PEACE FROM THE GROUND UP

Civil Society in Regional Interventions in the Horn of Africa

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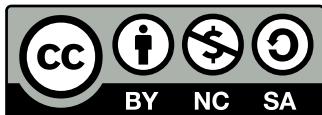## Civil Society in Regional Interventions in the Horn of Africa

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Acknowledgements

Foreword

Conflicts in the Horn of Africa are not inevitable. Residents of the region want peace, security, democracy and development. In recent years, the African Union (AU) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have sought to strengthen their multilateral interventions to prevent and resolve interstate and cross-border conflicts in the region. Both organizations have taken up greater roles to deal with complex intra-state conflicts. Yet, as internal armed conflicts, terrorism and climate-change-induced drought and migration significantly drive a reversal of democracy in the region, more effective multilateral action is called for.

For the AU and IGAD to develop more flexible and better-targeted initiatives to transform regional conflict in the Horn of Africa, it will be crucial to work more innovatively with other stakeholders. Civil society actors are well placed to shape domestic political transitions away from conflict and towards democracy. Some are already using their expertise and proximity to communities to contribute to the early warning capabilities of the regional multilateral mechanisms. Beyond this, the strengthening of partnerships between the AU/IGAD and civil society actors can enhance inclusive mediation and generate conflict-prevention initiatives that national actors are more likely to implement.

At International IDEA Africa and West Asia Programme, we hope that this report will help strengthen civil society engagement in the peacemaking and mediation work of the AU and IGAD. The report is timely, since it comes at a time of escalating intra-state conflicts, interstate tensions and new regional realignments that are threating peace, security, democracy and regional prosperity. It is hoped that this report will contribute to stronger and more sustainable efforts to implement durable African solutions for African problems.

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Contents

Abbreviations

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ARCSS	Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
ASF	African Standby Force
ATMIS	African Union Transition Mission in Somalia
AU	African Union
AUHIP	African Union High-Level Implementation Panel
AUSSOM	African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia
CBO	Community-based organization
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning System (IGAD)
CEWERU	Conflict Early Warning and Response Unit
CEWS	Continental Early Warning and Response Mechanism (AU)
CSO	Civil society organization
CTSAMVM	Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (Republic of Sudan)
ECOSSOC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council (AU)
HLRF	High-Level Revitalization Forum (South Sudan)
IDP	Internally displaced person
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IGADD	Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification
JMEC	Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSU	Mediation Support Unit
MVCM	Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mechanism (AU)
NeTT4Peace	Network of Think Tanks for Peace (AU)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
PAPS	Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department (AU)
PEAP	Panel of Eminent African Persons (AU)

PSC   Peace and Security Council (AU)

R-ARCSS Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan

REC   Regional economic community

RSF   Rapid Support Forces (Sudan)

SAF   Sudanese Armed Forces

SPLM/A   Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army

SSUF/A   South Sudan United Front/Army

TPLF   Tigray People's Liberation Front

UAE   United Arab Emirates

UNDP   United Nations Development Programme

UNMISS   United Nations Mission in South Sudan

OVERVIEW

Complex conflicts in the Horn of Africa increasingly draw attention to the outcomes of peacemaking efforts by the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Peacebuilding practitioners have called for more concerted efforts between the AU and IGAD. Moreover, these multilateral institutions have been encouraged to enhance the involvement of diverse civil society organizations (CSOs) in their conflict-response interventions. Various reports of the AU and IGAD highlight the need for their third-party mediation practices to be more adaptive and responsive to conflict situations and actors.

Armed conflicts are not a new phenomenon in the Horn of Africa, but their resolution increasingly demands acknowledgement of their complex driving factors. They range from climate-change-induced communal competition over resources and conflagrations arising from disputed elections to ethnic rivalries and the disputed legitimacy of states and governments in the region. These drivers are not restricted to any one country or locality but cut across state borders, while their effects are felt regionally. More concerted efforts can tackle these persistent drivers and ameliorate the multilayered conflicts that occur. Such efforts would require acknowledging that diverse CSOs possess specialized and comparative advantages to draw on for strengthening regional multilateral peacemaking.

The CSOs are already engaged in independent localized and community-based peacemaking in the Horn of Africa. Their access to information on conflict actors and dynamics at local levels is already improving the AU's Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and IGAD's Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN). The challenge for CSOs is how to engage more strategically, and more effectively, in multilateral early conflict response and preventive

The CSOs are already engaged in independent localized and community-based peacemaking in the Horn of Africa.

diplomacy in this highly complex region. More specifically, the challenge pivots on how to enhance closer strategic collaboration among CSOs, the AU and IGAD.

Purpose of the report

This report deals with how CSOs, the AU's Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department and IGAD's peace and security organs can strengthen collaboration to resolve the armed conflicts that proliferate in the Horn of Africa. It identifies opportunities to deepen CSOs' participation in multilateral peacemaking initiatives and anticipates some policy implications. The report builds on the understanding that several CSOs in the Horn of Africa already possess comparative advantages, such as expertise, knowledge, proximity to conflict actors, flexible on-the-ground operations and gap-filling capacities. These advantages have enhanced their participation in multilateral peacebuilding in general. For instance, several CSOs and coalitions of CSOs are already involved in strengthening elements of the general African Peace and Security Architecture. A few CSOs are engaged in supporting AU and IGAD third-party mediation in subsidiary roles, like public outreach, research and dialogue facilitation. Consequently, the report focuses on the question of strategic engagement by CSOs, to strengthen AU and IGAD interventions aiming to end hostilities and armed political violence by supporting conflicting parties in reaching agreement.

This report was motivated by a regional dialogue held in June 2024 at the AU PAPS Department headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The dialogue brought together the PAPS Department, IGAD, International IDEA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, national government officials and several civil society representatives. The purpose was to deliberate on the inclusion of civil society representatives in multilateral peacebuilding. This report has been developed to amplify the outcomes of the dialogue based on additional interviews with relevant stakeholders.

Structure of the report

Chapter 1, the Introduction, addresses the context and dynamics of conflict in the Horn of Africa, highlighting their complexity and their multiple actors. Older patterns of conflicts (such as interstate and intra-state) are identified as interwoven with new ones (such as climate change) to underline the importance of integrative and collaborative initiatives for peace and security. Chapter 2 lays out the normative basis for CSO engagement in peacemaking. Chapter 3 details AU mechanisms for engagement with CSOs in

the peace and security arena: after examining the principles that permit CSO engagement, it reviews the challenges of previous CSO inclusion in the AU PAPS Department's peacemaking and suggests improvements. Chapter 4 examines IGAD's peace and security mechanisms for CSO engagement, highlighting the CEWARN and its strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, it analyses some experiences of IGAD–CSO collaboration in peacemaking in two conflict-affected countries in the region—Somalia and South Sudan. Chapter 5 harvests some of the lessons learnt from AU/IGAD inclusion of CSOs in peacemaking and makes policy recommendations.

Methodology

The report emerged from a qualitative study relying on three major sources.

The first source consisted of insights obtained from three expert meetings. The first one was a stakeholders' dialogue on democratization, peace and security in the Horn of Africa, which was convened in Addis Ababa, 23–25 June 2024, by the AU PAPS Department, International IDEA, the UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, and UNDP Africa Regional Office. International IDEA convened a follow-up workshop in Zanzibar, Tanzania (11–14 November 2024), on strengthening IGAD mechanisms, attended by IGAD and East Africa Community (EAC) officials plus experts. The third expert meeting, in Nairobi, Kenya (27–28 November 2024), concerned mapping the future of peace and security in the Horn of Africa. It was organized by the Institute for Security Studies, the Life & Peace Institute and the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it was attended by IGAD officials and experts. These meetings provided a baseline understanding of issues pertaining to the enhancement of CSOs' engagement in multilateral peacemaking in the Horn of Africa.

The second source was a study, conducted by this report's authors, of the roles of CSOs in previous interventions by the AU and IGAD. This study relied on online interviews (via Zoom) and phone calls with interviewees from IGAD, the AU and selected CSOs. To ensure relevance, the authors posed the following questions to informants:

- How are CSOs currently complementing the peace initiatives of the AU PAPS Department and IGAD in the Horn of Africa? For instance, how have institutions such as the AU Mediation Support Unit (MSU), and IGAD special envoys for South Sudan and Somalia, and the ad hoc AU Panel on Kenya worked with CSOs?

- What capacities do CSOs have for more strategic participation in AU PAPS Department and IGAD peacemaking and mediation initiatives? What additional capacity would they require beyond collecting and submitting early warning data?

- What rules of engagement are needed for CSO peace missions to formally augment the roles of AU/IGAD mediators?

- How do CSOs view the challenges of engagement with the AU and IGAD in peacemaking and mediation?

- What specific recommendations will the study emphasize?

For the third and final source, a desktop review considered official documents and published materials emerging from IGAD, the AU and CSOs in relation to peacemaking and mediation. Academic and policy analyses from a wide range of public sources supplemented the information obtained from official sources. This review allowed a contextual analysis of the multiple conflicts in the region, considering areas where CSOs might have distinctive but complementary advantages as mediators and peacemakers. Some recommendations were considered on how to mitigate blockages against enhanced contributions by CSOs in regional, multilateral mediation and peacemaking.

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF ARMED CONFLICT IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Complex, multilayered and often intractable armed conflicts continue to characterize the Horn of Africa. These conflicts spawn multiple crises for regional peace, security, political stability and democracy. The drivers of conflicts are varied: they include inter- and intra-communal resource competition, vulnerability to climate-change challenges, political fragility and geostrategic conflicts of interest among regional and global powers in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea region.

Several types of conflicts are ongoing. They range from civil wars and inter-ethnic conflagration in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan, to jihadist and counterinsurgency wars in Somalia and pastoralist community conflicts in Kenya. Some of the conflicts involve state-supported violence against specific communities. Furthermore, criminal gangs engaged in illicit trade sometimes fuel the violence across the region (de Waal 2015). Moreover—as the conflicts in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan underscore—the growing use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), cyber attacks, online propaganda and artificial intelligence is developing into a prominent concern among many in Africa.

Principal conflict zones in the region include the following:

1.1.1. Ethiopia
The Tigray conflict erupted in November 2020, between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian Government. It has continued to cast its shadow over the general security situation

Complex, multilayered and often intractable armed conflicts continue to characterize the Horn of Africa.

in the country. A peace agreement signed in November 2022, with AU facilitation, officially ended the conflict (AU 2022b), but the situation has remained fragile, with only partial implementation of the agreement to date. Meanwhile, serious hostilities erupted between the Tigrayan and Amhara groups, and between militia from another region, Oromia, and Ethiopian state forces. These conflicts stemmed from unresolved territorial disputes and constitutional issues such as regional authority and federalism. Some armed groups resurfaced in the Afar region, while grievances about ethnic autonomy, federal guarantees and socio-economic disparities fuelled violent conflicts, criminality and insecurity in both Oromia and Ogaden regions.

Ethiopia's conflicts have also had a wider regional dimension.

Ethiopia's conflicts have also had a wider regional dimension. Eritrean troops were heavily involved on the government side in the Tigray conflict in 2021, enabled by a brief rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Since the end of that war, new tensions have surfaced between the two countries, influenced by regional political realignments. Relations between Ethiopia and Somalia deteriorated, owing to Ethiopia's signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), in January 2024, which would allow Ethiopia to recognize officially the independence of Somaliland in exchange for a lease of land for a Red Sea port. Moreover, the governments in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan experienced heightened tensions as Egypt pressed counterclaims on the use of River Nile waters and issued threats against one of Ethiopia's centrepiece projects in recent years—the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Meanwhile, Ethiopia has remained persistent about trying to secure direct access to the Red Sea as a matter of strategic national interest.

Ethiopia has continued to face increasing inter-ethnic armed conflict in several regions, as well as some hostility from Somalia and Egypt. Indeed, tensions among these states date back to earlier times in history. Territorial disputes in the northern and southern regions of Ethiopia have increasingly coincided with demands for political and constitutional reforms, thereby complicating the disputes' resolutions, including for mechanisms such as the National Dialogue, which officially started in 2023. Economic reforms announced in 2024 looked likely to affect the public by way of a higher cost of living, potentially translating into lowered public trust in authorities. Many civil society actors have accused the Government of Ethiopia of constraining the civic space, including through Internet restrictions during the build-up to national elections in 2026. In addition to all these challenges, Ethiopia has continued to face a dire humanitarian situation in the north, with millions of its people in need of aid and recovery from both the effects of war and drought conditions.

1.1.2. **Somalia**

Somalia has continued to be embroiled in a long-standing conflict with the Islamist extremist group al-Shabaab, which controls significant rural areas in the southern federal member states of Hirshabelle and Southwest. Al-Shabaab was resurgent during 2024, with increased recruitment, despite military campaigns against it led by the Federal Government of Somalia and initiatives to limit its territorial control and cashflow. Joined by members of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), al-Shabaab has posed a constant threat to both the Federal Government and the governments of Somalia's federal member states as well as to Somalia's neighbouring countries (The Reporter 2025). Somaliland, the self-declared independent state in the north-western part of Somalia, has continued its territorial dispute with its neighbour Puntland, a semi-autonomous federal member state of Somalia. Tensions have also continued over control of areas like the Sool region, with periodic clashes between the forces of Somaliland and Puntland. Although these conflicts have been localized, they have contributed to the overall instability in the Horn of Africa.

