

# International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

CSO handbook



**GREAT LAKES PROJECT**  
Peacebuilding in the African Great Lakes Region

# CONTENTS

## Foreword

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 List of acronyms</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3 The International Conference of the Great Lakes Region</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1 Brief history of the ICGLR	19
3.2 Steps in the ICGLR process	20
3.3 The decision-making structures of the ICGLR	27
<b>4 Case studies for successful CSO involvement in the ICGLR</b>	<b>31</b>
4.1 The ICGLR Regional Women Forum	33
4.2 The ICGLR Regional Youth Forum	38
<b>5 Reflections and recommendations on how to practically engage the ICGLR</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>6 References</b>	<b>55</b>
Diagrams:	
Operational Framework of the ICGLR	23
Organigram of the ICGLR	29



# Foreword

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) emerged from the conflicts that had engulfed the region in 1990s, including the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the protracted conflict, instability and war in eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo. These events generated widespread insecurity, culminating in the regionalisation of the conflicts, which were a threat to peace, security and development in the region. The United Nations Security Council subsequently, in resolutions 1291 and 1304 of 2000, called for an international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region.

The ICGLR was established under the principles of ownership and inclusiveness by all the member state governments and all other stakeholders, including the official forums that represent different stakeholders. These include the Parliamentary Forum, Regional Youth Forum, Regional Women Forum, Private Sector Forum and the Civil Society Forum.

The idea of creating a regional civil society forum was raised by regional actors during the process that led to the creation of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Civil society organisations in the Great Lakes Region have been recognised and engaged as key partners in the whole preparatory process which gave birth to the *Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security and Development* in 2004 and then the *Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region* in 2006. Civil society was tasked, and is expected to play an important role in the implementation of the pact, based on the guiding principles articulated in the Dar es Salaam declaration.

To further the role of civil society, the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation was appointed Regional Coordinator of Civil Society by the joint UN/AU secretariat of the Great Lakes region, in Nairobi in 2002. As the leader of civil society, the foundation was accorded space to engage in ICGLR processes and provide input for the conference.

CSO mobilisation is under the mandate of the Regional Civil Society Forum (RCSF), a space for open and constructive dialogue towards identification of common interests and search for solutions through consultation and cooperation. The RCSF provides for organising regional or thematic meetings around the issues at stake in the conference.

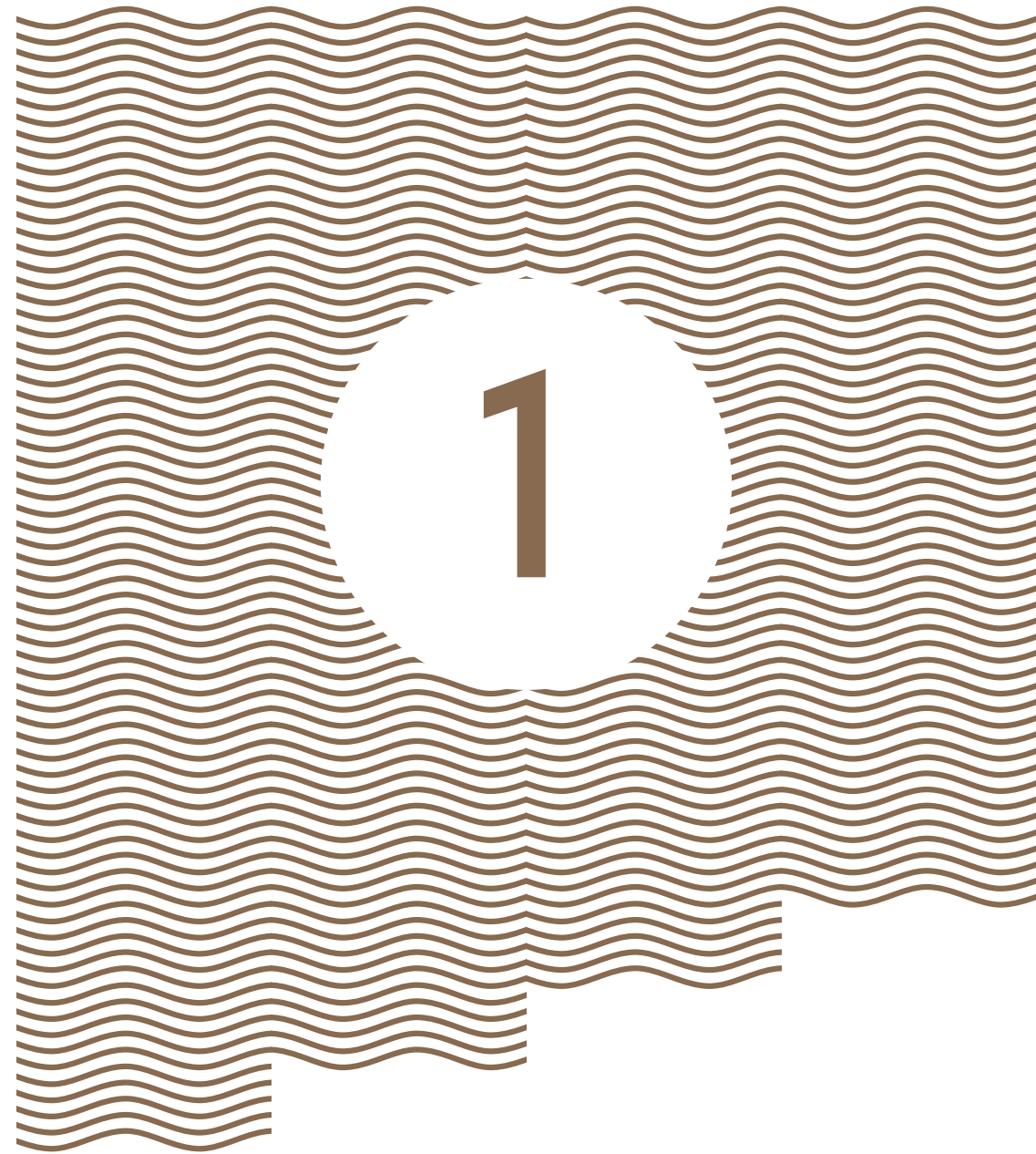
Some of the challenges the RCSF has experienced, including a lack of structure at the national level in member states and a lack of a coordinating centre or a secretariat, have hampered effective coordination of the forum's activities. This setback contributed to slow

progress in the establishment of the National Civil Society Forum. This delay in turn had a bearing on holding the General Assembly meetings as specified in the CSO ACORD; lack of or slow implementation of strategies and any other activities of the forum contributing to its lack of vibrancy. Despite these obstacles, RCSF is to be commended for its achievements, including the establishment of the Civil Society National Forum in 8 member states and the election of the new leadership of the Regional Civil Society Forum at the 2nd ICGLR General Assembly meeting that was held in Dar Es-Salaam in March 2016.

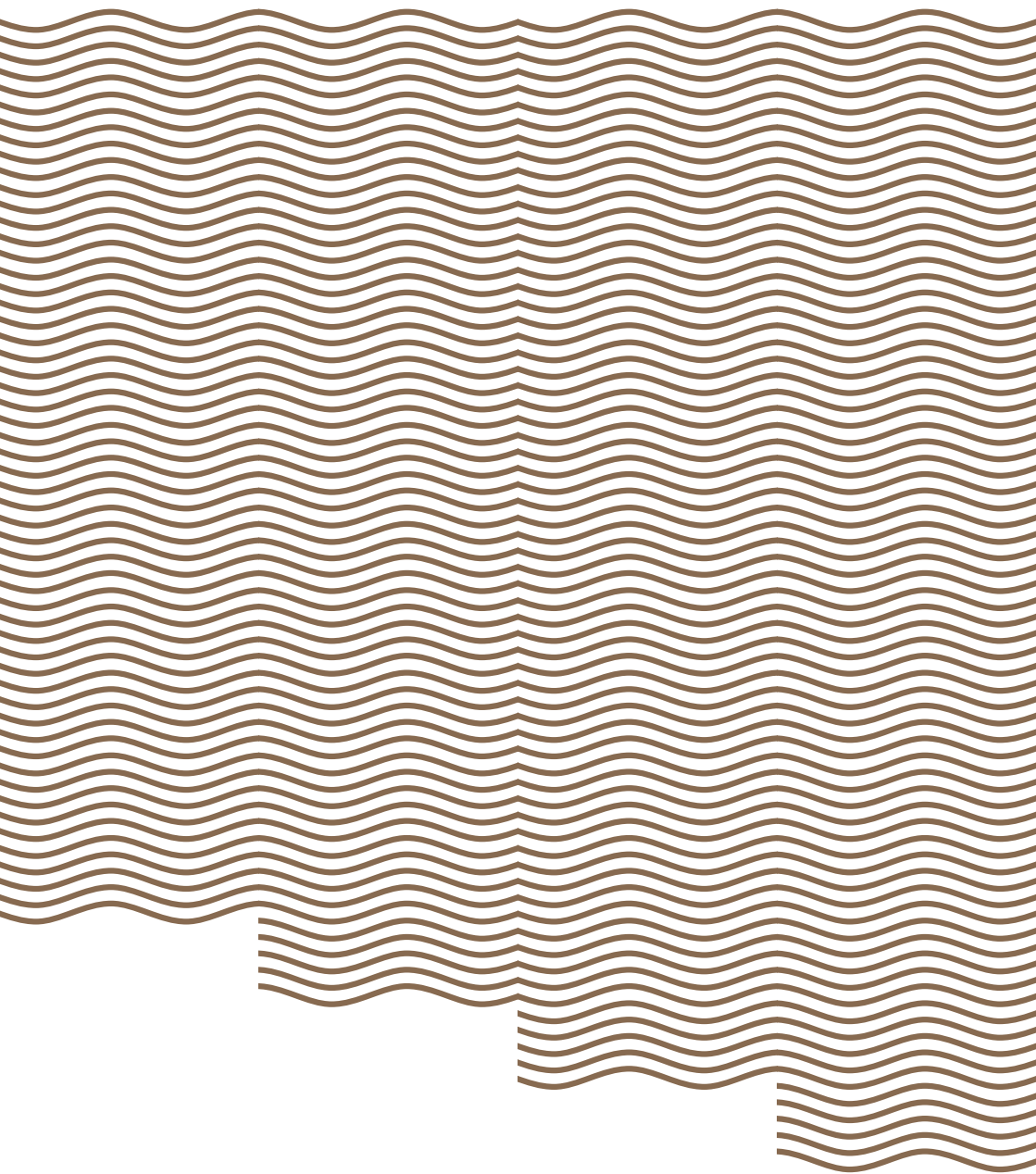
There is, however, a need to expedite the process leading to the establishment the RCSF secretariat. Having a secretariat will enable the consolidation of the newly established national structures in the member states and ensure effective implementation of the Regional Civil Society Activity plan, thus immensely contributing to effective CSO involvement in the implementation of the pact in the Great Lakes region. This handbook contributes to this endeavour by showcasing the importance and the potential of the ICGLR among civil society actors and providing a guide for how to fulfil that potential. It practically illustrates how CSO's can engage with the regional intergovernmental organisation and its structures in a mutually beneficial and productive manner. We therefore welcome this useful tool, which we hope will help to consolidate the work of the RCSF and CSO's throughout the region in their engagements with the ICGLR, and therefore, ultimately the ICGLR itself.



