Reflect the positive image of the NGO sector and civil society actors and services worldwide;
- t) Present opportunities for members to market and showcase their products and services;
- u) Help members increase business and generate revenue through exposure, networking and referrals;
- v) Conduct research with partner organisations on socioeconomic development issues and civil society matters in Africa and worldwide.

3.2 Africa NGO solidarity

From its founding, Africa regional NGO solidarity has been the Council's guiding principle. This principle is being implemented through:

- building solidarity at every stage of the regional development process;
- international and sector-wide organising at national, regional and global levels, especially at important events and occasions;
- regional and global action to defend NGOs, civil society in general, and human rights, democratic governance, and environmental protection in particular.

3.3 Strengthening Affiliates

The Council exists to strengthen member NGOs through mutual support. It does this through:

- assisting affiliates in organising drives and in conflicts with employers and governments;
- coordinating and implementing solidarity and support actions;
- research, publications, documentation and dissemination;
- promoting women's equality at the workplace, in society and in the NGO sector;
- civil society/NGO education programs to help build the strength and independence of affiliated NGOs.

The Council is committed to positive government-stakeholder relations. The Council believes in working through problems and issues with members to improve the working environment of NGOs and the quality of working life for its members. However, the Council's commitment to "Putting Members First" guides all that the Council does.

The Council stands up for its members in the field; both individually and collectively as they pursue their objectives. It believes however, that it has an important and constructive advocacy role to play in helping NGOs feel more positive about their roles in nation building and regional and global development. It regards itself as a partner to regulators in good times and bad.

The Council's advocacy programme runs across Africa and around the world as it relates to NGOs' regional and global effectiveness and issues with governments and regional development. The Council takes a collaborative approach to advocacy with all stakeholders and not just the Council members, on broad issues such as education, healthcare, human rights, security, climate change, safe environment, work permits, regulations, and foreign funding, etc.

4.0 OUR PRIORITY ISSUES

As the global voice for African civil society and as diverse as the African continent, AFRONGO is working on the following priority issues as a matter of concern to strengthen African civil society and at the same time realise sustainable development, peace and social justice in African communities.

- NGO Governance & Accountability
- Civic Society Space and NGO/CSO Effectiveness
- Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability
- Disaster Risks Reduction
- Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Gender & Women's Empowerment
- ICT and Free Media
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Effective Pan-African Institutions
- Peace and Human Security
- Development Cooperation
- Anti-Corruption & Anti-Money Laundry
- Corporate Social Responsibility and Philanthropy
- Effective Humanitarian Response
- Migration & Development
- Governance, Human Rights & Democracy
- Child Protection and Youth Empowerment
- Food Security and Nutrition
- Economic Livelihoods
- Social Protection, etc.

5.0 OUR SPECIALISED STRUCTURES AND INITIATIVES

AFRONGO serves as the secretariat and currently administers the following specialised structures and initiatives on behalf of its members and other stakeholders across Africa and abroad.

5.1 African NGO Institute

The African NGO Institute serves as the training and capacity building and research arm of the African NGO Council. It coordinates all training and capacity building activities of the Council in collaboration with partners across the continent and abroad.

5.2 African NGO Summit & Awards

The African NGO Summit brings together leaders of African civil society, policy makers and key stakeholders to converge on national NGO laws, emerging issues and trends and challenges facing African civil society. It also provides a networking opportunity where members network with their colleagues from other organisations and celebrate excellence in the African NGO sector.

5.3 Other Specialised and Administered Initiatives

AFRONGO currently administers these thematic forums and other newly created initiatives for its members, at its secretariat:

- African Coalition for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- African Network for Migration and Development
- African Network for Climate Change (ANCC+)
- African Coalition for the Sustainable Development Goals
- African Disaster Reduction and Response Network
- African Humanitarian Action Network (AHANET)
- African Humanitarian Fund (AHF)
- African Sustainable Development Fund (ASDF)
- African Human Rights and Democracy Network (AHRDN)
- African Child Protection Alliance (ACPF)
- African Youth Development Fund (AYDF)
- African Civil Society Fund (ACSF).

6.0 OUR CONTACT DETAILS

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