Until the end of 2024, the Federal Government's military operations were supported by the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the Somali National Army. In January 2025, a new AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) succeeded ATMIS following UN Security Council Resolution 2767 (2024) (UN 2024b). Meanwhile, al-Shabaab has remained capable of projecting and sustaining a show of force. Although most al-Shabaab attacks have occurred inside Somalia, the group has also undertaken cross-border attacks in Ethiopia and Kenya.

In January 2024, the MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland purported to give Ethiopia access to the port of Berbera on the Gulf of Aden, in exchange for Ethiopia's recognition of Somaliland's sovereignty: this development ruptured relations between Somalia and Ethiopia (Majid and Khalid 2024; House of Lords Library 2024). The dispute was resolved after mediation by Türkiye (2024). This mediation also illustrated the growing influence of Türkiye—in addition to that of the Gulf States and Egypt—in the Horn of Africa. Meanwhile, Somalia's acceptance of Egypt's troop contribution to AUSSOM continued to rile Ethiopia.

According to a report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA 2024), inter-clan violence has displaced nearly 150,000 people in different parts of Somalia, significantly disrupting livelihoods in affected areas. Furthermore,

Although most al-Shabaab attacks have occurred inside Somalia, the group has also undertaken cross-border attacks in Ethiopia and Kenya.

OCHA's Humanitarian Programme Cycle projected that an estimated 5.98 million people would require humanitarian and protection assistance in Somalia in 2025.

1.1.3. **South Sudan**

South Sudan has been entangled in political conflicts since achieving independence in 2011. Power struggles within the ruling Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) sparked civil wars in 2013 and 2016, leading to unstable power-sharing arrangements involving SPLM/A splinter groups, the most significant of which was the SPLM-In-Opposition (SPLM-IO). No elections have been held since independence, and no democratic, permanent constitution has been promulgated, negating provisions set out in the Transitional Constitution of 2011.

The 2016 civil war ended with the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), adopted in 2018. It created the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, comprising five parties. These were the incumbent SPLM/A, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA), the 'Former Detainees' and a grouping described as 'Other Political Parties'. The initial 44-month transition period provided for by R-ARCSS lapsed in December 2022 without any of the major objectives of the transition—such as the unification of armed forces, permanent constitution making, a population census, elections—being achieved.

In August 2022, the R-ARCSS signatories convened a High-Level Standing Committee, comprising senior party members, which agreed to extend the transition period by two years until February 2025. They adopted a roadmap for completing outstanding transition tasks, including elections, by December 2024. However, weak political will and political distrust among the parties undermined those tasks, while sporadic violence erupted in some of South Sudan's 10 member states and 3 administrative regions, spurred by a failure to address the root causes of conflict. In September 2024, the signatories extended the transition period by another two years, to February 2027.

The formal lead role of IGAD in facilitating the political transition process has continued to be proactive, with the support of the AU and its mission in South Sudan. Its role has also received crucial support from the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), whose mandate—as defined by UN Security Council Resolution 2567 (2021)—includes peacekeeping and building governance capacities.

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South Sudan's economy is fragile, because of its reliance on oil revenues that have been affected by the country's civil wars and, since 2023, by Sudan's war; and the humanitarian needs of South Sudan's population keep increasing, owing to the widespread conflict-fuelled poverty. Growing frustration and fatigue among international partners with the periodic extensions of the transition period—due to inconsistent adherence to the peace agreement—means that the country will face financial challenges in implementing reforms.

1.1.4. Sudan

Sudan has been embroiled in numerous inter-communal conflicts, military coups and attempted coups over the past decades. Several formal and informal initiatives were made over the years to resolve long-standing conflicts—such as that between Arab communities and the Masalit people in the Darfur region, and the conflicts affecting other communities in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states and in the Nuba mountains—but these usually provided only temporary respite. In 2019, a civilian–military alliance emerged in the wake of youth-led mass demonstrations that started the previous year, bringing an end to the authoritarian Islamic rule of the National Congress Party, which was disbanded. A Constitutional Charter for the Transitional Period was promulgated in 2019, under which a Transitional Government would oversee constitution making as well as political and economic reforms. The Transitional Government also engaged in dialogues with several armed rebel groups, which culminated in the Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan (2020), with provisions for transitional justice, federalization and a new political settlement.

Nevertheless, the situation remained volatile, and in October 2021 the military deposed the Transitional Government, sparking new protests from domestic and international actors. The situation rapidly deteriorated when fighting broke out in April 2023, in Khartoum and its environs, as the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) fought the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Civil war followed, as the warring parties engaged in hostilities elsewhere: in the district of Bahri, in the Darfur and Kordofan regions, and in the states of White Nile and al-Jazira. As the war continued throughout 2024, the combatants were accused of committing war crimes and gross violations of human rights, including gender-based violence, and Sudan's humanitarian situation remained extremely dire. In March 2025, the SAF appeared to have gained the upper hand in the war, with territorial gains, including by ejecting the RSF from Khartoum; but the risk of de facto partitioning of the country into regions controlled by the SAF and RSF respectively remained substantial.

Since 2023, several civilian groups have continued to advocate ceasefire agreements and a return to a civilian-led political transition. These include groups fronted by women, such as the Women Against War coalition, and the National Mechanism for Supporting a Civilian Democratic Transition and Stopping the War in Sudan, comprising professional people and academics, as well as ex-politicians. Their tactics have included staging demonstrations in places like Blue Nile state, to demand an end to the war and the inclusion of women in negotiations and transition mechanisms, and organizing strategizing meetings outside the country. Because of the problem of partisan divisions among civilian groups, concerted efforts have been made to forge united fronts. However, despite those efforts, unity has proved elusive. In 2023, the Democratic National Forces for the Cessation of War and Managing the Transitional Period were launched in Asmara, a product of the coalition 'Forces of Freedom and Change', to propose an interim emergency government and humanitarian aid corridors. Another umbrella organization known as 'Tagadum' was launched by more than 100 groups and political figures in October 2023, in Addis Ababa. Viewed by observers as a more promising prospect, Tagadum established leadership and planning structures, and embarked on a series of conferences aiming to launch a roadmap for returning the country to democratic civilian rule. Nevertheless, Tagadum split into two groups during 2025.

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Regional initiatives to end Sudan's war have been pushed by the AU and IGAD, including jointly, but they have had little traction with the warring parties. IGAD established the Quartet Group of Countries for the Resolution of the Situation in Sudan, under the leadership of the Kenyan president, to engage the SAF and RSF in dialogue; but the SAF rejected its neutrality. These initiatives were complicated by the withdrawal of cooperation by the warring parties, with the SAF at times threatening Sudan's withdrawal from the multilateral organizations, as well as by the parallel mediation initiatives of external actors. The latter have included the so-called 'Jeddah process', led by Saudi Arabia and backed by the United States, and the 'Cairo process', as well as talks in Geneva, in which the SAF did not participate. Not only have international actors not coordinated their initiatives adequately, despite nominal agreement to let the AU take the lead in resolving Sudan's war, but the situation has also been complicated by regional powers in the Gulf backing one or other of the warring parties.

1.2. Political dynamics affecting multilateral peace mediation in the Horn of Africa

Multilateral peace mediation in the Horn of Africa is evolving against a complex backdrop of long-standing conflicts, political instability and humanitarian crises. There have been several concerted efforts by multilateral actors like the AU and IGAD to mediate peace processes, negotiate ceasefires and support post-conflict reconstruction. However, these efforts have faced significant challenges because of the changing dynamics of governance and security in the Horn of Africa—including the competing interests of regional states, deep-rooted local dynamics and shifting geopolitical alignments.

1.2.1. Governance dynamics

Governance deficits
The Horn of Africa continues to experience governance deficits recognized by the AU as principal drivers of unconstitutional changes of government, as noted in various declarations—the Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government (Lome Declaration), adopted in July 2000, which was reinforced by the Malabo Declaration on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government, adopted by the AU in May 2022. Without mechanisms for inclusive politics, political accountability is largely absent, leading to the socio-economic inequalities that fuel violent extremism and alienation (Mengisteab 2020; Schneider-Yattara 2023). Additionally, as the ongoing conflicts in Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan demonstrate, stalled transitions to democracy and power-sharing have contributed ultimately to militarization and war (Savage 2024). Governmental power remains concentrated in the executive branch, enabling the exercise of patronage to reward political loyalists. In Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan, this concentration of executive power is exacerbated by the instrumentalization of militaries to sort out political problems. Combinations of these governance issues mean that systems have developed to support conditions of political alienation and marginality, leaving political opponents with little recourse beyond violent conflict.

The competing interests of regional states
Regional states such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda have been involved in various peacekeeping and mediation efforts in the Horn of Africa. Kenya has emerged as a key player in regional peace processes, particularly in Somalia and South Sudan, but less so in Sudan. Overlapping state membership imposes duties on both the AU and IGAD to act to forestall risks to peace and security as well as governance crises. This situation can culminate in a combination

Multilateral peace mediation in the Horn of Africa is evolving against a complex backdrop of long-standing conflicts, political instability and humanitarian crises.

of supply—and demand—related factors, whereby regional states actually raise competition between the AU and IGAD. The roles of regional states—whether constructive or manipulative—have implications for AU and IGAD peace efforts because they affect the presence, or otherwise, of cohesive multilateral diplomatic strategies. This is demonstrated in the discussion of multilateral interventions later in this report.

The shifting role of the UN

UN roles in supporting peacekeeping missions, humanitarian efforts and political processes have an established presence in the Horn of Africa. The UN has had political missions in Somalia via the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), and in South Sudan via UNMISS, established in 2011 (and still ongoing) to support peace and stabilization. In Sudan, the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) supported the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, between the Government of Sudan and SPLM/A (South Sudan), from 2005 to 2011. In 2020, the UN established the Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) to support the ongoing transition to democracy, which nevertheless collapsed in 2023. UNITAMS closed in February 2024, pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2715 (2023). In addition, the UN OCHA has been instrumental in providing relief to displaced populations.

The UN has a long history of involvement in Somalia, but its peacekeeping efforts in the country have been increasingly channelled through the AU. The AU established its longest-running multinational force mission in Somalia: it started off as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), established in 2007 to support the Transitional Federal Government after Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia ended the de facto rule of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). AMISOM was later mandated under UN Security Council Resolution 2372 (2017) to reduce the threat posed by the al-Shabaab terrorist group while building up Somalia's security forces to combat insurgents. Resolution 2628 of the UN Security Council authorized the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) to reconfigure AMISOM into ATMIS, with added police and civilian dimensions, from April 2022, until its replacement, following Resolution 2767 (2024), with AUSSOM from January 2025. AUSSOM has the important mandate of scaling up Somalia's security forces to degrade al-Shabaab and its affiliates of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and to create humanitarian aid corridors; but it will confront challenges. Furthermore, access to new weapons systems, including reconnaissance drones, has seen the jihadis force-projection escalating into cross-border attacks. Although the missions

above were nominally AU affairs, the AU originally expected their conversion into UN missions, for funding reasons. Over recent years, the AU has gained strategic experience around multinational and multidimensional missions, but it is still reliant on external partners to fund them, as evidenced by Communiqué 1225 (2024) of the PSC (AU 2024).

Competing geopolitical interests

Both the USA and the European Union have significant stakes in regional stability and both have supported various peace processes through diplomatic engagement, humanitarian aid and funding for peacebuilding initiatives. The EU has been particularly active in supporting peace initiatives in Somalia and South Sudan, while the USA has been a major actor in the context of Ethiopia and Sudan, applying both diplomatic pressure and sanctions to influence outcomes. However, juxtaposed with the Horn's complex and interlocking conflicts is something else—a new phase of great-power competition, aggravated by the Horn's proximity to the Red Sea, the international maritime route connecting West to East through the Suez Canal, and to the Middle East (Ashine 2024; ICG 2019). In the tradition of great-power competition, regional powers such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are attracted to the Horn of Africa by the possibilities of exploiting resources, finding allies and gaining strategic positions in vital trade routes, particularly in one of the most important shipping corridors in the world (the Bab al Mandab Strait) and the Arabian Peninsula (Gebremichael 2019). Since 2010, Middle Eastern and Asian states, manoeuvring for greater access to the Red Sea, have invested in ports, bases and infrastructure in Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. For instance, Qatar has invested in ports in Sudan and Somalia, while Türkiye has administered the port of Mogadishu since 2014. To counter the Qatar–Türkiye alliance, in 2018 the UAE invested USD 450 million to develop Berbera's port in Somaliland (Aidi 2020). Consequently, this competition, pitting Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Qatar and Türkiye, often complicates peace processes and the ability of IGAD and the AU to be effective actors in peaceful solutions to the conflicts in Somalia and Sudan.

