

The Emerging ECOWAS of People

**(An Overview of the Role of Non-State Actors Participation
in the West Africa Regional Integration Process)**

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Abstract

ECOWAS has not been able to fully achieve its objective of fostering socio-economic and political integration in West Africa because it has not created adequate space for the participation of non state actors.

Historical Perspective

– NSA Participation in Anti-Colonial Agitations

The struggle against colonialism, to a large extent, succeeded because Kwame Nkrumah inspired the strategy of mass grassroots mobilization of non-state actors.

The ECOWAS Paradox

– Formation without NSA Participation

ECOWAS was established at a time when more than 50% of the Member States were ruled by military dictators who were more concerned about security matters than economics.

New ECOWAS Vision

– A Paradigm for NSA Participation in Regional Integration.

From an “ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of People.”

Five Pillars

- Good governance;
- Infrastructural development;
- Involvement of women, youth and children;
- Private sector participation;
- Sustainable natural resources and environment utilization.

ECOWAS Sponsored NSA Projects

- Objective:

“To strengthen the capacity of NSAs and NSA networks to enable them play an effective and relevant role in the regional integration process initiated by ECOWAS and UEMOA.”

- Funding

Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) of the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) ROC 10/ ROC 15, totalling more than one million Euros.

- Participating Countries

The NSAs are from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

Outcomes of NSA Projects

The NSA Projects were due to be completed at the end June 2011. There is therefore the need for a follow-up study on the outcomes of the projects in the various Member States.

Recommendations

- Information, Complaints and Monitoring Desk at border posts.
- Issuance of ECOWAS Travel Certificate (ETC) at border posts.
- Certification for Informal Sector Cross Border Traders.
- Common Registration for Inter-State Commercial Vehicles.
- Micro-Credit from ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)

Conclusion

ECOWAS leaders must create the conditions necessary for increased NSA participation in the West Africa regional integration process, especially in the areas of policy formulation and implementation.

Food for thought

“The forces that unite us are far greater than the difficulties that divide us at present, and our goal must be the establishment of Africa’s dignity, progress and prosperity”

- Kwame Nkrumah