Patience Ayebazibwe  
Secretary,  
Regional Civil Society Forum



# Introduction



## INTRODUCTION

The International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) is with no doubt an organisation of the 21st Century. Its founding history began in 2000 when the UN Security Council called for an international conference to discuss peace, democracy and security issues in the Great Lakes region. Later, in 2004, the Heads of State and Government of the region adopted *the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes*. This was followed by the pact on *Security, Development and Stability* in the Great Lakes Region agreed in 2006 and the inauguration of the ICGLR Executive Secretariat in Bujumbura, Burundi, in 2007.

The ICGLR was created in response to the changing nature of security challenges and the acknowledgement that transnational cooperation is necessary to respond to these threats. Boundaries in the Great Lakes region remain permeable. Challenges such as forced population movements, arms trafficking, terrorism, organised crime and widespread violence have cross-border causes and consequences. What happens in one country sends shock waves throughout the entire region.

The ICGLR was set up to address some of the bigger regional issues that affect the lives of people throughout the region. It seeks, for example, to increase peace and security through its Early Joint Verification Mechanism; enhance good governance and respect for democracy through its election monitoring; foster economic development and regional integration by fighting illegal exploitation of natural resources and work on humanitarian and social issues through its protocol on internally displaced people.



In the years prior to the establishment of this intergovernmental organisation, eight out of the eleven ICGLR countries experienced violent conflicts. All of these conflicts had regional implications and linkages that contributed to the destabilisation of neighbouring countries and the region as a whole. By creating the ICGLR, the governments of the region recognised that political instability and conflicts in their respective countries have a considerable regional dimension and thus require a regional response.

The origins of the ICGLR acknowledge that the people in the region have a shared history and close ethnic, cultural, social, economic and political links. Moreover, their views need to be included. Hence, both the drivers of conflict and instability as well as the connectors that can bring about stability and peace transcend national boundaries. In this sense, the ICGLR also goes beyond the paradigm of the intergovernmental organisations created in the 20th century, more focused on the protection of the security of the nation states and in upholding the concept of sovereignty and national borders than in addressing the root causes of insecurity that affected their citizenry. This focus on people, inviting them to participate through regional forums for civil society and the emphasis on providing regional solutions to national problems and vice versa, also marks the 21st century character of the organisation.

The same challenge as in the past will remain for the future: to make optimal use of such regional infrastructures for peace and to exploit all its relevant protocols and instruments. Achieving this will be the shared responsibility of all state and non-state actors.

This manual therefore builds on the idea of continuing the development of the ICGLR as a people-centred organisation. It provides practical information about the structure of this multilateral body and its decision-making process and cycles. It highlights the importance

of engaging with the ICGLR and indicates different spaces in which people from the region can participate to develop policies and actions and jointly strengthen the organisation in the prevention and management of armed conflicts. The manual also highlights case studies of successful involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the ICGLR. Finally, it formulates recommendations and reflects on how this organisation and civil society can further develop constructive partnerships and work towards a more peaceful region.

We hope this handbook articulates the efforts of civil society in the Great Lakes region working together with regional intergovernmental organisations such as the ICGLR. We are convinced that multilateral organisations must become more responsive to the needs and concerns of the population of their member states and that civil society from those countries must seek to establish productive relationships with those organisations. This will not only enhance a sense of ownership of these institutions by the people but will also help them meet their purpose, making them more effective in their efforts to prevent violent conflicts and foster more peaceful, stable, inclusive and prosperous societies.



Peter van Tuijl  
Executive Director  
GPPAC



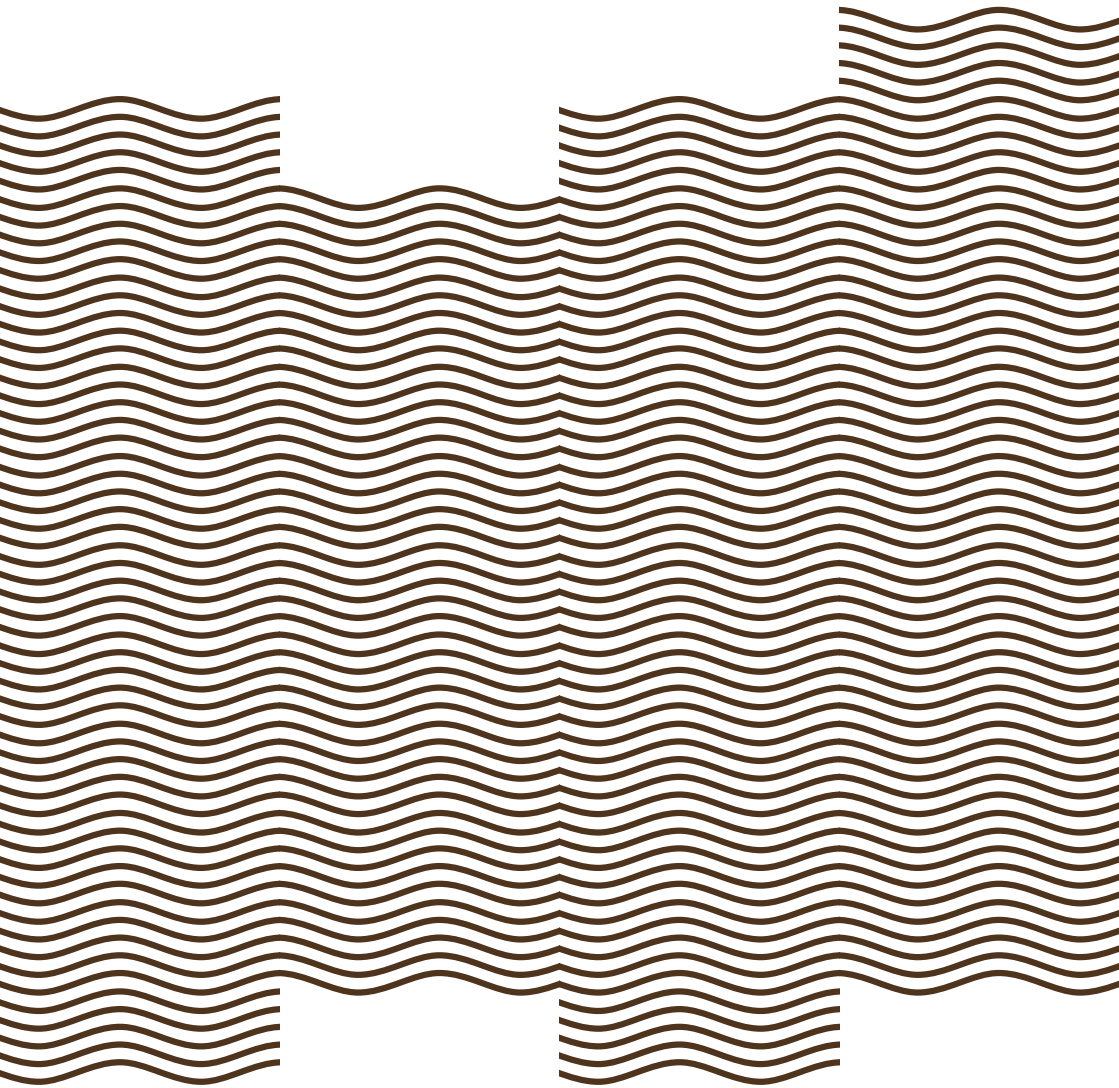
Walter Odhiambo  
Executive Director  
Nairobi Peace Initiative  
Africa