1.2.2. Security dynamics

The Horn of Africa remains a region marked by persistent conflict, fragile peace processes and complex political dynamics. The situation is fluid, and it will likely remain unstable unless key security challenges are addressed through sustained regional cooperation, better governance and international support. Several analysts have underscored the need for holistic, coordinated and multilateral

Over recent years, the AU has gained strategic experience around multinational and multidimensional missions.

peacemaking and peacebuilding approaches that involve more concerted efforts among state, non-state and regional actors.

The changing security dynamics include:

Fragmentation of interests
The Horn of Africa is characterized by a complex web of political, ethnic and religious divisions. These divisions, which are often rooted in historical battles, encumber multilateral mediation efforts, as regional and international actors often have embedded yet submerged competing interests or allegiances to different factions within a conflict.

Sovereignty versus ceding security to regional organizations
Although they have signed up to establish stand-by forces and military oversight committees at a regional level, the states are still reluctant to cede sovereignty in security spheres. In fact, uptake for external interventions or mediation by the states is usually delayed or obstructed through procedural pretexts, particularly when they perceive such efforts as threatening national interests. This tension has recently been evident in countries like Ethiopia and Sudan, where nationalistic political sensitivities can clash with international peace initiatives.

Enforcement of agreements

While multilateral mediation can facilitate dialogue, ensuring that peace agreements are implemented remains a major challenge.

While multilateral mediation can facilitate dialogue, ensuring that peace agreements are implemented remains a major challenge. In many cases, governments and combatants sign agreements but fail equally to abide by them, either because of a lack of political will or because of ongoing hostilities.

Geopolitical rivalries

The Horn of Africa is a geopolitically sensitive region, with external powers exerting influence.

The Horn of Africa is a geopolitically sensitive region, with external powers (such as China, the Gulf states, Russia and the USA) exerting influence. Their involvement in peace processes and bilateral military cooperation agreements can sometimes complicate the regional mediation efforts, as they support different factions based on their own respective strategic and economic interests.

Climate change
Compounding the conflicts are issues of climate change and resultant competition over scarcer water and other resources. The

severe drought in 2020 to 2023 fuelled internal displacement in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan, while undermining the food security resilience that several communities had built since the previous drought cycle.

Chapter 2

PRINCIPLES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN MULTILATERAL PEACEBUILDING

Civil society plays a unique role as a voice for marginalized groups

2.1. INTRODUCTION

CSOs can play a crucial role in multilateral peacebuilding efforts in the Horn of Africa. While international and regional multilateral organizations often mediate peace processes, civil society actors— ranging from grassroots organizations to national non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—can add unique perspectives, local knowledge and deep community ties. Their engagement can help ensure that peacebuilding efforts are inclusive, sustainable and reflective of the diverse needs of all stakeholders, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups. Inclusion is crucial for the legitimation of CSOs as creative actors in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. For civil society engagement in multilateral peacebuilding to be effective, it must be guided by principles that prioritize inclusivity, respect for human rights, local ownership and long-term sustainability. Civil society plays a unique role as a voice for marginalized groups, a facilitator of dialogue and a promoter of non-violent conflict resolution.

Several studies have examined the long-standing engagements of CSOs with regional institutions in other domains of peace, security and governance (Life & Peace Institute 2014; Okumu 2020). As conflicts persist in the region, CSOs are increasingly compelled to lend their distinctive intervention advantages as mediators and peacemakers. This report offers insights and suggestions to guide CSOs' engagement with the AU PAPS Department and IGAD mediation interventions. It includes recommendations and guidelines centred on increased collaboration, the sharing of ideas and knowledge and the building of expertise.

Overall, this report recommends greater roles in peacemaking in the Horn of Africa for CSOs that can harness valuable expertise, and resources, to create more sustainable mediation initiatives of the AU and IGAD systems. Equally vital, despite the diversities that characterize CSOs in the region, CSOs continue to contest marginalization from high-level mediation processes, potentially opening space for more formalized invitation and participation in future peacemaking initiatives. In addition, local community-based organizations (CBOs) that promote the participation of women and youth in peacemaking would benefit in the broadening of civic spaces for sustainable peacebuilding. There is, therefore, a need to understand CSO strategies to overcome exclusion and marginalization, and to appreciate how to broaden civic spaces in peacemaking and mediation.

2.2. **PRINCIPLED ENGAGEMENT**

For civil society engagement to be effective in multilateral peacebuilding, it should be guided by a set of core principles that ensures its contributions are constructive, transformative and aligned with the broader goals of peace and stability. These principles include:

1. Inclusivity and representation
- *Broad-based participation.* Civil society should represent the full diversity of a society, including women, young people, marginalized groups—such as ethnic minorities, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)—and those who are directly affected by conflict. Excluding these groups from peace processes can lead to fragile, non-inclusive peace settlements, which fail to address the underlying causes of conflict.

- *Multi-stakeholder approach.* Civil society should act as a bridge between grassroots communities and political elites, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and considered.

2. Local ownership and agency

- *Empowerment of local communities*. Civil society should give local communities a sense of ownership over peacebuilding processes. This is especially important in contexts where external actors may be perceived as imposing solutions from above. Supporting local peace initiatives, fostering grassroots dialogue and building the

Civil society should give local communities a sense of ownership over peacebuilding processes.

capacity of local leaders are all crucial ways whereby civil society can contribute to strengthening local agency.

- *Contextualized solutions*. CSOs should emphasize deeper understanding of the local context—be it ethnic, cultural or historical—to ensure that peacebuilding is tailored to the specific needs and realities of the people on the ground.

3. Human rights and justice

- *Promotion of human rights*. CSOs should be strong advocates for human rights and ensure that peacebuilding efforts respect and protect the fundamental rights of all individuals. This includes speaking out against violations like discrimination, repression and gender-based violence—violations that are often exacerbated in conflict settings.

- *Transitional justice*. Engaging in dialogue about accountability and transitional justice mechanisms (such as truth commissions, reparations and trials) is crucial for achieving sustainable peace. CSOs can help ensure that transitional justice processes are transparent, inclusive and responsive to the needs of victims, particularly for those who have been marginalized or traumatized by conflict.

4. Non-violence and conflict prevention

- *Commitment to non-violence*. CSOs that engage in peacebuilding must be rooted in the principle of non-violence. Promoting peaceful alternatives to conflict, encouraging non-violent forms of political activism and working towards disarmament are fundamental principles. The organizations can also play an important role in monitoring and reporting incidents of violence, particularly at the community level, and advocating for accountability. By building networks of peace advocates, CSOs can help defuse tensions and create platforms for peaceful conflict resolution.

5. Building trust and social cohesion

- *Fostering dialogue and reconciliation*. CSOs can facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties, helping to break down mistrust and create pathways for reconciliation. Intergroup dialogue initiatives— especially those that bring together different ethnic, religious or

political groups—can help rebuild relationships and prevent further violence.

- *Promoting social cohesion*. Beyond immediate conflict resolution, CSOs can help build long-term social cohesion by promoting a sense of shared identity and solidarity. This includes addressing issues such as inequality, exclusion and social fragmentation, which often fuel violent conflict.

6. Peacebuilding as a long-term commitment

- *Sustainable peace*. Civil society should approach peacebuilding as a long-term process, recognizing that lasting peace is not just about ending armed conflict but also about addressing the social, economic and political factors that sustain violence. This includes advocating for policies that address economic disparities, strengthen democratic governance and support the reintegration of ex-combatants and displaced populations.

- *Building resilience*. Civil society can help communities build resilience by promoting education, supporting the rebuilding of social infrastructure and fostering the capacity for self-sustaining peace efforts. This means going beyond short-term relief and investing in the long-term development of peaceful, just societies.

7. Partnership and collaboration

- *Collaboration*. Civil society should engage in partnerships with governments, international organizations, private sector actors and other NGOs to maximize the impact of peacebuilding initiatives. Effective multilateral peacebuilding often requires diverse actors to coordinate their efforts, pool resources and share expertise.

- *Global solidarity*. Civil society should also engage with global networks of peacebuilders, connecting local efforts to global movements. By building solidarity across borders, civil society can advocate for international support and push for peacebuilding to be more effectively integrated into global policy frameworks.

8. Neutrality and impartiality

- *Avoiding alignment with parties to conflict*. While CSOs often operate within a specific national or local context, they should strive to maintain neutrality and impartiality in their engagements. This helps to ensure that peacebuilding efforts are seen as

Effective multilateral peacebuilding often requires diverse actors to coordinate their efforts, pool resources and share expertise.

Neutrality allows CSOs to play the role of a trusted intermediary or mediator.

legitimate by all parties to a conflict and that civil society actors are not perceived as taking sides. Neutrality allows CSOs to play the role of a trusted intermediary or mediator. This is especially important in deeply polarized conflict settings, where perception of bias can undermine the effectiveness of peace initiatives.

9. Adaptability and flexibility

- *Responding to changing dynamics*. Civil society must be adaptable in the face of shifting political realities, particularly in conflict zones where situations can evolve rapidly. Flexibility in approach, especially in the face of changing power structures or emerging security challenges, is essential for maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts.

- *Learning from experience*. Civil society should engage in continuous learning, reflecting on past peacebuilding initiatives and adjusting strategies based on what has or has not worked. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are important for assessing the effectiveness of peacebuilding actions, and for adjusting them accordingly.

Chapter 3

AU REGIONAL SECURITY MECHANISMS AND THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

3.1. INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

One of the objectives of the AU as stipulated in its Constitutive Act 2002 was to achieve a people-centred organization pledged to achieve 'greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the peoples of Africa' (article 3) The act established the AU Commission as the executive arm of the organization, as well as the Pan-African Parliament to expand the representation of citizen voices in continental decision making. The AU PAPS Department is tasked with coordinating peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives of the AU Commission.

Additionally, in 2002, the first Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU adopted the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council, thereby creating the principal multilateral body engaged in peace mediation in Africa. Moreover, the protocol provided for the Peace Fund and the African Standby Force (ASF), and these subsidiary organs can be activated to support peacemaking initiatives.

3.2. AU MEDIATION TOOLS AND APPROACHES

The AU employs a variety of mediation tools and approaches to address conflicts and political instability crises across the continent. These tools and approaches are designed within a set of broader normative frameworks for peace and security, as well as for democratic governance. Operational responses are increasingly

The AU employs a variety of mediation tools and approaches to address conflicts and political instability crises across the continent.

guided by efforts to establish the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture.

Some of the key AU mediation tools and approaches are the following:

3.2.1. Mediation and dialogue processes

High-level mediation panels
The AU frequently forms high-level mediation panels to facilitate peace talks between conflicting parties. These panels are typically led by respected African leaders or former heads of state who can strengthen the credibility of the mediation process and secure additional resources for its operation. Examples include panels led by figures such as former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, and former South African Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who were instrumental in brokering the peace agreement in Ethiopia's Tigray conflict (2022). The mediation panels will normally include a coordinator and team of experts to assist the lead negotiator(s). The AU praxis of mediation is set out in the *AU Mediation Support Handbook* (AU 2014).

Special envoys
There are four categories of these envoys: special envoys; High Representatives of the Chairperson; Special Representatives of the Chairperson; and High-Level Ad Hoc Committees (Apuuli 2024; AU 2022a, n.d.). In principle, all are supported by the AU's MSU, located in the PAPS Department. Most special envoys appointed by the AU Chairperson in recent years have been former heads of state or high-profile persons who have integrity, experience, political influence and independence.

3.2.2. Post-conflict reconstruction approaches

Peacebuilding and reconstruction
The AU integrates peacebuilding efforts into its mediation processes by focusing on post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation and long-term stability. This approach, which is anchored in the AU Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development policy adopted by member states in 2006, involves addressing not just the immediate cessation of hostilities but also the root causes of conflict (such as political, ethnic or economic grievances) and ensuring that the peace process

includes provisions for justice, the reintegration of ex-combatants and the reconstruction of war-torn areas.

Transitional justice mechanisms

According to the Transitional Justice Policy adopted by member states in 2019, the AU uses transitional justice mechanisms as part of its mediation process to help societies transition from conflict to peace. They include truth commissions, reparations for victims and judicial processes that hold perpetrators accountable. These mechanisms are designed to promote reconciliation and build social cohesion by addressing past injustices and fostering accountability.

3.2.3. **Preventive diplomacy and early warning systems**

The Continental Early Warning System

The 2002 Protocol establishing the AU PSC (in force from 2004) provides (in article 12) for the establishment of the CEWS to monitor potential conflicts and take preventive action before tensions escalate. CEWS uses several tools, including media reporters, to track political, social and security developments in member states and identify possible flashpoints. Its observation unit, known as the 'Situation Room', collects data for analysis and reporting. In principle, CEWS is linked to all the early warning systems operated by the different regional economic communities (RECs).

Preventive diplomacy

During the incipient, low-end stages of conflicts that might escalate, the AU employs preventive diplomacy, which is mandated by the PSC or, in some situations, by the Chairperson of the AU Commission. This includes behind-the-scenes mediation efforts, quiet diplomacy and engagement with key actors (such as governments, opposition groups and civil society) to avert conflict. The aim is to address underlying issues before they lead to armed conflict. In principle, the preventive-diplomacy responses of the AU should be linked to analyses generated by CEWS, as outlined in the PSC's *CEWS Handbook* (2008).

3.2.4. **Peace agreements**

Comprehensive peace agreements

The AU often facilitates the negotiation of comprehensive peace agreements that cover a wide range of issues, including ceasefire terms, political power-sharing arrangements, humanitarian access, security sector reform and post-conflict reconstruction. These agreements aim to provide a holistic resolution to conflicts and set

During the incipient, low-end stages of conflicts that might escalate, the AU employs preventive diplomacy.

out the framework for a sustainable peace process. The AU's role in mediating the 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF is a notable example.

The monitoring and implementation of agreements
The AU also plays a key role in ensuring that peace agreements are implemented. This includes deploying monitoring missions and engaging in follow-up processes to ensure that all parties adhere to the terms of agreements. The AU sometimes works with regional organizations and the UN to maintain a coordinated effort in monitoring implementation.

3.2.5. The role of the African Standby Force

Peace support operations
The AU's ASF was established under the 2002 Protocol on the establishment of the PSC (article 13). In principle, the force is supposed to include military, police and civilian capabilities, drawn on a standby basis from contributing member states, and ready for rapid deployment. While the ASF's primary role is observation and monitoring in peace-support operations, it can also engage in peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance missions. The ASF has its headquarters in Addis Ababa, while the Continental Logistics Base was to be set up in Douala, Cameroon. At the time of writing, the force is not operational, despite the formulation of the Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force document (AU 2003) and the adoption of supposedly enabling roadmaps in 2005, 2008 and 2010.

Regional standby forces
In principle, the ASF can be drawn from regional standby forces, which are maintained by the RECs. These include—the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Standby Force; the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Multinational Force for Central Africa (Force Multinationale de l'Afrique Centrale; FOMAC); the Eastern Africa Standby Force; and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Standby Brigade. Nevertheless, some disagreements persist concerning who would need, legally, to mandate the deployment of the ASF were it to be made operational, and about the role of the UN Security Council in this regard.

3.3. PROCEDURES OF DECISION MAKING AND THE FORMAL ROLES OF CSOS

3.3.1 The Economic, Social and Cultural Council

The AU has sought to engage CSOs in its procedures and decision-making structures, particularly through the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC). The African Union Protocol establishing the PSC in 2002 allowed 'any international organisation or civil society organisation involved and/or interested in a conflict or a situation under consideration by the PSC, to be invited to participate, without the right to vote, in the discussion' (article 8) In addition, the PSC Protocol stated that CSOs working in conflict-affected areas may participate in peace and security deliberations at the PSC's invitation (article 20). The PSC was to 'encourage non-governmental organizations, particularly women's organizations, to participate actively in the efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa'. Thus, the protocol mandated ECOSOCC to coordinate CSO engagement with the PSC, at least once a year under a specific theme. At other times, CSOs may address the PSC when invited to do so by the PSC chairperson or its members. CSOs may also submit reports to the AU Commission for consideration during PSC meetings, but only through the ECOSOCC.

Over the years, however, there have been criticisms about ECOSOCC's insularity and failure to include CSOs, which has hindered its ability to influence the PSC and other AU organs (ISS 2024). To meet some of these criticisms, the PSC and ECOSOCC revitalized an instrument first created in 2008 and known as the 'Livingstone Formula'. This mechanism set out procedural modalities for consistent and systematic interactions with CSOs. It provided a basis for the PSC consulting ECOSOCC and inviting individuals and CSOs to address its meetings. A crucial provision related to ECOSOCC's facilitative or coordination role. Paragraph 4 designated ECOSOCC as the 'focal point' responsible for connecting and facilitating interactions between the PSC and CSOs compliant with ECOSOCC's eligibility criteria for membership. With respect to peace mediation, the Livingstone Formula called on CSOs to 'assist and advise mediation teams during negotiations by providing information to special envoys/Representatives of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union in their execution of their work' and to 'backstop mediation efforts by providing appropriate information required on particular aspects, objectives, and procedures of the mediation process' (Amani Africa 2022; Maindi 2022).

CSOs working in conflict-affected areas may participate in peace and security deliberations at the PSC's invitation.

In further reforms to expand ECOSOCC's interactions with grassroots organizations, in 2014 the PSC adopted an improved version of the Livingstone Formula called the 'Maseru Conclusions'. This version permitted a wide range of CSOs to interact with the PSC on peace and security, particularly those CSOs with local knowledge and experience in conflict-affected areas. At the same time, the PSC acknowledged its limited interaction with CSOs in the years following the adoption of the Livingstone Formula. Consequently, the PSC promised to organize two yearly meetings to improve future coordination. According to a study on ECOSOCC, after 2018 the PSC then regularly invited ECOSOCC to its open sessions, even though only a small number of CSOs participated because ECOSOCC had not completed a roster of accredited CSOs (Maindi 2022). Furthermore, although the PSC and ECOSOCC held regular annual meetings, their institutionalization has sometimes been disrupted by unexpected events as well as by the PSC's busy monthly programmes of work.

3.3.2. Challenges for CSO participation in the ECOSOCC framework

CSOs' participation in the PSC, to date it is still sporadic, informal, perfunctory and ad hoc.

Despite some encouraging progress over the past 20 years regarding CSOs' participation in the PSC, to date it is still sporadic, informal, perfunctory and ad hoc. Fulfilling the 2018 pledge for CSOs to provide technical support to the PSC also remained elusive, because African CSOs lacked significant avenues for influencing peacemaking and mediation initiatives. Subsequently, CSOs' input in peace and security agendas was limited to occasional appearances and participation in open sessions of the PSC, in accordance with its Rules of Procedure, where their capacity to exert influence was minimal. More pertinently, that participation and engagement fell short of the envisaged advisory and hands-on roles in mediation.

Drawing from the experience of ECOSSOC, most African CSOs and CBOs continually complained that the AU system had not tapped sufficiently into their knowledge and expertise, despite their ability to contribute more solidly in terms of early warning, conflict analysis and peacebuilding. Furthermore, CSOs engaged regionally in the Horn of Africa complained that the AU peace and security institutions often provided easier access to well-resourced international CSOs and humanitarian organizations than to their African counterparts (author interviews, online, with CSOs, August–September 2024).

Saddled with multiple obstacles—meagre resources, capacity constraints and few opportunities for influencing peacemaking and mediation initiatives—CSOs have had to innovate in using civic activism to demonstrate organizational abilities and advantage.

Navigating both the inclusion–exclusion and centre–periphery divides in peace, security and conflict resolution has entailed CSOs searching for strategic alliances among a wide variety of national, regional and multilateral institutions.

To improve and enhance CSO inclusion in AU mediation and peacemaking, the rest of this chapter identifies potential areas of engagement in peacemaking processes. Despite implementation hurdles, the Livingstone Formula remains vital to engagements between CSOs and the AU.

3.4. AU PAPS DEPARTMENT MEDIATION APPROACHES—ROOM FOR STRATEGIC CSO ENGAGEMENT?

3.4.1. Brokering agreements in Horn of Africa states

Tigray conflict (Ethiopia)
The AU played a significant role in brokering the peace agreement between the Ethiopian Government and the TPLF in November 2022. AU-led negotiations, facilitated by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, along with Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta and South Africa's Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, were instrumental in bringing both parties to the table after two years of brutal conflict. The peace agreement provided a framework for the cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access and a political settlement—though the implementation of the agreement remains fragile. The AU's involvement was crucial in offering a regional solution to a domestic crisis, while bypassing international interventions that could have been perceived as external interference.

Mediation in Somalia
The AU has also been involved in peace efforts in Somalia, particularly through AMISOM and its successors, ATMIS and AUSSOM. However, the AU's mediation role in Somalia is complicated by the ongoing conflict with al-Shabaab, the difficulty of reconciling competing clan interests and the challenge of fostering a stable federal system.

The AU-led mediation in Kenya, 2007–2008
In the aftermath of the electoral violence that engulfed Kenya for two months from mid-December 2007, the AU appointed a Panel of Eminent African Persons (PEAP) led by former UN Secretary-General

Kofi Annan as the chief mediator. The mediators sought to reconcile the Party of National Unity led by President Mwai Kibaki and the opposition Orange Democratic Movement under Raila Odinga. In the division of labour that emerged, the AU provided broad legitimation to the PEAP while the UNDP-Kenya set up a special trust fund to finance the mediation and seconded UN staff to assist the team. A Swiss NGO, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, became the most prominent organization backstopping the mediation (McGhie 2023).

The PEAP's approach was a continuous, in-depth and wide-ranging consultation with various Kenyan CSOs, the private sector and the media, both before and during the formal mediation process; this approach was named the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Process. It created a sense of domestic ownership over the process, raised issues pertinent to citizens that the parties might otherwise have overlooked and fostered political pressure on Kibaki and Odinga (Khadiagala 2008; AU 2014).

Kenyan CSOs were critical players who galvanized domestic pressure on national leaders to end the violence.

From the start of the violence, Kenyan CSOs were critical players who galvanized domestic pressure on national leaders to end the violence and ensure provision of humanitarian assistance to the IDPs. A combined effort brought together religious organizations, lawyers and other professional associations. These institutions coalesced around two umbrella CSOs—the Concerned Citizens for Peace, which focused on ending the violence, and Kenyans for Peace with Truth and Justice, which focused on the necessity of truth and reconciliation. Women had representation in both institutions and played vital roles during the negotiations. As Graça Machel, the only female member of the PEAP noted, the women's movement produced recommendations that fed directly into the negotiating process undertaken between the political parties. These recommendations emphasized the need to address the humanitarian situation and the root causes of the violence. Furthermore, they highlighted the scourge of gender-based violence and the need to address its instrumentalization as a weapon of war (Machel 2024).

Owing to the 'heavy lifting' undertaken by CSOs in the aftermath of the violence, the PEAP could not ignore them in the negotiations. From the outset, therefore, the PEAP appealed to the negotiating teams to give CSOs the chance to make written submissions to the mediators. The PEAP also reached out to the Kenya Association of Manufacturers and the Kenyan Private Sector Alliance to obtain the views of the private sector (AU 2014: McGhie 2023).

In addition to mobilizing essential pressures and monitoring (and documenting) the electoral violence, CSOs—through their meetings and submissions to the PEAP—helped in defining the historical context of the crisis, provided crucial information about the parties, made recommendations to the PEAP on its agenda items, and helped the PEAP to prepare scenarios during the negotiations (McGhie 2023). Thus, although CSOs were not at the negotiating table, they provided an additional source of information and communication in the mediation process. Beyond the CSOs, the PEAP sought to generate broad local legitimacy for its role by widely disseminating deliberations through advertisements in Kenyan newspapers, on television channels and via radio stations. In the final phases of the negotiations, bilateral meetings limited to Kibaki and Odinga produced the Kenya National Reconciliation and Dialogue Agreement in February 2008. Overall, the process of negotiations reflected a participatory, consensus-building, multi-track configuration (AU 2014).

Building on the solid relations that the mediators had established with CSOs and the media, Kofi Annan invited a Kenyan think tank, South Consulting Africa Ltd, to provide monitoring data for assessing compliance with the implementation process. Its regular monitoring and evaluation reports became central to measuring reform progress on the ground. Furthermore, South Consulting Africa Ltd worked alongside a private public-opinion polling firm, Ipsos, in conducting regular polls among Kenyans to assess popular perceptions of the implementation of the various facets of the agreement. The Kofi Annan Foundation used the results from monitoring and from polling data to convene periodic meetings of major stakeholders during the implementation phase.

Notable observations on CSOs' engagements in Kenya included the following:

1. The mediator's deliberate decision to involve CSOs.
2. CSOs, particularly women's organizations, had a 'champion' on the mediation panel.
3. CSOs were agile in making their expertise and knowledge relevant to the mediators.
4. CSOs presenting common and autonomous positions, separate from the interests of political protagonists, enabled mediators to tap into their broad neutrality as dependable interlocutors.
5. The mediators depended on the expertise of CSOs and were able to build trust with them.

Although CSOs were not at the negotiating table, they provided an additional source of information and communication in the mediation process.

CSOs were agile in making their expertise and knowledge relevant to the mediators.

These observations linked to the design and structure of the AU-led mediation, with an emphasis on the following elements:

1. There was a strong mediation team, which prevented the protagonists from vetoing CSO participation.
2. The negotiations judiciously combined open and participatory elements (engagement of CSOs, outreach to citizens, and media briefings) with closed-door elements (deliberations between the mediation team and protagonists).
3. The mediation outcomes were the distillation of ideas and prescriptions from CSOs and the protagonists.
4. There was a critical role for NGOs and the media in monitoring the agreement.