Vasu Gounden  
Executive Director  
ACCORD



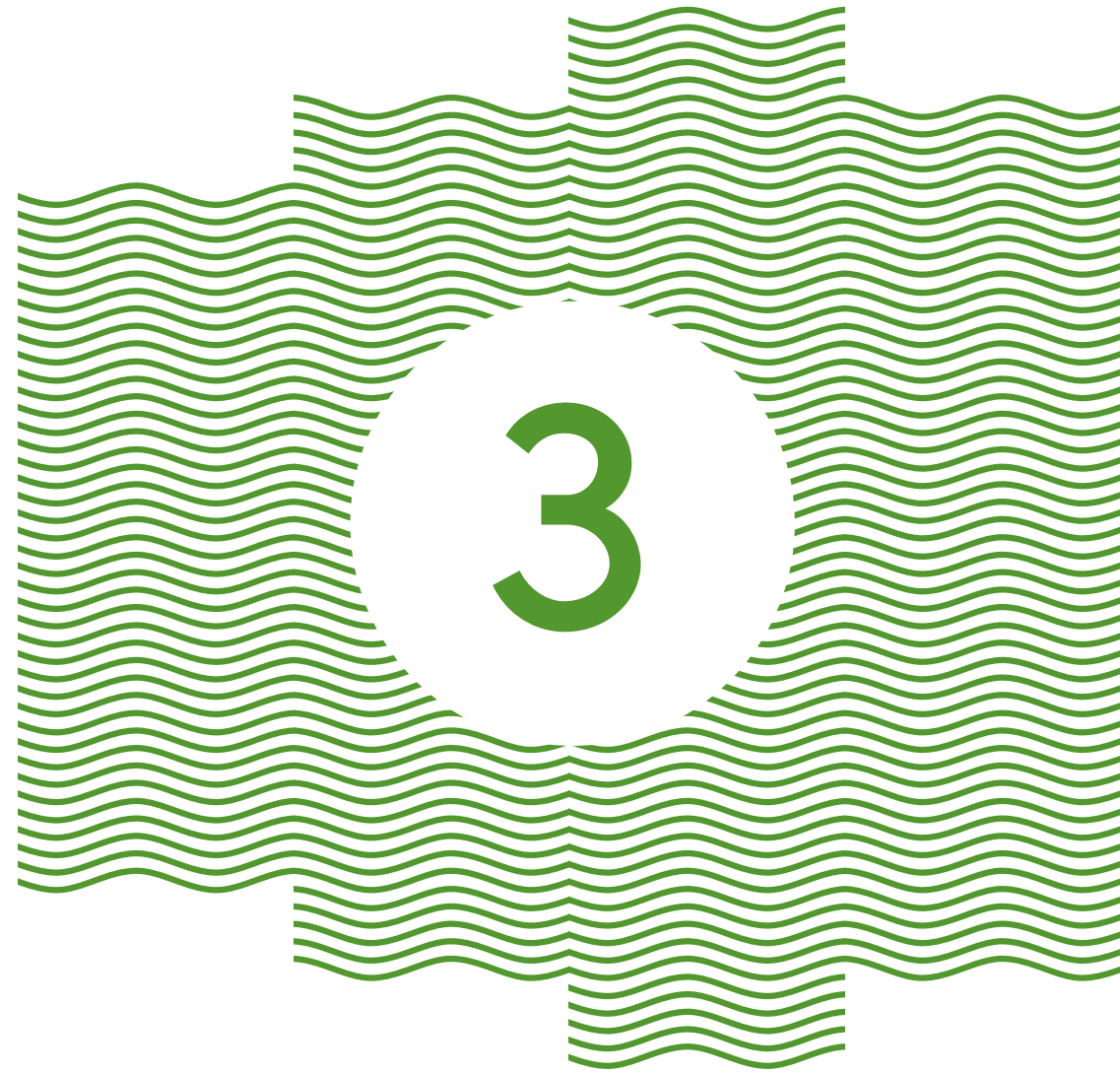
## List of Acronyms



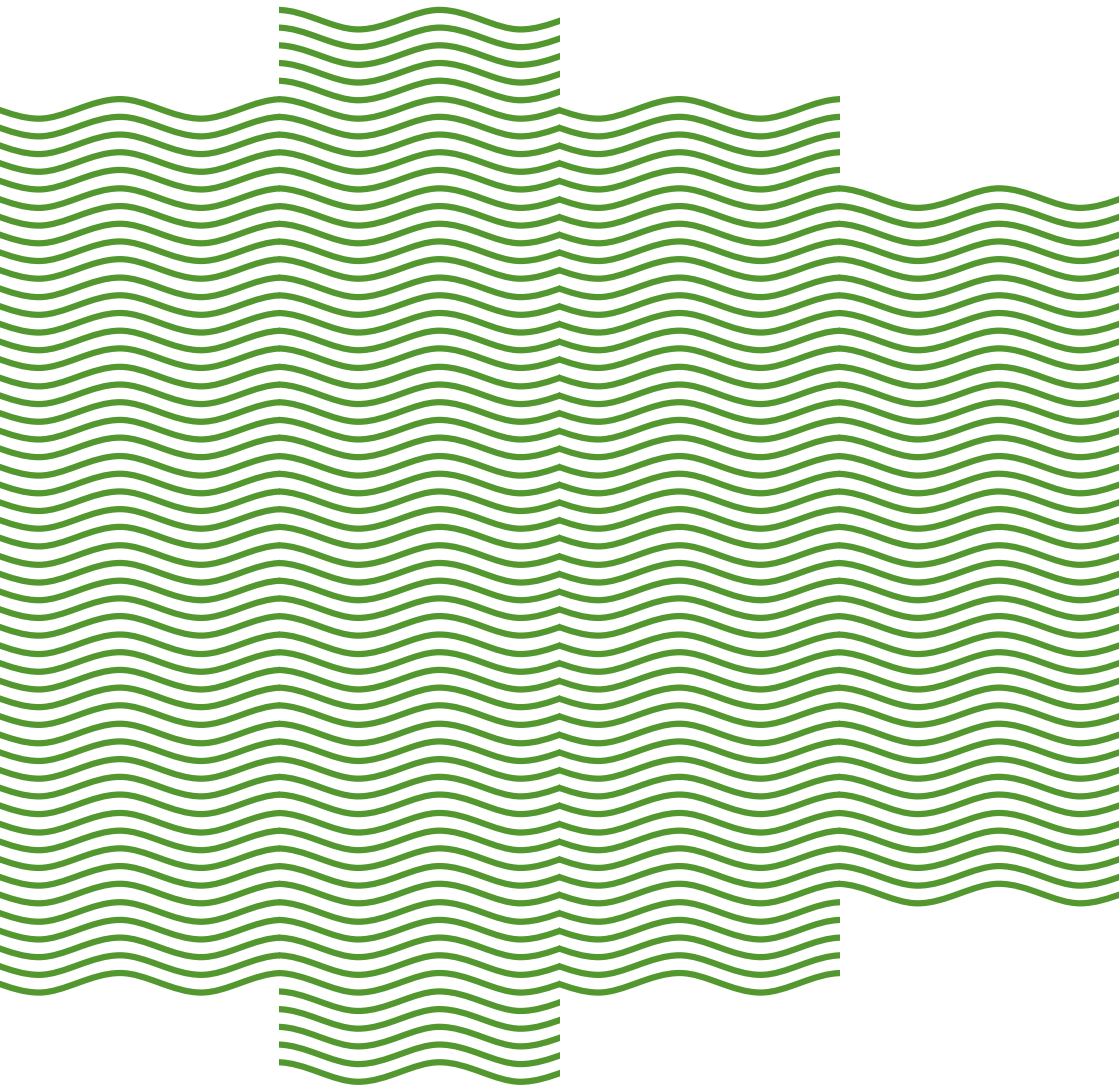
## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ACCORD</b>	African Centre for the Constructive Resolutions of Disputes
<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>CNDD-FDD</b>	Burundi National Council for the Defence of Democracy
<b>CSFs</b>	Civil Society Forums
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>GLP</b>	Great Lakes Project
<b>GPPAC</b>	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
<b>ICGLR</b>	International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>NCM</b>	National Coordination Mechanisms
<b>NCSF</b>	National Civil Society Forum
<b>NPI - Africa</b>	Nairobi Peace Initiative Africa
<b>RCSF</b>	Regional Civil Society Forum
<b>RWF</b>	Regional Women's Forum
<b>RYF</b>	Regional Youth Forum
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender Based Violence





**The International  
Conference on  
the Great Lakes Region**



### 3.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ICGLR

The history of the founding of the International Conference on the Great Lakes (ICGLR) starts in 2000 when the United Nations Security Council, as stated in its resolutions 1291 and 1304, called for an international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region. Later that year, the Secretariat of the International Conference was established in Nairobi, Kenya, under the umbrella of the United Nations and the African Union.

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) is an inter-governmental organisation of the countries in the African Great Lakes region. Conflicts and political instability in these countries have a regional dimension: they are not limited by borders. The establishment of the ICGLR was based on the recognition of this regional aspect, and the conviction that a concerted effort is needed to promote sustainable peace and development. For example, the 1994 Rwandan genocide contributed to political instability in DRC. Such regional conflicts can pose a major threat to international peace and security.

Twelve member states make up the organisation: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Republic of South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.



The eleven heads of state and government of the member countries unanimously adopted the *Declaration on Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region* in Dar es Salaam, in 2004. This declaration was innovative in addressing the regional character of the root causes of intractable conflicts and constraints to development.

In 2006 the heads of state convened in Nairobi, where they signed the *Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region*. The pact included the Dar es Salaam declaration and followed up with programmes of action and protocols. After this period of preparation, the ICGLR was ready to implement the content of the pact and declaration.

The ICGLR Executive Secretariat was inaugurated in May 2007 at its headquarters in Bujumbura, Burundi. The Executive Secretariat ensures implementation of the pact by coordinating, facilitating and monitoring member states and other organisations in the Great Lakes region, with the goal of attaining peace and political stability.

## 3.2 STEPS IN THE ICGLR PROCESS:

Understanding roles and complementing efforts of civil society organisations  
ICGLR structures and accessibility by CSOs

The ICGLR has a multi-level, complementary structure of governance and operations. Operating and focusing on addressing joint issues in the ever-dynamic region of the Great Lakes, the ICGLR has developed a structure that facilitates both effective identification of issues and mobilisation of efforts for action. This is the rationale for the hybrid—regional and national—systems of ICGLR structure. There are therefore two levels of structures: an organisational level and an operational level.

In order to determine the accessibility by CSOs and how they can influence policies, processes and actions of the ICGLR, it is important to understand how it operates. The ICGLR attends to issues affecting regional peace and stability. Such issues may emerge from local, national and/or regional levels. The operation flow must therefore begin from problem identification to action and implementation and finally to monitoring and evaluation. The following illustrative structure explains how issues are supposed to be attended to under ordinary circumstances.

The graphic illustration on the following page identifies eight key strategies that, conceptually, provide strategies on how the ICGLR functions. In looking at it, the following are how the CSOs can engage and work with the ICGLR.

### Step 1: Detection and definition of the problem(s)

Before any decision is made on a particular matter within the region, the process of identifying an issue as a problem must start at the national level. Respective states have machineries for such tasks, relating to the ICGLR this includes their ministries, with, for most states, the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) as the lead ministry for interaction for the ICGLR. To facilitate this interaction all ICGLR member states have set up National Coordination Mechanisms (NCM) and nominated national coordinators for the ICGLR. They are usually based at the MFA but this varies per country.<sup>1</sup> In a number of member states interactions between the coordination mechanism and CSOs have been ongoing, in others, this is a new phenomenon.

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<sup>1</sup> The list of national coordinators can be found under: <http://www.icglr.org/index.php/en/coordinations-nationals> but might not always be fully up to date.