3.4.2. CSOs and the activities of AU special envoys

Special envoys are a key tool in AU mediation initiatives, for they can allow greater CSO participation in mediation and peacemaking. However, an upfront challenge is that CSOs are not involved in the selection and appointment procedures regarding special envoys and are therefore not in a position to influence their terms of reference and mandates. For the most part, the appointment procedure is opaque and secretive, preventing the participation of CSOs in the choices.

Although CSOs took part in an AU-organized meeting to operationalize the MSU that supports envoys from the AU PAPS Department in September 2016, it is still unclear how these envoys have interacted with CSOs in their activities. In South Sudan, where the AU opened a Liaison Office in 2008 to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the AU appointed three sets of special envoys to help in peacemaking and the post-conflict reconstruction. First, in 2009, the AU appointed a High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan, chaired by a trio of former state presidents—Thabo Mbeki (South Africa), Pierre Buyoya (Burundi) and Abdusalam Abubakar (Nigeria)—to assist with the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. After South Sudan's independence, the AUHIP's mandate became largely the promotion of peaceful relations between Sudan and South Sudan. Second, in December 2014 the AU appointed the High-Level Ad Hoc Committee comprising the presidents of Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa to support the IGAD mediation. Third, in July 2015, the AU Chairperson appointed former Malian president Alpha Oumar Konaré as the High Representative for South Sudan. Konaré's mandate was to complement the work of the AU High-Level Ad Hoc Committee: to facilitate a collective and coordinated

> **Special envoys are a key tool in AU mediation initiatives, for they can allow greater CSO participation in mediation and peacemaking.**

African action in the search for a negotiated solution, to support the IGAD mediators, and to establish communication with South Sudanese parties and IGAD leaders (AU 2015). CSOs had limited and perfunctory contact with these AU envoys in large part because the latter made short visits and often consulted mainly with South Sudan's political and military leaderships and the representatives of the three Troika states of Norway, the United Kingdom, and the USA. Of the AU envoys, Konaré played the most prominent role in the short-lived 'IGAD Plus' forum, where he interacted with IGAD states and the Troika in the lead-up to the signing of the 2015 Addis Ababa agreement. The other envoys played generally less visible roles in South Sudan (author interviews, online, with several CSOs, Addis Ababa and Nairobi, June and November 2024).

CSOs were also remarkably absent from the AU initiative to end the Ethiopia−Tigray war that broke out in November 2020. The war stemmed ostensibly from an attack by the Tigrayan armed forces against a federal army base in the region, killing more than a dozen soldiers and wounding several others. The federal government responded through the deployment of thousands from the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) against what it perceived as a secessionist bid by the TPLF provincial government. Between November 2020 and August 2022, the fighting resulted in the displacement of more than 2 million people and an estimated 383,000 to 600,000 fatalities (Mabera 2023; Aidi 2021).

The scale of the humanitarian crisis and mounting casualties led to pressure from multiple global actors for a negotiated settlement. In agreeing to negotiate, the Ethiopian Government expressed a firm stance that any peace initiative would have to be within the AU framework anchored on the principle of 'African solutions to African problems'. Hence, the AU purposefully appointed the team specifically established for the Ethiopian peace process comprising the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa, along with Obasanjo, Kenyatta and Mlambo-Ngcuka. The negotiations took place in Pretoria, South Africa, in highly secretive sessions during late October 2022. There followed discussions on a cessation-of-hostilities agreement in November 2022, in Nairobi (Berhane 2022). The Nairobi meeting reached major decisions on the composition and operation of the AU's Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mechanism (MVCM), which included 10 observers from the home countries of the High-Level Panel members—Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa—as well as 2 liaison officials from the TPLF and the Ethiopian Federal Government. Consistent with the exclusionary thrust of the peacemaking, the parties to the MVCM signed a

CSOs were also remarkably absent from the AU initiative to end the Ethiopia−Tigray war that broke out in November 2020.

confidentiality clause in the mechanism's terms of reference, which prohibited MVCM members, advisors and support personnel from engaging with the media and other parties during and after the conclusion of their responsibilities. Two years after the creation of the MVCM, its reports and operational details have remained classified (Deleglise and Khadiagala 2024).

3.4.3. New ideas from AU PAPS Department on the inclusion of CSOs in AU mediation and peacemaking

The AU and IGAD recognize the increasing advantages of CSOs, and the experience they offer, in localized conflicts. The challenge is how to harness and scale-up these experiences in national and regional peace initiatives. Major international policy platforms such as the Master Roadmap on 'Silencing the Guns' in Africa, the UN Security Council resolutions on 'Women, Peace and Security' and 'Youth, Peace and Security', and the new UN Pact for the Future have acknowledged and advanced the roles of CSO engagement in peacemaking and mediation. For instance, one of the indicative frameworks of the Master Roadmap is to institutionalize the Livingstone Formula and the PSC–ECOSOCC–CSO annual meetings on the sidelines of PSC retreats and to harness the contributions of CSOs towards the development of the PSC's annual programme of work (AU 2016). UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (adopted in October 2000) reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction (UN 2000). Similarly, UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (adopted in December 2015) affirmed the important role youth should play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts (UN 2015). These themes of inclusiveness are reinforced in Actions 19 and 20 of the Pact for the Future: they stress that the full, equal, safe and meaningful participation of women and youth in decision making at all levels of peace and security, including conflict prevention and resolution, mediation and peace operations, is essential to achieving sustainable peace (UN 2024a).

The AU PAPS Department has tried to introduce new ideas into the broader question of inclusion of CSOs in peacebuilding, mediation and conflict resolution. These ideas acknowledge the growing roles of CSOs, academic institutions and a cross-section of non-state actors in the activities of the department. More pertinently, the PAPS Department launched the AU Network of Think Tanks for Peace (NeTT4Peace) in February 2023. It aims to drive the

strategic partnership between the PAPS Department and those research communities focusing on governance, peace and security. Furthermore, NeTT4Peace seeks to enhance the relevance and value of the contribution of African knowledge communities and allow the PAPS Department to identify and better utilize evidence-based research to inform policy formulation and strategic decision making (AU 2023).

This initiative has identified about a dozen academic and policy think tanks as founding members—organizations such as the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, which has a history of advocacy and grassroots mobilization of CSOs for peace in West Africa. Being a new initiative, NeTT4Peace needs to be popularized by the PAPS Department to a larger community of CSOs. Nevertheless, some concerns have already emerged that it is biased in favour of regional African research centres, to the potential detriment of local-level CSOs. The PAPS Department needs to increase efforts to link knowledge-producing institutions and grassroots-based organizations in its initiatives (author interviews with CSOs, Addis Ababa and Nairobi, June and November 2024).

The PAPS Department needs to increase efforts to link knowledge-producing institutions and grassroots-based organizations in its initiatives.

Chapter 4

IGAD PEACE AND SECURITY INTERVENTIONS AND THE ROLE OF CSOS

4.1. INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

IGAD is a successor, or modification, of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD), which was launched in the mid-1980s by Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda to mitigate the effects of droughts and desertification. In 1996, IGADD (including Eritrea) transformed into IGAD, with a broader mandate to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts. South Sudan joined IGAD after breaking away from Sudan in 2011. Given its membership, IGAD is focused on the Greater Horn of Africa.

IGAD's mediation efforts in countries like Sudan and South Sudan have been undermined by local dynamics and challenged by the external influence of regional powers.

In recent years, IGAD has become known for its proactive roles in peacemaking and peacebuilding in the region. As noted in Chapter 1: Introduction, there have been serious challenges from the competing interests of member states and frequent political instability within them, which has resulted in limited resources for the organization. Moreover, IGAD's mediation efforts in countries like Sudan and South Sudan have been undermined by local dynamics and challenged by the external influence of regional powers such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

An overview of IGAD's roles would include the following aspects:

Somalia
IGAD has played a role since 2004 in supporting the Somali Federal Government and fostering peace dialogues between different Somali factions. It has also facilitated negotiations between the Somali Government and the semi-autonomous regions (such as Puntland and Somaliland), although these talks have often been slow-moving.

South Sudan

IGAD's involvement in South Sudan has been more significant. After the civil war (2013–2018), IGAD facilitated negotiations for the R-ARCSS (2018), which eventually led to the formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity in 2020. Its implementation process, which is supported by an IGAD special envoy, has been ongoing, with major delays. IGAD remains one of the most engaged regional organizations in the country.

Sudan

IGAD has attempted to mediate the ongoing conflict in Sudan following the military coup in 2021 and the subsequent power struggle between the army and paramilitary forces. However, IGAD's mediation efforts have been limited by the regional and international complexity of the situation, and IGAD's capacity to bring together the various factions has been questioned.

Borderlands programme

The borderlands in the Horn of Africa—as defined by IGAD in the four 'clusters' of Karamoja, Borana, Somali/Mandera and Dikhil—are characterized by economic, social and political marginalization, entrenched poverty, persistent conflict, low state capacity, forced displacement (estimated at 4 million refugees and 8 million IDPs) and environmental degradation (World Bank 2020; Horn of Africa Initiative 2023). Over the years, climate change has exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities, with altered rainfall patterns leading to both droughts and floods. The Karamoja borderland, which straddles the borders of Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and South Sudan, also faces challenges of insecurity caused by cattle rustling, the prevalence of livestock diseases, resource competition, insecure communal land tenure, banditry and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. With the low levels of state authority in these areas, there is hardly any delivery of public services, further deepening marginality. Both the Dikhil Cluster (on the boundary between Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia) and Borana Cluster (on the Kenya–Ethiopia border) share similar socio-economic and conflict dynamics.

4.2. IGAD PEACE MEDIATION AND APPROACHES

IGAD has developed, and deployed, various mediation mechanisms and approaches to address conflicts and to promote peace in the Greater Horn of Africa. These include the following:

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4.2.1. **Dialogue and reconciliation**

IGAD has been involved in organizing dialogue as a specific peacemaking effort, whose lynchpin has been the mediated creation and strengthening of conducive personal relationships between the leaderships of directly conflicting parties. These dialogues, which are typically led by a serving head of state/government, or their appointee, have been used to achieve ceasefires or the cessation of armed conflicts in situations of civil war and protracted inter-communal border conflicts, in advance of a push for relatively holistic peace agreements, in which member states can act as guarantors. One of the better-known dialogues in this regard has been the inter-Sudanese dialogue leading to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan and the South Sudan peace processes from 2015 to date. Given the nature of these dialogues, they offer limited openings for CSOs to be included, let alone to influence outcomes.

4.2.2. **IGAD Roster of Mediators**

The IGAD Roster of Mediators is an active, or standby, database of individual experts and organizations, which IGAD can call on to respond effectively to conflict situations as they arise. These experts can be requested to consider practical approaches to reconciliation and dialogue, either as encompassing (or operational) tools for strengthening mediation processes or as a way to enhance dialogues as part of peace initiatives. Previously, members of the roster were involved in developing a reconciliation framework and a dialogue index for the IGAD region. When individual experts are deployed, their work modality is, in principle, regulated by the IGAD strategic guidelines on mediation, which were introduced in 2017.

4.2.3. **Mediation Support Unit**

The IGAD established its MSU in December 2012, by a Resolution of the Committee of Ambassadors. This MSU is supposed to provide different kinds of support to ongoing mediation efforts and to strengthen the institutional capacity for preventive diplomacy. Currently based in IGAD's Department of Peace and Security in Addis Ababa, the IGAD MSU performs two principal functions. First, it undertakes capacity-building interventions targeting IGAD mediators as well as national and subnational institutions and actors in IGAD member states. These include mediation training, to improve the mediation skills of staff and stakeholders, and the formulation of normative and operational guidelines. Second, it maintains a Knowledge Management Platform, which is an online tool that provides what IGAD calls an all-encompassing database of policy documents and publications documenting past mediation efforts, as well as other key resources and information on IGAD's peacemaking

and peacebuilding initiatives. The tool is also meant to serve as a platform for sharing best practices and for improving future mediation interventions.

4.3. FORMAL DECISION MAKING IN IGAD AND ROLES FOR CSOS−CEWARN

In 2002, IGAD adopted a Protocol to launch CEWARN as one of Africa's pioneer early warning mechanisms. The establishment of CEWARN laid the foundations for IGAD's partnership with CSOs because CEWARN was conceived as an interwoven network of governmental organizations and NGOs that operate with complementary mandates in peace and development matters at local, national and regional levels (IGAD 2012). To implement this commitment, the Eighth Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government in 2002 provided a framework for CSO cooperation with IGAD through the NGO/CSO Forum, overseen by a steering committee. For almost a decade after 2002, CEWARN focused primarily on information sharing with the purpose of preventing and responding to violent conflicts relating to pastoralist communities inhabiting the borderlands of the Horn of Africa. In 2012, IGAD broadened its mandate under a new Strategy Framework: this transformed CEWARN into a system of timely detection and response to the potential escalation of violent conflicts—arising in the economic, environmental, governance, security and social spheres—in all IGAD states. Apart from expanding both the thematic scope and the geographical areas, the strategy deepened CEWARN's partnership with CSOs (Borchgrevink 2009). In establishing CEWARN, IGAD made a critical decision to use early warning and early response to prevent violent conflict and to serve people's aspirations for shared prosperity, security and a sustained peace (Goldsmith 2020).

While CEWARN established parameters for CSO−intergovernmental partnerships, national authorities have retained the mandate to operationalize these mechanisms through the Conflict Early Warning and Response Units (CEWERUs) and National Research Units. The multi-agency model of CEWERU committees in principle ensures that CSOs participate in the planning and execution of responses at local levels. To support national initiatives, IGAD created the Rapid Response Fund in 2009 to support urgent interventions to de-escalate persistent inter-communal conflicts and to support capacity building for national structures. Many analysts have credited the Rapid Response Fund with providing direct support to local communities

affected by conflicts and helping to foster collaboration between governments and CBOs with better understanding of local contexts of conflicts (IGAD CEWARN 2009; Kebede 2020).

Kenyan and Ugandan CEWERU committees have been the most active to date. Their regular meetings have involved CSOs, while the participation of CSOs in other IGAD member states has declined. This decline is partly caused by official mistrust and suspicion of CSOs as well as shrinking civic spaces (Maru 2018). Typically, CEWERU committees follow a division of labour that assigns three primary roles to CSOs. First, CSOs collect data and write incident reports on the local-level dynamics that formal media-monitoring institutions cannot capture. Second, expert NGOs and research institutions offer more in-depth analyses on reports from local contexts. Third, CSOs and community leaders provide responses at the local level, through rapid preventive interventions, facilitating dialogue among groups in conflict and monitoring local compliance mechanisms (IGAD 2012).

CEWARN's ability to operate pivots principally on whether governments offer room and legitimacy for CSOs to operate.

Critically, CEWARN's ability to operate pivots principally on whether governments offer room and legitimacy for CSOs to operate. As Aeby (2023) has noted, implementing the CEWARN Strategy Framework in various IGAD member states has hinged on 'continuously building confidence between government and civil society, [and] maintaining sufficient civic space for CSOs to undertake early warning and response activities'. Equally vital, the 'experiences of CEWARN and other (inter)-governmental early-warning (and response) systems show that the participation of CSOs, including local community-based organisations can prove beneficial at all stages of the early-warning and response process, including data collection, analysis, warning and the implementation of responsive action' (Aeby 2023).

Currently, several CSOs are engaged in providing source data to CEWARN. These include: the Eastern Africa Civil Society Network (ECONet); the Life & Peace Institute; the South Sudan Youth and Development Organization; the Centre for Inclusive Governance, Peace, and Justice (South Sudan); and the Center for Social Development (Somalia). Some of the challenges they experience include lack of adequate and consistent funding for their activities and limited, sporadic engagement with IGAD institutions. On the other hand, IGAD has its own challenges in working with CSOs, including lack of well-functioning and operationally meaningful CSOs that can contribute to IGAD strategic objectives. In addition, some governments insist on IGAD dealing only with CSOs that are affiliated to governments (author interviews with CSO actors, Nairobi, November 2024).

The real controversy, however, has been whether CSOs can transcend their current localized conflict-prevention roles and engage effectively with formal national and regional peacemaking and mediation efforts, in concert with state actors and regional institutions. While CEWARN envisaged that CSOs might provide technical support to mediators, even in most high-level crisis responses, in practice CSOs have maintained low-level or subsidiary positions. One of the explanations is that governments and regional institutions often consider high-level mediation and peacemaking exercises as the exclusive preserve of state officials. As one critic has pointed out: 'The viewpoint that policy formulation and decision making are the prerogatives of states is at the heart of civil society's exclusion. Policy actors at both the AU and IGAD believe they are doing civil society actors a favour by occasionally including them, rather than respecting their fundamental rights as set out in the legal provisions of the founding documents of these institutions' (ISS 2019). Reinforcing the exclusion of CSOs is the fact that despite the aim of IGAD to establish a CSO desk at its Secretariat that would provide more institutionalized roles for CSO engagement, this has yet to occur.

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4.4. CSO ENGAGEMENT IN SPECIFIC IGAD INTERVENTIONS

4.4.1. CSOs in Somalia interventions

Interventions by IGAD in Somalia started in the early 2000s. They were initially aimed at state building and stabilization by establishing a transitional government after the collapse of formal governmental institutions in the 1990s. Through convening inclusive dialogues between factional leaders, both inside and outside the country, IGAD facilitated the emergence of the key transitional charter for re-founding Somalia as a federal state. For various reasons, including their own weak organization, CSOs did not feature meaningfully in these early dialogues (Woodward 2004; Healy 2011).

In recent years, IGAD's interventions have shifted to peacebuilding principally in response to crises that continue to be catalysed by weak state institutions, political factionalism, clan-based conflicts and the rise of militarized, insurgent Islamist groups. IGAD has also been drawn into state-building support, for instance in the establishment of decentralized levels of government and the holding of elections. In both the peacebuilding and state-building spheres, IGAD has relied on the political and technical assistance of the AU, UN, diplomatic missions and regional states.

The IGAD has a dedicated office for the mission to Somalia, as well as a Special Envoy for Somalia, whose mandate also extends over the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. The role of the special envoy has involved facilitating dialogues between the federal government and federal member states. These regularly deal with heavily contested issues emanating from democratization and federalization processes in the country, including recent electoral disputes in 2022. Additionally, the IGAD special envoy fosters coordination or even alignment with the peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives of the AU, UN, EU and other external actors.

Somalia-based CSOs have engaged in their own peacemaking and peace-advocacy initiatives in Somalia, particularly at local and communal levels within the federal member states.

The CSOs have pressed for inclusive dialogues to deal with the same issues, especially as they currently have greater capacity than formal institutions to provide technical assistance in state-building initiatives. It is also noteworthy that several stabilization, humanitarian, public-service-supply (particularly education and health) and rule-of-law/accountability projects of international partners pivot on the work performed by CSOs on the ground. Moreover, Somalia-based CSOs have engaged in their own peacemaking and peace-advocacy initiatives in Somalia, particularly at local and communal levels within the federal member states. Several, like the Somalia Youth Development Network (Soyden) and the Somali Dialogue Platform, have built trust with community leaders to resolve local conflicts over resources where they have a comparative advantage. Some CSOs and CBOs have established strategic positions to be the first interveners in resolving clan and inter-clan conflicts. Furthermore, CSOs are engaged in conflict-resolution activities outside their traditional work, for instance, assisting international counterterrorism and law-and-order operations.

CSOs are available to play several strategic roles augmenting IGAD peacemaking engagement.

Furthermore, CSOs are available to play several strategic roles augmenting IGAD peacemaking engagement. These include organizing, facilitating and even mediating dialogues to end armed conflicts, linking local and communal level peacemaking to national reconciliation and disarmament plans and strategies, and lobbying for the support of international partners and the large Somali diaspora. Since IGAD's CEWARN still requires activation in Somalia, CSOs have not been involved in its national early-warning data-collection and collation work.

4.4.2. **CSOs in South Sudan's conflicts, 2013−2024**

2013−2018

In December 2013, two years after South Sudan's independence in July 2011, civil war broke out. The conflict followed a dispute within the ruling SPLM/A between President Salva Kiir and first Vice-President Riek Machar over the pace and direction of the post-independence political transition. To pre-empt further escalation, in December 2013 IGAD and AU envoys intervened by way of a fact-finding mission. A follow-up summit of IGAD member states decided to create an Office of the IGAD Special Envoys for South Sudan, led initially by Ethiopia's foreign minister Mesfin Seyoum, the Kenyan former lieutenant-general Lazaro Sumbeiywo, and Sudan's ambassadors (Lieutenant-General) Mohamed Ahmed al-Dabi (2013−2015) and Ismail Wais (2017−2018). Subsequently, the AU established two institutions to assist the IGAD special envoys—the High-Level Ad Hoc Committee and the AU High Representative for South Sudan. However, the roles of these envoys were hardly visible during most of the negotiations (author interview with a member of IGAD special envoys technical team, Zanzibar and Nairobi, November 2024).

IGAD special envoys mediated the first phase of talks in Addis Ababa. Among the issues discussed was the participation of CSOs, particularly as the latter sought representation, arguing that their exclusion from previous IGAD mediation efforts (1993−2011) had weakened the outcomes in peace agreements. Conflicting parties resisted that argument, claiming that CSOs would become 'unnecessary intruders', threatening the interests and power of the combatants (Akol 2014; interview with a member of the IGAD special envoys technical team, Zanzibar and Nairobi, November 2024).

Eventually, the two principal figures, Kiir and Machar, relented on the question of CSO inclusion. Through a framework agreement signed by them in early May 2014, CSOs gained entry to a multiparty negotiation forum. In this new format, CSOs brought 28 members drawn from professional groups, religious organizations, political parties and former detained political leaders. Each of the groups had seven representatives (Tubiana 2014). However, deep schisms soon emerged within South Sudanese CSOs, along ethno-regional, religious and political lines. Furthermore, these divisions mirrored the wider fragmentation among political groups, resulting in partisan alignments that diluted cohesion among CSO voices. As one of the CSO participants noted, there were wide differences between 'government-friendly civil society' and 'opposition-friendly civil

society' (Mohandis 2018). In addition, the feuds among these actors extended to the selection and composition of the other stakeholders to the negotiations, essentially paralysing the talks (Akol 2014).

With CSOs presenting a multiplicity of views about the conflict and approaches to ending it, at the end of 2014 the IGAD special envoys terminated CSO inclusion and reverted to the narrower elite-driven process, to reduce the complications of many players. In August 2015, the SPLM/A parties reached the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) in Addis Ababa. This agreement provided for the establishment of an inclusive government, demilitarization and the return of militias to civilian life, mechanisms for transitional justice, measures to facilitate humanitarian access and a programme to redress the economy. It also established a Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), in which CSOs eventually participated to monitor the implementation of the ARCSS (Verjee 2017, 2019). Some CSO actors have claimed that their participation in the JMEC was largely perfunctory, because the militaries of the key players dominated the deliberations (author interviews with CSOs, Addis Ababa, June 2024, and Nairobi, November 2024).

The 2015 ARCSS collapsed within a year, a victim of the political mistrust and polarization among South Sudanese leaders. Heavy fighting in July 2016 between the South Sudan army and military groups aligned to Machar ended the agreement and forced IGAD mediators back to the drawing board. Following a series of consultations with the parties, the mediators formed the High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) for South Sudan in June 2017 to revive the talks for a more permanent ceasefire and the full implementation of the ARCSS. In the series of negotiations under the auspices of the HLRF, various donors supported the participation of numerous CSOs, all laying claims to be genuine representatives of the South Sudanese public. With the mediators appealing for unified positions among the discordant CSO voices, religious organizations—under the auspices of the South Sudan Council of Churches—played a visible leadership role during the HLRF final negotiations in Khartoum (Wilson 2019: 24). In the face of the failure of the parties to respect the many ceasefire agreements signed during the HLRF, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni and Sudan's then president, Omar al-Bashir, stepped in as the main interlocutors. Both leaders convened face-to-face meetings in Khartoum between Kiir and Machar, which led to the signing of the R-ARCSS in August 2018. The agreement also created a multiparty Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements

Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM), in which the CSOs found representation.

Although divided, CSOs had relatively higher representation during the 2017–2018 HLRF than in the previous negotiations. As Magara and Rivers (2024: 15) noted:

> Civil society actors employed multi-pronged tactics, including caucusing with negotiators and parties to the conflict, issuing memoranda, lobbying national and regional leaders, and passing their messages through international actors, such as the Troika (Norway, UK, USA). Civil society actors coalesced and established working bases in Addis Ababa and recruited communication experts and other support teams to offer technical support during the process. Civil society made concerted efforts over many years to build lobbying and negotiating capacities at every stage of the peace process.

By the second phase of the negotiations, IGAD special envoys had widely accepted the inclusion of CSOs as a prerequisite for peace in South Sudan. CSO participants in these rounds of negotiations acknowledge that their presence made a vital difference to the outcome of the talks, particularly because their inclusion galvanized the search for a peaceful outcome in which South Sudanese participated irrespective of position and stature. Others have noted that the all-inclusive negotiations fostered a climate of reconciliation that built a firm foundation for nation building (author interviews with CSOs, Addis Ababa, June 2024, and Nairobi, November 2024).

Nevertheless, it is also crucial to appreciate role of the spirited demands by the Troika—the leading financiers of the negotiations—in the breakthrough in the struggle for inclusion (Magara and Rivers 2024). In this regard, Vertin (2018:10) has claimed that 'the Americans proposed the multi-stakeholder format for the second phase of talks'. More accurately, the combination of internal learning and external prodding produced positive results in the negotiations.

By the second phase of the negotiations, IGAD special envoys had widely accepted the inclusion of CSOs as a prerequisite for peace in South Sudan.