As structures and organs that interact and work with communities, the CSOs must take a leading role in ensuring that the process is context based and people-centred. To facilitate this process regional forums for non-state actors have been included in the structures of the ICGLR.

This includes The Regional Civil Society Forum (RCSF); The Regional Women Forum (RWF); The Youth Forum (RYF); the Parliamentary Forum and the newly established Private Sector Forum.<sup>2</sup>

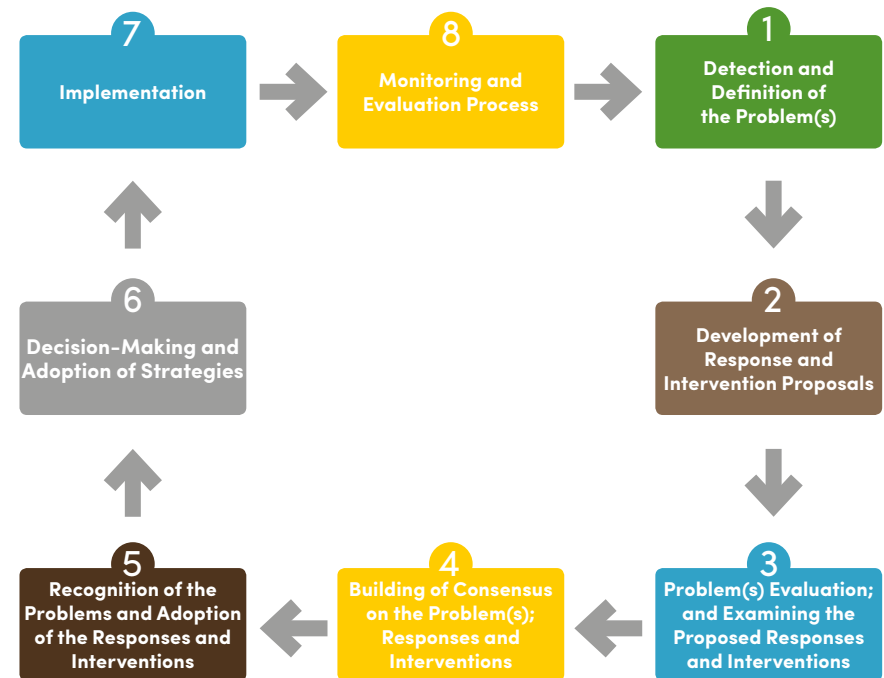
At the national level the RCSF, RWF and RYF have established national forums in most of the member countries. For the RCSF, the respective National Civil Society Forums (NSCF) come up with a system through which national issues are identified and defined in regard to the regional focus. This calls for a close and structured working relationship with the National Coordination Mechanism at national level and with the relevant ICGLR programmes, organs and individuals at regional level. In order to do this, the NSCF and RSCF should develop and implement strategic regular situational and context analysis on both the emerging issues and lessons learnt from the ongoing programmes.

**Step 2: Development of response and intervention proposals**

The NSCF and RSCF can engage with the respective NCM in synthesising the issues identified and defined in step 1 above. At this stage, key intervention proposals and ideas on how they can be addressed can be jointly developed. The involvement of the CSOs at this stage is central, since it will ensure that the issues reflect civil society voices as well as position of the state. Critical synthesis of the

<sup>2</sup> The RCSF is currently chaired by the Director of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, Joseph Butiku, +255 22 2118354, info@nyererefoundation.org. The RWF is in the process of setting up a secretariat in Kigali, Rwanda and is currently chaired by Dr. Attiat Mustafa Abdel Halim, Dr.attiat@gmail.com. The RYF has set up a secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya with Kennedy Walusala as its head kenwalusala@gmail.com and is currently chaired by Nancy Kaizilege, nkaizilege@yahoo.com

## The Conceptual Cyclic Operational and Organisation Framework of an Inter-State Organ such as the ICGLR



issues and proposed actions will also be undertaken and alternatives proposed. The state and non-state actors need to start generating consensus at this stage and at both levels—national and regional. In this case, while the NSCF will engage with the NCM, the RSCF will engage with the RIMC, and processes leading up to the RIMC such as expert meetings and research as well as relevant ICGLR organs. In advocating the RYF for example got the ICGLR Centre on Good Governance to undertake research on this topic. This led to a series of seminars and policy proposals that were then presented at national and regional level and a proposal by the RYF representative to the heads of state to host an extraordinary summit dedicated to this issue, which was accepted. In the run up to the summit, regional expert meetings were convened by the RYF together with its national forums, the ICGLR secretariat and NCM's to develop the decisions of the summit. Most of those propositions were then successfully integrated in the final declaration. The sequencing of such successful CSO advocacy steps are further described below.

#### **Steps 3 and 4:**

##### **Evaluating problems; examining the proposed responses and interventions; and building of consensus on the problem(s); responses and interventions**

During these steps of the process, engagement moves to the regional level. The RSCF, in approaching respective operating systems of the RIMC as well as ICGLR organs and ad hoc mechanisms, relook at the problem(s) identified, defined and documented. They also initiate consensus building on the responses and proposed interventions. At this stage, the RSCF will also initiate identification of the existing protocols that may need review and/or, together with the RIMC, start determining if there is a need for new protocols to structurally address the identified issues. These conversations and engagements can take place before the regular meetings of the RIMC to ensure that when the RIMC meets, the identified matters and respective proposals become part of the agenda. In the

meantime, the respective NSCF will be engaging with and lobbying their NCM on the matters.

During these steps the RSCF and its members can also enter into discussion with existing programmes and organs to seek collaborations on practical issues and ideas if they fall within existing operational parameters of the ICGLR.

#### **Step 5:**

##### **Recognition of the problems and adoption of the responses and interventions**

The lobbying of and engagement with the respective NCM and RIMC are expected to lead to discussions and decisions on the matters at hand. Since the RIMC prepares the agenda for the Heads of State and Government Summits, if properly and adequately engaged, the committee will ensure that the identified problem(s) and developed interventions will not only reach the summits, but will also be captured in the relevant agenda. As exemplified (in chapter 4.2) this is the process that the RYF engaged in in their endeavour to have a special summit and declaration on youth and unemployment. In this case, it is possible that the proposed protocols and/or decisions on how they should be addressed come in handy. The RSCF will mobilise and engage respective NSCFs towards ensuring that respective NCM are kept abreast of the need to have the identified issues at the table of the convened meetings of the RIMC meetings.

#### **Step 6:**

##### **Decision-making and adoption of strategies**

The deliberations at the RIMC set the agenda and usually predetermine the official decisions of the Heads of State and Government Summit. In this case, from the outcome of step 5, it is possible that the problems identified and proposals developed in a structured involvement of the CSOs at both levels—national and regional—will find themselves at the Summit. This was the case with the RYF, but also with the lead up to the Kampala declaration and the advocacy processes initiated by the RWF. Lobbying and advocacy through the RSCF as well as the NSCF



ensure heads of state support the proposals at this point. Their support is crucial, since it will contribute to the endorsement of the proposed protocol or legal decision that seeks to address the issues identified.

#### **Step 7: Implementation; monitoring and evaluation**

The CSOs, through the national and regional structures, must ensure that the decisions made at the summit are effectively implemented. In this case, while they contribute to the problem identification and proposed intervention development, they also need to ensure that a properly outlined implementation plan is endorsed. They will then determine the roles of different agencies including the NCMs and RIMCs as well as non-state actors. This will then give the respective CSOs opportunities to work with them for the decision implementation purposes.

In order to ensure a contextual implementation process that is based on results, the CSOs at the two levels will also engage in the monitoring and evaluation of the action implementation. In this case, they will engage with NCM (for NSCF) and RIMC (for RSCF) to follow up the implementations and, regularly and/or through statutory-convened meetings, discuss key issues and lessons learnt. Through this, it is possible to determine new issues from the implementation process as well as deliberate on other matters that need new actions. This then leads to Step 1 and hence becomes full cyclic conceptual framework of joint operations.

In the case of the RWF, for example, they have been involved in the monitoring of the implementation of the Kampala Declaration by member states. In discussions with the relevant ICGLR programme officer on how to improve implementation of the declaration and women, peace and security issues, they also developed the idea for a regional 1325 action plan, which would also need member states commitments and might need engagements in such a policy making cycle.

## **3.3 THE DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES OF THE ICGLR**

The decision-making process and structure of the ICGLR range from the national to the regional levels with each feeding to the other. The following elements form the structures on how issues flow and decisions are made:

*The Heads of State and Government Summit* – Being the supreme organ of the conference, the summit is responsible for all decisions that guide the life and operations of the organisation. In this case, it provides political direction and is fully responsible for all decisions. It is chaired by a head of state and government of a member state and this leadership is on a rotation basis. The RCSF and the four other forums mentioned above can address the Heads of State and Government Summit to present the work undertaken and make propositions for agreement by the summit. This is formally how the RYF introduced the proposal for an extraordinary summit on youth and unemployment and where it was accepted by the heads of state.

*The Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee (RIMC)* – The committee is composed of foreign affairs ministers of the member states. It guides the heads of states and governments in making strategic decisions. The committee is responsible for the development of protocols and legal decision framework as well as the agenda for the summit. Given these roles and functions, the CSOs, especially through the RSCF or its sister forums, need to develop strategic engagement approach with the committee. Under ordinary circumstances, the committee meets in ordinary session twice a year but it can also meet in extraordinary session on the request of one member state with the consent of the absolute majority of member states.

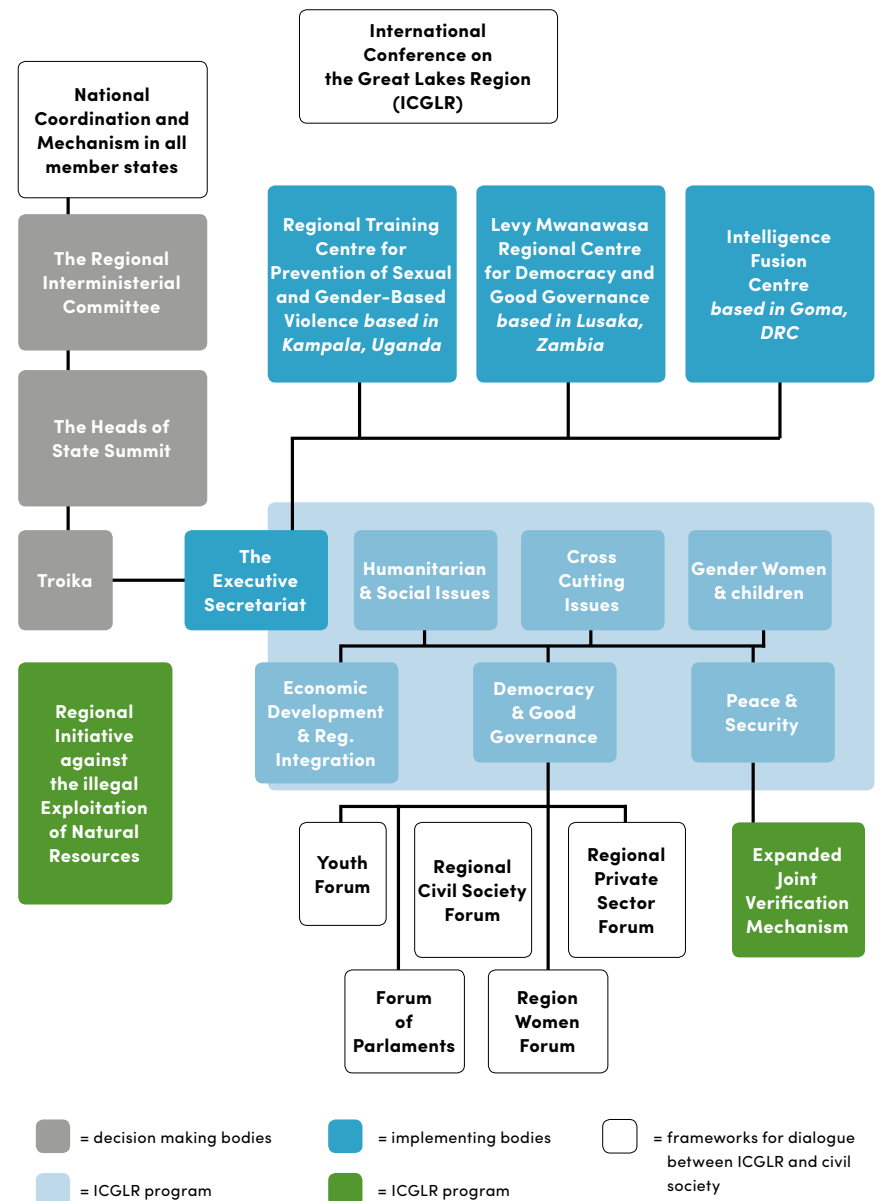
*National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism* – The mechanism provides the link between the regional and respective national operations of the ICGLR. It seeks to ensure that the member state is fully involved in the

matters of the organisation by identifying issues and further developing and following up on previously made decisions. From this role, it is imperative to note that the NSCF can highly influence the processes (see conceptual framework above). To ensure that this is actualised, the NSCF need to have a structured and functional working relationship with the NCM.

*The Executive Secretariat* – This is the coordinating organ of the organisation. Located in Bujumbura, the secretariat provides the technical functions to the body and is headed by an executive secretary; the secretariat is responsible for the calendar of events of the organisation. It is also responsible for the operational side of the ICGLR through its 6 programmes and oversees the three independent organs (the Levy Mwanamasa Regional Centre for Democracy and Good Governance, the Regional Training Centre for Democracy and Good Governance and the Intelligence Fusion Centre). For lobbying and effective engagement with the various structures for different actions as well as developing cooperation on specific issues, the RSCF needs to strengthen a working relationship with the secretariat both at the level of the executive secretary and his deputy and at the level of the programme officers. Through this, the RSCF will be able to keep itself and the NSF abreast of upcoming policy developments, decision-making moments and programmatic implementation, and decide on how to engage the various structures mentioned above.

It becomes clear that CSOs can only work effectively with the organisation, if they use the outlined structures of the ICGLR. Of particular relevance for all CSOs in the region, is the RCSF (next to the RWF and RYF, which have more specific mandates) This cannot be effective if the CSOs themselves are not strong both in terms of leadership and knowledge of issues affecting respective countries and the region.

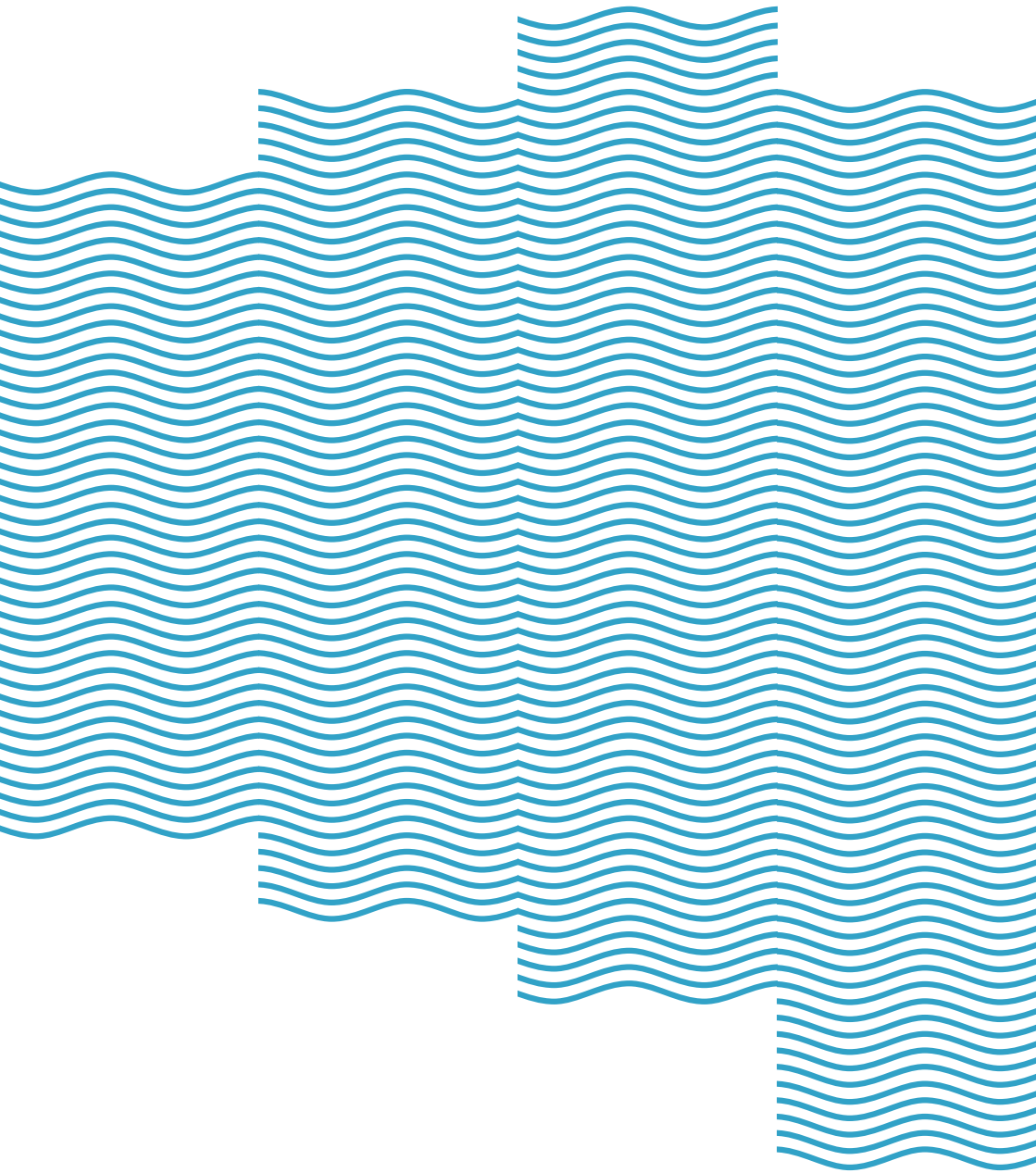
## Organigram of the ICGLR



A decorative graphic consisting of numerous horizontal, wavy blue lines that form a large, stylized number '4'. The lines are of varying lengths and are arranged to create a sense of depth and movement. The number '4' is centered within a white circular area.

**4**

**Case studies for  
successful CSO  
involvement in the ICGLR**



## 4.1 ICGLR REGIONAL WOMEN FORUM

The Regional Women Forum (RWF) is one of the most active forums of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The ICGLR-RWF was created in December 2010 by the ministers in charge of gender/feminine issues from 11 members of the ICGLR. The impetus to set up the RWF came from a reminder of the Kigali declaration formulated during the Women's Regional Meeting attended by over 100 women from the ICGLR member states held in Kigali in October 2004. The ministers that formed the RWF also took into account the *Dar Es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security and Development in the region of the Great Lakes* signed by the heads of member states of the ICGLR on 20 November 2004, which incorporated this declaration.

The RWF aims to strengthen women's rights in the Great Lakes region and to promote equal participation of women at all levels. The forum wants to ensure that the principles of women's empowerment and gender equality take root in the governance and development process of the ICGLR, that gender is mainstreamed in the policies of the countries of the Great Lakes region and that this is effectively implemented.

The heads of state and government of the countries of the Great Lakes region met in Dar Es Salaam in November 2004 and adopted a *Declaration on Peace, Security and Development*. This action was based on the analysis of conflicts and political crises that characterised the region in the 1990s. They recognised that bad governance, failure to respect democratic principles and human rights were the main causes of conflicts in the region. The heads of state and government subsequently signed the *Pact on Security, Stability and Development* in Nairobi in December 2006 containing 10 protocols and 4 programmes of action. Among the protocols is one on democracy and good governance through which member states recognise that empowerment of women and protection of their

rights guarantee development and peace in society. They undertook to establish appropriate mechanisms to promote women's rights and to eliminate all forms of prejudices, degrading and discriminatory practices against them in accordance with relevant national, regional and international standards.