2019–2024
While the 2018 R-ARCSS brought relative peace to South Sudan, its complexity made implementation an arduous task, which was marked by delays and postponements. The main sticking points revolved around writing a new constitution, holding a national census, security sector reforms, setting up a representative transitional parliament and agreeing on an election date. Except

for the establishment of a transitional parliament in early 2022 and agreement on local mechanisms for transitional justice, most of the core provisions remain mired in disagreement. Originally slated for the end of 2022, the elections were moved to December 2024 and then delayed, in September 2024, to December 2026. Amid the national stalemate, violent groups proliferated, most of them competing for power and resources at the local level (Craze and Marko 2022; ICG 2021; Madut Jok 2019).

CSOs responded to the stalemate by organizing alternative mediation processes.

This time, CSOs responded to the stalemate by organizing alternative mediation processes, to bring in non-signatories of the 2018 agreement, and by mobilizing a national consensus to end the stalemate. Building on both their growing stature in the South Sudan negotiations and their international networks, religious organizations—particularly the Catholic Church—invited the Community of Sant'Egidio, a lay Catholic institution based in Rome, to lead a new initiative entitled the 'Rome Initiative'. Benefiting from experience of previous engagements in mediating African conflicts, the Community of Sant'Egidio launched new talks in the aftermath of a visit by Kiir and Machar to The Vatican in April 2019, and a reciprocal visit to Khartoum by Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury in February 2023 (Africa News 2019; Al Jazeera 2023).

In the first negotiations, held in mid-July 2019, the Community of Sant'Egidio mediated the signing of two roadmaps: one for the inclusion of two groups—the Real SPLM and the South Sudan United Front/Army (SSUF/A)—in the CTSAMVM, and one for 'political dialogue on the causes of the conflict'. Representatives of IGAD, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and several donors attended the Rome negotiations as observers, in an effort by Sant'Egidio to include parties that had previously led the negotiations (Community of Sant'Egidio 2019). To build on the momentum established in Rome, the Community of Sant'Egidio organized in December 2021 (in Nairobi) a workshop for military representatives of the South Sudan Government, the Real SPLM and the SSUF/A, in collaboration with the CTSAMVM. During it, the government representatives agreed that the inclusion of opposition military groups in the CTSAMVM would strengthen peace in South Sudan (Community of Sant'Egidio 2021).

Following the Nairobi workshop, President Kiir formally invited Kenya's President William Ruto to participate in the Rome Initiative during a forum in December 2023. President Ruto then appointed Lazaro Sumbeiywo, formerly one of the main IGAD mediators, to lead the High-Level Mediation for South Sudan—which is commonly known as the 'Tumaini ('Hope') Initiative' (Mutambo 2024)—with

Mohamed Ali Guyo, IGAD Special Envoy for Somalia and the Red Sea, as deputy. The re-emergence of Sumbeiywo in effect signalled the merger of the CSO-led Rome process and the IGAD process under Kenya's leadership. At the inaugural event in Nairobi, to mark the new round of negotiations under the joint Tumaini and Rome Initiatives (May 2024), the Community of Sant'Egidio endorsed the new collaboration in the presence of regional and international actors (Community of Sant'Egidio 2024b).

From May to August 2024, Sumbeiywo and the Secretary General of the Community of Sant'Egidio, Paolo Impagliazzo—the co-mediators—held several meetings in Rome and Nairobi, under the joint Rome and Tumaini initiatives, which brought together South Sudan's Transitional Government and opposition parties. The parties signed the first eight protocols, covering matters including humanitarian assistance, community conflict resolution, confidence-building measures among the parties, security sector reforms and the role of peace guarantors. In addition, the parties discussed protocols on justice reform, resource and financial management, and the constitution-writing process. During the negotiations of the protocols, CSOs contributed to the deliberations. As Rajab Mohandis of the People's Coalition for Civil Action stated: 'We joined the Tumaini Initiative with a lot of expectations, and we are happy that the majority of our proposals have been incorporated in the various protocols' (interview with Radio Tamazuj, 15 May 2024). Funding partners also supported the Rome and Tumaini initiatives to establish avenues for civil society, particularly women, to have their priorities for peace and governance heard (author interviews with CSOs, Addis Ababa, June 2024; Community of Sant'Egidio 2024a, 2024b; Oluoch 2024).

4.5. OBSERVATIONS ON CSO ENGAGEMENT IN IGAD PEACEMAKING

From the examples described above, CSOs and their coalitions are notably observed to be involved in a variety of IGAD peacemaking activities in the Horn of Africa. Whether their engagement is successful, in terms of the peace outcomes pursued, is difficult to measure. At any rate, peace is a long-term outcome in states like South Sudan and Somalia, which depend on more than the ability of multilateral actors to secure agreements. Peace depends, too, on continuing to build trust among local stakeholders to ensure the implementation of agreements and other changes in a country's complex ethnic, political and social fabric. CSO engagement in IGAD

CSO engagement in IGAD peacemaking clearly has been evolving.

peacemaking clearly has been evolving, especially regarding the influence that CSOs can exert on IGAD special envoys and mediators. As the illustrations show, this influence has pivoted on CSOs' ability to leverage external partners.

According to its relevant documents, IGAD's engagement with CSOs rests on five pillars, including governance, human rights, and peace and security. IGAD established the CSOs' Governance Forum in April 2021 to enlarge its collaboration with CSO regional networks in strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Similarly, IGAD has occasionally convened consultations with CSOs that support cross-border land-governance projects, for instance in the Somali Cluster (IGAD 2020).

By contrast, engagement with CSOs in the IGAD Peace and Security Department has been relatively limited beyond the highly visible information-gathering modalities of CEWARN. Other efforts have included sporadic workshops, but the follow-up has been uncertain. For instance, the IGAD MSU held a workshop in June 2023, where it engaged CSOs drawn from faith-based organizations, women's political coalitions and youth political forums. The workshop strategized how to engage women and youth in conflict resolution and negotiations in regions where religious beliefs and practices are a significant feature of social organization. Although the workshop proposed the creation of a CSO forum for mediation and peacebuilding, IGAD has not operationalized this idea (IGAD 2023).

Chapter 5

DRAWING LESSONS FROM CSO ENGAGEMENTS IN AU AND IGAD PEACE INTERVENTIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the AU and IGAD have increasingly acknowledged the role of CSOs in promoting civic participation in mediation and peacemaking. Both CEWS and CEWARN have amplified the voices of CSOs in decision making in the early-warning and local-response mechanisms, while also involving them in contributing to policies and frameworks at formative stages of conflicts. The AU has moved to rekindle the Livingstone Formula through the Maseru Conclusions, while IGAD has set up the IGAD NGO/CSO Forum. These institutions have also enabled CSOs to use existing spaces to gain more organizational room and to press for inclusion in AU and IGAD mediation processes.

Despite this progress, there remain continuing obstacles in developing the partnerships between the AU/IGAD on the one hand, and CSOs on the other. These include a persistence of mistrust between them, a culture of opaqueness and secrecy regarding high-level security matters, the reluctance of governments to share information during negotiations, and the weak capacity of CSOs in becoming effective actors in peacemaking processes, especially when it comes to the implementation of protocols and peace instruments. Notwithstanding the Livingstone formula and Maseru Conclusions, ECOSOCC still struggles with the inclusion of CSOs in AU mechanisms. Meanwhile, some analysts note that the IGAD NGO/CSO Forum remains dysfunctional and that there will be no significant involvement of CSOs without the establishment of a CSO desk in the IGAD Secretariat to formalize and this partnership and render it routine (ISS 2019).

CSOs often raise genuine concerns about exclusion from formal mediation, there is, in fact, a growing practice of inclusion.

The lessons drawn below seek to guide CSOs as they grapple with finding space in the peacemaking and mediation arenas which states and regional institutions have dominated. They are also presented as strategies for future engagement in peacemaking and mediation. Their premise is the assumption that while CSOs often raise genuine concerns about exclusion from formal mediation, there is, in fact, a growing practice of inclusion, which depends on six interrelated strategies, described in Section 5.2: A learning curve.

The second part (5.3: Summation of CSO engagement by process and mechanisms) offers a depiction, in tabular form, of the participation of CSOs in IGAD and AU peacemaking and mediation initiatives that blur the boundaries between formal Track 1 and informal Track 2 and 3 processes. The final part (5.4: Conclusions and policy recommendations) recommends some of the measures to strengthen changing roles of CSOs in peacemaking and mediation.

5.2. **A LEARNING CURVE**

While organizational hierarchies in mediation persist, a vital learning process regarding lessening the chasms between CSOs and regional and state actors in mediation has occurred. This report has demonstrated that there are significant opportunities for CSOs to grasp in order to overcome the hurdles impeding inclusion. From the experiences of mediation in the Horn of Africa, as analysed in this report, several lessons and opportunities stand out.

Gaining and retaining relevance

The activism of CSOs before and during peace processes is important in raising their profiles and making them relevant to the mediators.

The activism of CSOs before and during peace processes is important in raising their profiles and making them relevant to the mediators. In the Kenyan mediation, for instance, the CSOs' campaigns for an end to violence and for humanitarian assistance endeared them to the mediators, who could not thereafter afford to alienate them. Throughout the negotiations, the PEAP solicited the views and perspectives of the CSOs because they perceived CSOs as allies in the peacemaking initiative. Similarly, South Sudanese CSOs were at the forefront of campaigns for inclusive processes, in order to avoid the mistakes of previous peace agreements. Furthermore, following the collapse of the 2015 peace agreement—from which they had been largely excluded—several CSOs engaged in campaigns to advocate for the resumption of negotiations to address the flaws in the previous agreement. The persistence and tenacity of these actors forced the mediators to rethink CSO participation in the

2017–2018 talks. By employing multi-pronged strategies to enter the negotiations, such as the lobbying of national and regional leaders or the dissemination of their messages through international actors, CSOs gained and maintained their relevance.

Building alliances with critical constituencies

In mediation processes that are financed largely by external actors, the ability of CSOs to leverage donors and other multilateral actors is important. Some analysts refer to this alliance building as 'borrowing power'. In South Sudan, CSOs benefited profoundly from the Troika's pressure for their inclusion, particularly in the 2017–2018 period. Lobbying the Troika bought CSOs the power to engage in the negotiations. The Troika's leverage over the IGAD special envoys thus worked for the benefit of CSOs by encouraging their inclusion. Links between CSOs and donors/international players are significant for unlocking resources for CSOs and increasing the pressure on the disputing parties.

Seizing the initiative

The engagement of South Sudan's CSOs, notably those from the Catholic community, facilitated the entry of the Community of Sant'Egidio as mediators in the face of the impasse in the implementation of the R-ARCSS (2018). Through the merger of the Rome and IGAD initiatives, the Community of Sant'Egidio seized upon the invitation as an opportunity to broaden the mediation, transforming it into a joint Rome–IGAD mediation. It expanded the number of parties to South Sudan's ongoing peace process. In Kenya, most of the leading CSOs remained active to press issues on the agenda and in the eventual agreements.

Cohesion is crucial for meaningful roles in mediation

Although most societies in the Horn of Africa face internal fragmentation along ethno-regional and sectarian lines, the ability of CSOs to participate in peacemaking and mediation hinges principally on their ability to build cohesive constituencies around common objectives. The ability of CSOs in Kenya to rise above sectarian interests and coalesce around functional and professional lines enabled them to influence the course of negotiations. In contrast, in South Sudan, intra-CSO rivalries have been one of the major impediments to collective action. These rivalries often coincide with prevailing political cleavages. Intense competition affects the effectiveness of CSOs once they obtain opportunities to participate in mediation. Thus, after CSOs were invited into the peace process in South Sudan in May 2014, at the prodding of the Troika, deep fragmentation among them subsequently imperilled their role in the

The ability of CSOs to leverage donors and other multilateral actors is important. Some analysts refer to this alliance building as 'borrowing power'.

Intense competition affects the effectiveness of CSOs once they obtain opportunities to participate in mediation.

negotiations. In the final stages of the South Sudan negotiations, CSOs found a modicum of cohesion when groups such the South Sudan Council of Churches took on more leadership roles in the mediation. Where political and ethno-regional divisions dominate CSOs, it is always necessary to find leadership that can transcend these cleavages and provide direction to the multiplicity of actors.

Negotiation modalities and formats have significance for CSO inclusion

Traditional closed-door and opaque negotiation formats do not lend themselves to actors other than formal mediators and negotiators, as the Ethiopia–Tigray talks demonstrated. Nevertheless, relatively open and transparent negotiations can have disadvantages over restrictive ones, for example, by delaying concessions by parties who are less inclined to reveal their bargaining positions, or by raising premature expectations or anxieties about outcomes. The puzzle is how to balance open and closed mediations. Typically, parties who prefer closed mediations often seek to limit the number of participants on various grounds, including security and credibility, leaving little or no room for other stakeholders. Ideally, CSOs can participate in closed mediations if they swear to maintain secrecy. More importantly, following negotiations to end civil wars in Burundi and Democratic Republic of the Congo in the late 1990s, negotiations have increasingly turned to multi-stakeholder forums and ad hoc committees as modalities that can accommodate and encourage multiple voices: none of the mediators involved at that time raised questions of CSOs 'threatening' negotiation secrets. The input of CSOs is often rendered more possible when negotiation modalities are participatory and allow inclusion of divergent views and perspectives—and when the South Sudanese negotiations experimented with a 'multi-stakeholder forum', CSOs became more active in the deliberations. There should be more opportunities for CSOs to present their perspectives, during negotiations, in such formats.