Taking advantage of the establishment of the ICGLR and the space given to civil society's involvement women's organisations from across the region and the continent started a successful initiative for the ICGLR to develop policies and actions on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). This resulted initially in the *Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region*, of 2008. This initiative involved many of the organisations and individuals who are still currently involved in or associated with the RWF. The declaration launched a continued advocacy process, among others with the ICGLR first ladies as allies. This culminated in the hosting of a special session on sexual and gender-based violence during the fourth ordinary ICGLR summit in Kampala, Uganda and the signing of the *Kampala Declaration of the Fourth Ordinary Summit and Special Session on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)* in December 2011. For civil society, this was the first successful campaign with the ICGLR that allowed it to put a key regional issue on the agenda and mustering enough support for the heads of state to sign it. In this process the women's organisations worked with all relevant stakeholders within and outside the ICGLR, the structure of the RWF continues to provide a key platform for linking the insiders and outsiders and developing joint strategies for engagement and follow up on this issue.

But the RWF has a broader mandate than SGBV issues. It was set up as a specific coordination and follow up mechanism on gender issues under the ICGLR *Pact on Security, Stability and Development*. As mentioned above, the RWF aims to strengthen women's rights in the Great Lakes region, to promote equal participation of women at all levels, to ensure that the principles of women's empowerment and gender equality take root in the process

of governance and development of ICGLR and mainstream gender in the policies of the member states.

The accord setting up the RWF was adopted in Kigali, Rwanda in May 2010. It provides for the General Assembly as the supreme organ of the RWF as well as a Steering Committee of 11 (now 12) members, representatives of member state and a bureau.

#### **Specifically, the RWF is responsible for:**

1. Providing leadership and facilitation in the implementation of the gender dimension of ICGLR pact.
2. Providing necessary technical support to women's organisations and institutions for the effective implementation of the objectives of the ICGLR pact and its protocols and projects.
3. Advocating and lobbying on women-specific issues in the context of the ICGLR pact and other related regional and international instruments on women's rights.
4. Mobilising resources for women's effective participation in all aspects of the ICGLR programmes of action.
5. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the implementation of the gender dimension of the ICGLR pact.

#### **Structure of ICGLR/RWF**

##### **The structures of the RWF are:**

- The General Assembly is composed of 60 members and is the supreme body of the forum Its main functions are to deliberate on all matters relating to the objective of the RWF-ICGLR, to consider and approve appointments of secretariat staff, to adopt the rules of procedure and approve the budget for the forum.
- The Steering Committee has 12 members, one from each member state of the ICGLR. This body ensures the management and operation of the forum.



- The specialised committees: there are 5 standing committees created by the General Assembly:
  - > Peace and security
  - > Democracy and good governance
  - > Economic development and regional integration
  - > Humanitarian and Social Issues
  - > Cross-cutting issues

The secretariat includes an international staff whose number and functions are determined by the General Assembly. It is the organ that provides administrative, financial and technical management and coordination of the activities of the forum. It was decided in 2015 that this secretariat will be hosted in Kigali, Rwanda.

#### **Achievements of the forum**

During the ICGLR Heads of States and Government Summits, the RWF has the opportunity to present declarations on issues of concern in the region. RWF representatives have effectively used these opportunities to push for actions by the ICGLR and its member states to implement policies affecting gender, women and children's issues. In addition, the RWF was instrumental in having a special session by the heads of state that led to the adoption of the *Kampala Declaration on prevention of Sexual Gender Based Violence*, end of impunity and assistance to the victims. Since its inception, the RWF has held different General Assembly meetings and meetings of the Steering Committee. Its high level lobby and advocacy initiatives led to a series of achievements such as the setting up of a Gender Unit with the ICGLR secretariat or the establishment of a Counter SGBV Regional Training Facility in Uganda to train judicial officers, police officers, medical personnel and others who handle cases of SGBV. Many ICGLR member states adopted a national action plan on the UN Resolution 1325 and the RWF monitors the implementation of such plans as well as ICGLR protocols and declarations.

One of the most remarkable achievements of the forum is that the ICGLR Regional Women Forum has been granted

observer status in the talks underway between the DRC Government and M23 in Kampala, Uganda. The RWF requested observer status to ensure both parties included women's voices in the negotiations. Besides including women's issues in the outcome, it also contributed to the idea of having a pool of women mediators attached to the ICGLR.

#### **The importance of the Regional Women Forum for civil society working on conflict prevention in the region**

The RWF plays a key role in bringing together women from across the region on peace and security related issues. The UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of that time, Mary Robinson, acknowledged this when she involved the forum in the implementation of the *Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region*. In a situation where member states and the ICGLR face huge challenges in addressing competing demands and where relationships between civil society actors and governments can be confrontational, the RWF provides principled leadership for the ICGLR to live up to its commitments, is a partner in the development and implementation of activities and allows for productive engagements among all parties. Furthermore, the issues that have so far been at the core of RWF's work such as SGBV and Resolution 1325 both unearth and help to address some root causes of conflicts in the region.

Finally, by engaging with the RWF civil society actors seize on an opportunity to develop and show shared common values, mutual responsiveness and develop joint capacities. As ACCORD highlighted in their 2012 publication, for the work on the implementation of ICGLR's SGBV declarations, for civil society to work with the ICGLR through the RWF "is not just a matter of solving the problem but is also a means to the creation and maintenance of a stronger Great Lakes security community"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Angela Ndinga-Muvumba, *Preventing and Punishing Sexual Violence: The Work of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region* (ACCORD, 2012).

## Conclusion

Even though ICGLR RWF has made significant achievements, key gender issues, as identified under each programme as well as the challenge of national follow-up on the implementation of ICGLR commitments, still remain. Key gender issues include sexual violence, lack of women's representation in peace negotiations and conflict resolution, and the issue of civic participation and underrepresentation of women in decision making. To tackle those and other important gender and women's issues it will be important to continue strengthening the RWF at regional and national level and have civil society from across the region as well as the ICGLR member states and its secretariat engaging pro-actively with this structure to support its objectives.

## 4.2 THE ICGLR REGIONAL YOUTH FORUM

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) has five formal forums for structured engagements with regional civil society. Next to the Regional Women Forum, there is the Parliamentary Forum, the Regional Civil Society Forum, the Regional Youth Forum and the newly created Private Sector Forum. All of them are at different stages in their establishment and function differently. But all of them offer avenues for engagement to strengthen the ICGLR as a regional infrastructure for peace.

Over the course of 2014 and 2016 the RYF has made particularly effective use of the space by extensively researching youth and unemployment. They undertook this research through the ICGLR Good Governance Centre, convincing member states and the secretariat to hold an extraordinary summit on youth and unemployment and formally establishing a secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya.

This chapter, therefore, highlights key issues and factors that can be taken into consideration in further enhancing the role of youth in the region. It concludes by providing recommended practical actions, particularly in relation to the role of the ICGLR and its Youth Forum.

### Definitions of youth in the Great Lakes region

In assessing the role of youth in regional stability, it is critical to seek a common understanding of the concept of “youth” across the region. Looking at three of the ICGLR countries—Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda—various discrepancies emerge that, seemingly, may hinder the development of a common agenda for youth engagement with regional issues. *The Kenya Youth Policy* (2006) defines youth to be persons resident in Kenya in the age bracket of 15 to 30 years and this takes into account the physical, psychological, social, biological and political definitions of the term.<sup>4</sup> *The Uganda National Youth Policy* (2001) determines the youth to be persons of between 15–19 years of age.<sup>5</sup> In Rwanda, while acknowledging that ‘a young person is that person, who is considered as such by the society,’ the national policy (2005) considers “the youth to be made up of person between 14 and 35 years”.<sup>6</sup>

The above indicates the challenges faced when trying to develop common regional youth frameworks for peace and stability. How can different countries in the region undertake steps to address common challenges such as youth unemployment when they do not even have a consensus on who the youth is? These divergent definitions are also detrimental to regional civil society cooperation on youth issues. This becomes relevant at the level of the ICGLR since it has developed its own age bracket that is not necessarily aligned with its member states. The ICGLR Youth Accord defines youth as “all persons of 15–35 years of age”.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Kenya National Youth Policy’ (Kenyan Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2006), p.1.

<sup>5</sup> ‘The Republic of Uganda National Youth Policy: A Vision for Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ (Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2001), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> ‘The Republic of Rwanda National Youth Policy’ (Rwandan Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports, 2005), p. 8.

This is important when considering the nexus between youth and issues such as economic development and (un) employment. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), noted in 2012 “that 70% of Africa’s population is under the age of 30, and slightly more than 20% are young people between the ages of 15 to 24” and further acknowledged that “the place of unemployment, food insecurity and the adverse effects of climate change as significant challenges and the place of improved microeconomic and political stability as key to regional stabilization”.<sup>7</sup> It recognises therefore that high levels of unemployment of young people contribute to political instability.

This is an important insight but in order to address the issue of youth unemployment and underemployment, it is essential that institutional and conceptual frameworks become aligned and respond to the situations on the ground. Youth civil society and actors working with youth across the region need to work with their national governments and regional intergovernmental organisations to align and harmonise youth related policies.

### Reasons for youth mobilisation

The five drivers of fragility identified for the continent by the African Development Bank are:<sup>8</sup>

1. Poverty and exclusion.
2. Urbanisation and the growing informal sector.
3. The youth bulge.
4. Extractive industries, climate disruption and resource conflicts.
5. Unemployment, especially among the youth and women.

But on their own those drivers do not explain the acknowledged potential for youth mobilisation towards violent conflicts. For example, while it has been argued that unemployment and poverty drive young people to

conflicts, others have indicated that political instability lead to the deteriorating economic performance of a country.<sup>9</sup> Violence in a country—whether armed or not—negatively affects economic growth which creates more unemployment. A weak economic status, resulting from among other things, lack of investments, poor or weak states and violent response mechanisms, creates spaces for young people to get involved in violence.

When linking the economy and state delivery and providing a rationale for people to get involved in armed violence, Miguel observes that poverty (coming as a result of unemployment) breeds armed violence aimed at looting assets and natural resources while simultaneously highlighting that poor states simply have limited institutional capacity to repress armed uprisings. Miguel goes on to note that “ethnic groups that experience discrimination (including economic, political and cultural) should be the most likely to organise armed insurrections against the state, and conflicts are most likely to erupt in undemocratic states and those with pronounced social divisions.”<sup>10</sup>

This describes adequately developments in the Great Lakes region where youth form or are mobilised to form armed groups based on ethno-political divisions to fight against their ethnic discrimination. Such cases have taken place in Kenya where various youth gangs such as Mungiki<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ari Aisen and Francisco José Veiga, *How Does Political Instability Affect Economic Growth?*, Working Paper (International Monetary Fund, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Miguel, ‘Poverty and Violence: An Overview of Recent Research and Implication for Foreign Aid’, in *Too Poor for Peace?: Global Poverty, Conflict, and Security in the 21st Century*, ed. by Lael Brainard and Derek Chollet (Brookings Institution Press, 2007), p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> “Multitude” in Kikuyu—a secretive quasi-religious group dating back to the 1980s with exclusive Kikuyu male membership is drawn mainly from Central Province claiming ideological links with the anti-colonial Mau-Mau movement. The group was allegedly used during the 2007/8 post-election violence in the country in which they were accused of organising “the systematic, brutal killings of women and children so as to expel Luo and Kalenjin from Kikuyu-dominated areas”

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Africa: No Real Growth without Jobs’, *International Labour Organization*, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> H. Tuunanen and P.M.N. Mwangala, *Annual Report 2014* (Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire: African Development Bank, May 2015), p. 18.

and Chinkororos<sup>12</sup> pursue and fight for ethno-political based causes. Other similar groups exist across the region and some political parties have successfully organised their youth wings on similar grounds. These examples indicate that dire economic conditions combined with missing frameworks for structured and sustainable participation in economic, social, political and cultural arena provide environments in which youth spark and drive violent or armed conflicts.

From the above analysis, it can be noted that young people, whether educated or not, are likely to suffer consequences of unemployment especially if the economy of the country is either weak or faces political instability. But next to that ethnic composition, social cleavages and demographic trends, mobility and interactions, as well as how those influence or are influenced by economic, political and religious factors need to be examined further.

### Potential areas of strategic interventions

It is clear that the regional conflict landscape needs urgent structured and harmonised interventions. Given that there is already an inter-state framework (the ICGLR) and non-state actor's framework (the ICGLR Youth Forum and other civil society forums) in place the immediate intervention needed is the harmonisation of the respective actions. The 2014 ICGLR Special Summit on youth unemployment held in Nairobi, Kenya, recognised that youth unemployment in the member states “pose[s] a great threat to social-economic fabric, peace and stability in our Region”. In response to this, the summit, in its declaration, among other recommendations, “committed to harmonize employment policies in the region including labour force management plans and develop guidelines for foreign direct investors on preferential employment of youth

<sup>12</sup> The armed wing of the Abagusii community, which is found in several districts in the western ethnic Luo-dominated Nyanza Province and traditionally was a community defence force, guarding territory against cattle rustlers and other perceived “enemies” but was highly used during political clashes against other communities

from the region”.<sup>13</sup> This was responding to the realisation that “if young people are left with no alternative but unemployment and poverty, they are more likely to join a rebellion as an alternative way of generating an income”.<sup>14</sup>

The summit also committed “to create a favourable environment for investments and socio-economic development” through, among others things, “acceleration of regional integration including the free movement of persons and goods, to capitalize on the region’s economic potential and to facilitate the transfer of technology and know-how”.

### The importance of the Regional Youth Forum for civil society working on conflict prevention in the region

The challenges leading to violence in the region have been identified and commitments generated in relation to youth and unemployment. The ICGLR Regional Youth Forum has been a main actor in driving this realisation and developing a common agenda. The establishment of the ICGLR RYF, with a secretariat and respective national forums in ICGLR member states, provides structure as a non-state actor that can facilitate relevant multi-stakeholder engagements between civil society and government, intergovernmental actors, as well as the private sector and political parties. In addition the existing structures in the region provide avenues for developing joint agendas for defining national and regional strategies as well as providing sustainable structures that ensure local ownership and allow national and regional monitoring and accountability. Finally, as indicated above for the Regional Women Forum, joint engagement in the RYF allows for developing joint values and strengthening the ICGLR as a regional infrastructure for peace.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Declaration of the Special Summit of the ICGLR Heads of State and Government on the Fight against Youth Unemployment through Infrastructure Development and Investment Promotion’ (International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, 2014), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Henrik Urdal, *A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence* (New York: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2012), p. 2.

### **Recommendations**

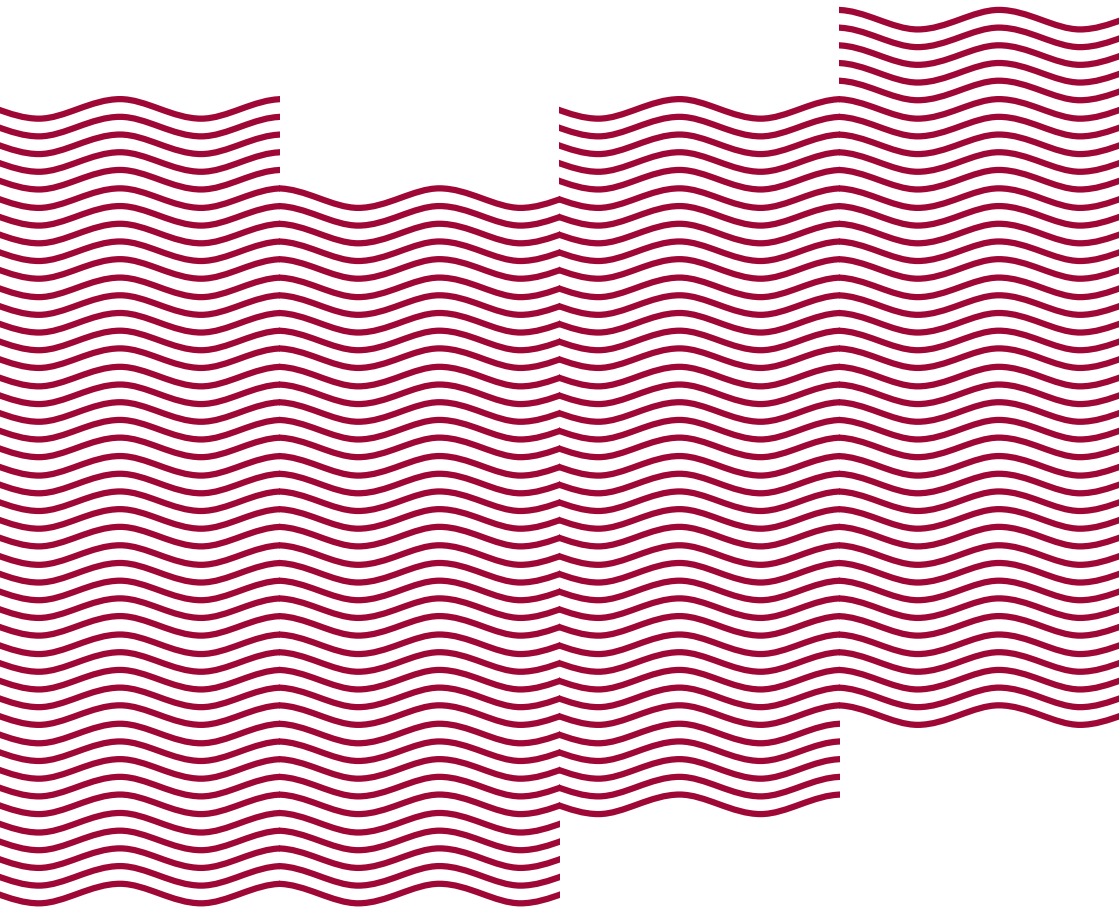
Given the regional dynamics and especially the role of young people in the regional stabilisation, CSO-ICGLR engagement must ensure that there are deliberate efforts in the harmonisation of respective youth related policies. In this, the National and Regional Youth Forums can develop and propose to the ICGLR and respective National Coordination Mechanisms plans and the need for such exercise. This can be embedded in the 2014 summit follow up strategies.

The youth forums can also undertake regular conflict analysis and updates as they engage with the ICGLR. To this end, collaboration with various professional bodies that engage with youth matters must be encouraged. Institutions such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) can be helpful to the RYF. Through its *Human Capital Strategy for Africa 2014-2018*, the AfDB aims to support equitable access to quality basic social services, including those in which there is emphasis on skills and technology development, youth employment, and economic productivity.



## **Reflections and recommendations on how to practically engage the ICGLR**





## CONCLUSION

The regional dimension of armed conflicts in the Great Lakes region demands a regional approach to achieve effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The Congo War laid bare this regional character of conflict, and was the core reason for the creation of the ICGLR. The organisation aims to coordinate efforts to address the interlinked root causes of conflict across the different countries in the region.

This interdependence is largely a reflection of the close ethnical, cultural, social, economic and political links of the people in the Great Lakes region. That is why it is particularly important for this organisation to create spaces for effective engagement and articulate mechanisms of collaboration with the citizens of its member states.

While the ICGLR's instruments acknowledge the important role of civil society and the organisation offers structured forums for engagement, the effective involvement of CSOs by the organisation remains challenging. Almost 10 years after the creation of the ICGLR, the existing framework for consultation, involvement, coordination, dialogue and exchange of experience between civil society actors in the region and between civil society, their governments and the ICGLR has improved in some areas but remains insufficient.

While recognising that the ICGLR has been more visible over the past few years, the knowledge about the organisation, its mandate, capacities and actions is still very limited among CSOs in the region. The organisation needs to improve its outreach efforts and enhance people's sense of ownership. CSOs can be instrumental in the implementation of the *Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes region* and CSOs can provide valuable input to complement and/or enhance the work of the organisation in conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding.

CSOs can become valuable allies to the ICGLR in policy development, outreach and implementation of programmes and projects. In this, the various civil society forums, as long as they remain accountable and legitimate, can play a key role by helping to sustain and structure the engagements between the ICGLR and the population in the region. Through such a process, they can help ensure that all projects and decisions are made in the interest and with participation of the people of the Great Lakes. Making the ICGLR “ours” requires the active engagement from organised civil society throughout the region.

In order to do this effectively, consultation mechanisms with CSOs should allow quality contributions and enable opportunities for in depth discussions. It is important that CSOs feel that these mechanisms actually take into consideration their inputs as contributions to policy formulations. CSO's knowing they can exercise some influence is fundamental to any forum of consultation and coordination. In this regard, the case studies of the Regional Women Forum as well as the Regional Youth Forum represent good practice and successful examples of engagement with the ICGLR. This should be extended to other forums, while coordination among the forums must also be ensured.