The input of CSOs is often rendered more possible when negotiation modalities are participatory and allow inclusion of divergent views and perspectives.

Expanding the knowledge base of CSOs

The participation of CSOs in the peacemaking and mediation arenas hinges fundamentally on their knowledge and expertise. Since both the AU and IGAD prefer to work with CSOs that have expertise as well as sizable and recognizable constituencies, the level of knowledge that CSOs can contribute to peacemaking or mediation phases ultimately increases their chances of invitation. In open and transparent negotiating contexts, both the AU and IGAD can benefit from CSOs who lend their technical expertise in other areas of conflict resolution, including in specialized themes. Experts in

governance, transitional justice, development and public finance are always required in most negotiations to end civil conflicts. It is noteworthy that South Sudanese CSOs working with international counterparts provided expert knowledge to augment the negotiators on transitional justice mechanisms like the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, the Commission on Truth, Reconciliation and Healing and the Compensation and Reparations Authority (CRA). This input was particularly relevant given the reluctance of political and military leaders to countenance accountability mechanisms (author interviews with CSO participants, Nairobi, November 2024). Given that CSOs with relevant expert knowledge are invaluable to ending conflicts, it behoves CSOs to select carefully the participants they send to mediation, especially if conflicts have been protracted.

Given that CSOs with relevant expert knowledge are invaluable to ending conflicts, it behoves CSOs to select carefully the participants they send to mediation.

5.3. SUMMATION OF CSO ENGAGEMENT BY PROCESS AND MECHANISMS

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below capture some of the themes of this report that underscore the gaps that need reducing between the AU/IGAD and CSOs in peacemaking. Multilateral actors with strong military mandates represent the most inaccessible spaces for CSO participation. This may be due to traditional divisions of labour, conservative silo mentalities or a perceived need for secrecy. Participation of CSOs is less limited where peacemaking phases allow for experimentation and require a broadening in the diversity of actors and voices in peacemaking and mediation.

Based on the insights gleaned from the foregoing analysis, delineating the processes and mechanisms used by AU and IGAD would help to indicate where CSOs are more likely to gain access and influence. Equally vital, it would inform the kind of knowledge and capacities that CSOs need to be more effective in multilateral regional peacemaking and mediation. Ultimately, however, it would demand wide mobilization, at regional and continental levels, to achieve the objective of expanding CSO participation and inclusion in these initiatives.

Table 5.1. AU engagements in peacemaking and mediation in the Horn of Africa

Process	Mechanism	CSO participation
Early warning	CEWS' structural vulnerability assessment, with input from accredited CSOs	Good
Deployment of fact-finding	AU PSC, PAPS Department officials and special envoys in some low-level initiatives	CSOs sometimes consulted as stakeholders
Deployment of individual special envoys/high representatives	AU special envoys	N/A
Negotiating the cessation of hostilities	AU Panels and mediation teams	Participation limited to expert CSOs
Planning the main negotiations and designing the process	AU MSU/special envoys	Little participation
Trust-building and confidence measures	Various AU institutions	Participation limited to trusted, expert CSOs
Deployment of ad hoc teams to support envoys, including regional heads of state/former heads of state	N/A	CSOs, Netpeace networks, and other academic institutions
Executing agreements	Joint military and security teams of experts	Little participation
Deploying agreement-implementation mechanisms	Joint military and security teams of experts; AU mediation experts	Little participation
Monitoring agreements	Joint military teams of experts; AU mediation experts	Participation limited in some instances to expert CSOs, depending on national agreement
Investigating root causes of conflict and documenting measures for various reforms for sustainable peace	Ad hoc AU panels and appointed experts from various transitional justice mechanisms	Good participation, especially for human rights organizations (national, regional, continental and CSOs)
Communications about the peace process and strategic communications about issues on a peace-negotiation agenda	AU communication institutions	Good participation, also of media institutions (national, regional, continental)

Table 5.2. **IGAD engagements in peacemaking and mediation in the Horn of Africa**

Process	Mechanism	CSO participation
Early warning	CEWARN, CEWERU/reporters	Accredited CSO input to national reporters, mostly in Kenya and Uganda
Deployment of fact-finding	IGAD Executive Secretary/ Secretariat	Limited input (national and regional human rights organizations)
Deployment of individual special envoys/high representatives	IGAD Summit and Executive Secretary	Little CSO participation in appointment and deployment of envoys
Negotiating the cessation of hostilities	IGAD military, military committees and security experts	Little participation
Planning the main negotiations and designing the process	IGAD Executive Secretary, envoys and MSU	Little participation
Trust-building and confidence measures	Various institutions in IGAD Peace and Security Division and governance experts	Limited participation of CSOs in IGAD member states
Deployment of ad hoc teams to support envoys including regional heads of state/former heads of state	IGAD peace and security experts	Expert CSOs may be invited
Executing agreements	Joint IGAD military and security teams	Little participation
Deploying agreement-implementation mechanisms	Joint IGAD military and security teams	Little participation
Monitoring agreements	Joint IGAD military and security teams, alongside teams and representatives of other civilian institutions, such as parliaments and the judiciary	Some ad hoc CSO participation in member states
Investigating the root causes of conflict and documenting measures for various reforms for sustainable peace	Experts and ad hoc committees/ panels	Partner CSOs may participate (from national and regional human rights organizations)

Table 5.2. **IGAD engagements in peacemaking and mediation in the Horn of Africa (cont.)**

Process	Mechanism	CSO participation
Communications about the peace process and strategic communications about issues on a peace-negotiation agenda	IGAD communication institutions	Ad hoc participation, as well as of media institutions (national and regional)

5.4. **CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

As this report has highlighted, some of the limitations that hinder the strategic inclusion of CSOs by the AU and IGAD in their conflict-resolution initiatives are long-standing. This is often because of statist views of the nature of mediation regarding multilateral actors. In recent years, however, both the AU and IGAD have shown interest in engaging CSOs in various ways in their early warning systems and in preventive diplomacy, mediation, dialogues, and reconciliation and reconstruction interventions. This interest has been the result of push-and-pull factors, as diverse CSOs seek to qualify for inclusion in various stages or modalities of multilateral conflict resolution in the Horn of Africa.

Understanding the ecosystem of the AU and IGAD

It is important for CSOs to strategize based on an understanding of how organizations like the AU and IGAD work with multilevel peace and security concerns.

It is important for CSOs to strategize based on an understanding of how organizations like the AU and IGAD work with multilevel peace and security concerns. Both organizations are often engaged in the rigours of trying to animate, and re-animate, stalled peace processes in the Horn of Africa, where conflicts can be protracted and seemingly intractable. As multilateral organizations, depending on the political will of their member states, their capacities to resolve such conflicts can be limited. As the illustrations in Kenya and Somalia suggest, departments of political affairs and peace and security in both the AU and IGAD are aware of the capabilities CSOs possess to shape the narratives and discourses around conflicts. Moreover, approaching that capacity strategically may influence how influential external actors, and international partners, view conflict or specific aspects of an ongoing mediation or facilitated dialogue process.

Short-term involvement versus long-term ramifications

CSOs can gain influence in specific instances and aspects of AU and IGAD mediation based on a short-term calculus among conflicting parties and mediators, as illustrated by the Tumaini Initiative for South Sudan. Nevertheless, the longer-term implications of their participation, in terms of multilateral policy and strategy, still need to be worked out. For instance, both the AU and IGAD regularly interpret their mandates in multilevel peacemaking by invoking the subsidiarity principle within closed spaces, where African solutions to African problems are prioritized. A usual result is that both the AU and IGAD can be averse to the internationalization of conflicts in their respective domains. The extent to which the inclusion of CSOs in multilateral peace initiatives is tied to strategies of internationalization—because of obvious links between CSOs and external actors—means that it is not problem-free for risk-averse AU and IGAD officials. Indeed, the report has highlighted the way in which CSO inclusion may draw extensive criticism from Horn of Africa states like Ethiopia, because CSOs are sometimes perceived as foreign agents. The inclusion of CSOs as a direct result of pressure from funders alone is not sustainable in the longer term. Considering that several CSOs rely on relations with funders, it is useful for them to evaluate when strategies of internationalization of conflicts are useful, rather than counterproductive, in terms of the wider ramifications and political sensitivities.

The inclusion of CSOs as a direct result of pressure from funders alone is not sustainable in the longer term.

Risks of reputational harm

The independence of CSOs from AU or IGAD institutional mediators is another policy concern. An overriding goal of such mediators is to preserve the credibility of their multilateral agency. Both the AU PAPS Department and IGAD have started compiling databases of CSOs with various expertise in mediation and peacemaking. Due to their unwillingness to partner CSOs not on the accredited CSOs database, several CSOs are compelled to collaborate in prolonged mapping exercises undertaken by the AU and IGAD respectively. Those CSOs whose inclusion depends on accreditation, or selection, by the AU and IGAD can find themselves involved, knowingly or unknowingly, in the creation of a dilemma where their inclusion is hard won, yet they could later be blamed by third parties for the failure of a facilitated dialogue or for impractical measures in the outcomes. Because these are risks that CSOs may have to take anyway, a condition for their participation could be to require a visibly effective voice in the way a peacemaking process is conducted. For instance, CSOs might consider insisting on revealing their role in the full structure of mediation, rather than settling for covert roles in opaque structures simply to gain inclusion and participation.

Both the AU PAPS and IGAD have started compiling databases of CSOs with various expertise in mediation and peacemaking.

CSOs may not be aware of the kind of capacity they need.

Capacity building

The independence and objectivity of CSOs can be strengthened by improving their institutional skills and professionalism. This may require accessing capacity-building programmes. Several mediation support training courses are available nowadays, but not all are suitable or accessible locally. Moreover, CSOs may not be aware of the kind of capacity they need. Hence, although on the one hand CSOs should be independent of the AU and IGAD, on the other, they may require the support of these organizations to improve their capacity. IGAD's MSU periodically provides capacity building and knowledge resources to improve the skills of mediating agencies in civil society. Organizations formed by, or on behalf of, communities affected by violent conflicts—including women's and youth organizations—have been prioritized, because of limited resources. Fortunately, an infrastructure for mediation training already exists in the Horn of Africa, particularly in major research and academic institutions. What might be needed more is a joint AU PAPS Department/IGAD/CSOs initiative, in order to address capacity gaps from a problem-solving approach understood from the perspective of ongoing peace processes. There is mutual benefit in multilateral agencies and knowledgeable CSOs sharing experiences and the documentation of these experiences.

Lobbying for inclusion

Despite the existence of mechanisms for CSO inclusion—particularly in the case of special envoys/elder statespersons, where resistance to CSO inclusion is lower—CSOs have not launched deliberate campaigns for inclusion once conflicts break out. Here, the objective of lobbying would be to organize campaigns that directly target the individuals and actors involved in mediation. Nevertheless, for CSOs to engage proactively and strategically in multilateral peacemaking, they must adhere to principles and guidelines that enhance their credibility as mediating agents acceptable to conflicting parties. CSOs must show responsiveness to unfolding situations and take the initiative to press multilateral actors, like the AU and IGAD, to tailor their interventions. This means responding to the actors who initiate, or engage in, armed conflict and identifying the avenues whereby such actors can gain from the dividends of peace.

The ways in which CSOs overcome long-standing limitations on their inclusion in multilateral mediation efforts in the Horn of Africa will be an indicator of the extent to which peacemaking and peacebuilding undergoes change in the region.

In conclusion

The ways in which CSOs overcome long-standing limitations on their inclusion in multilateral mediation efforts in the Horn of Africa will be an indicator of the extent to which peacemaking and peacebuilding undergoes change in the region. As observed in Chapter 1 (Introduction) of this report, this is a region prone to

complex and protracted violent political disputes at the regional, national and local levels. Most crucially, the participation of CSOs in various phases of multilateral mediation, in accordance with their expertise and motivations for engagement, can improve normative elements of mediation and enhance capacities for implementation of its outcomes. This is important in a region where peace agreements are often never fully implemented and where armed conflicts keep recurring around similar grievances.

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Peace from the Ground Up: Civil Society in Regional Interventions in the Horn of Africa report provides a thoughtful analysis of how civil society actors can strengthen their strategic engagement with the AU and IGAD to gain effective roles in their multilateral peace initiatives and preventive diplomacy work in the Horn of Africa. The report outlines challenges and opportunities for this type of engagement, based on views and experiences of the envoys and officials of the AU and IGAD respectively, combined with the voices of civil society leaders who have been engaged in various forms of conflict mediation in this deeply troubled region of Africa.

The report builds on the understanding that several CSOs in the Horn of Africa already possess comparative advantages, such as expertise, knowledge, proximity to conflict actors, flexible on-the-ground operations and other capabilities that could complement and strengthen the peace interventions of the AU and IGAD at a crucial historical juncture.