Using the existing consultation forums to facilitate cooperation and consultation between CSOs and some of the programmes and specialised organs of the ICGLR is another way to channel quality contributions. CSOs, programmes and organs, including an organ such as the Intelligence Fusion Centre, would greatly benefit from enhanced collaboration based on the different, complementary expertise and would help ensure that security of the people is at the centre of the ICGLR's interventions.

Other recommendations developed by CSOs in the region to enhance collaboration and greater complementarities of their respective efforts with the ICGLR include:

**Exchange and coordination:**

- The ICGLR Executive Secretary should organise an annual meeting with CSOs for a broad exchange of information.
- The ICGLR Executive Secretariat should organise, together with the regional civil society forum, regular (at least yearly) consultative meetings with interested CSOs active in conflict prevention and peacebuilding to discuss possibilities for co-operation.
- Based on ICGLR and RCSF strategic and action plans, a joint plan defining each complementary role in the implementation of the *Pact on Security, Stability and Development and the Framework of Hope* should be developed and implemented.
- When on official trips and missions, ICGLR officials and officers should, time and mandate permitting, meet representatives of CSO forums at the national and local level as well as other civil society organisations based on mission scope and objectives with the aim to present information on ICGLR activities.
- The National ICGLR Coordinator should seek and maintain regular contacts with the relevant CSOs active in their country, particularly the national and regional ICGLR forums representatives.
- The National ICGLR Coordinator should seek to facilitate regular contact between ICGLR organs and temporary missions in member states with relevant CSOs active in their country.

**Expert input:**

- The ICGLR Secretariat, programmes, organs and national coordinators should actively involve CSO experts on specific issues in the run up to major meetings and policy processes.
- The ICGLR Secretariat, programmes, organs and national coordinators should invite the regional and/or national chairpersons of the relevant forums as well as experts from CSOs with required expertise to address ad hoc informal and formal meetings, missions and election monitoring organised by the ICGLR.
- The ICGLR Secretariat, programmes, organs and national coordinators should actively ask CSOs with the required expertise to contribute to the review of the implementation of ICGLR commitments at the regional and national level.
- The ICGLR should set up a database of experts to facilitate the above recommendations.

**ICGLR structures and support:**

- To appoint among the ICGLR Secretariat staff a CSO liaison person to serve as their point of contact with the Bujumbura, Lusaka, Goma and Kampala bodies and other ICGLR institutions.
- ICGLR Secretariat should include the Regional Civil Society Forum (RCSF) in its budget and jointly fundraise with the RCSF to provide adequate financial and technical support to the RCSF and to ensure sustained CSO representation and involvement from the national to regional level.
- The National Civil Society Forum (NCSF) should develop systems and structures that can effectively mobilise, throughout the country, those who identify with the agenda of peace, security and development to ensure wider involvement.

- The NCSF should implement regular capacity strengthening of its members and leadership and hold thematic discussions on ICGLR and its operations, functions and objectives. If possible such discussion should include the ICGLR National Coordinating Mechanism's other representatives.
- The NCSF should also undertake regular national situational analysis on issues that relate to the ICGLR and discuss their findings with the NCM; and develop a structured working relationship with the NCM and other stakeholders to ensure that when it comes to lobbying (as per the conceptual framework), the process becomes easy.
- The RCSF should develop and implement a deliberate structure to regularly collect and collate national issues affecting peace, security and development. It should also regularly take regional situational analysis and produce documents determining the areas of concern and possible points of action.
- The RCSF should regularly convene regional sessions to discuss issues and capacity enhancement. They should also develop and implement a working structure with the RIMC and the Secretariat.

**CSOs:**

- CSOs should send their written contributions, petitions and communications to the ICGLR Executive Secretariat through the national and regional ICGLR forums to strengthen their mutual engagement and to strengthen the ICGLR as a functional structure.
- Information about the ICGLR should be popularised among CSOs and the broader population.
- CSOs should be encouraged to actively engage with the national and regional ICGLR forums and, where possible, participate in ICGLR regional meetings, activities and engagements mentioned above.

These recommendations of systematic engagement with CSOs require sustainable funding and designated staff capacities. It is therefore necessary for the ICGLR to invest in the development of these capacities to elicit civil society's perspectives and promote greater inclusiveness in the work of the organisation. The return on the investment will with no doubt make the effort worthwhile.

CSOs in the region must also invest to enhance their advocacy capacities to establish relevant cooperation, have meaningful participation and influence in policymaking. CSOs need to be more assertive about what they bring to the table, more astute in selling their messages. They need to claim their own spaces. Methods for enlarging the political space and offering platforms for engagement between the ICGLR and civil society can include both formal and informal modes of engagement.

CSOs seeking to engage with the IGLR could consider some of the following options to build a relationship of collaboration and policy discussion:

**Do an environmental scan** to determine with which of the different bodies and organs of the ICGLR, including the various forums, it would make more sense to engage. Consider the different entry points that can be used, the existing mechanisms of engagement, the strengths of these bodies and their sphere of influence. Consider a broad range of issues, not just that directly relate to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, but also those that deal with other social or economic issues that could constitute indirect entry points to address peace and security matters.

**Review the roles and capacities of your organisation. Identify what capacities you need to strengthen.** Know what added value you can bring to the table. This may be knowledge/expertise, local connections, access to specific communities, et cetera. Also, be aware of in which areas your organisation needs to build greater capacity to engage with the ICGLR and influence policies. This may include

capacities for monitoring and evaluation, generating policy analysis, undertaking advocacy activities, and so on.

**Determine your approach and modes of engagement**—how are you going to frame your message? Avoid language that can be perceived as antagonism. Instead, use terminology that suggests constructive collaboration.

**Establish alliances with other CSOs.** The Regional Civil Society Forum, Regional Youth Forum and Regional Women Forum offer particularly valuable spaces for establishing those alliances. These alliances do not necessarily have to be among other organisations working in the field of peace and security. CSOs may also consider alliances with organisations working on issues like human rights, humanitarian relief, development, peace & security, and so on. While they may pursue different agendas, there is also the possibility of benefiting from their entry points.

**Develop outputs/materials, such as briefing papers.** Produce targeted, quality, smart briefings with specific proposals. Link the problem analysis to concrete actions that can be undertaken by the ICGLR or other actors.

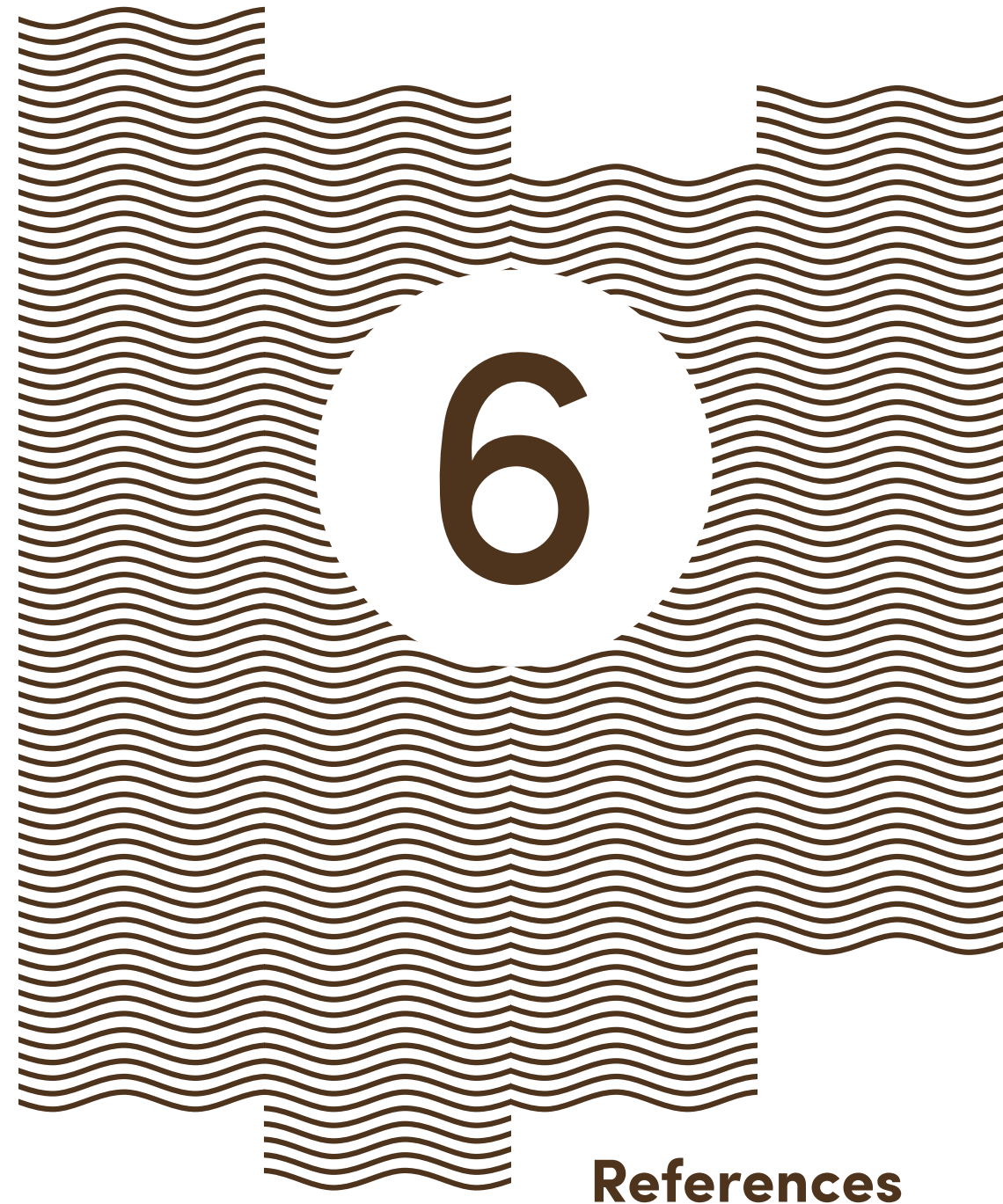
**Create your own platforms for engagement.** If formal spaces for engagement are limited, consider creating your own informal, appealing spaces where you can invite the key decision makers your organisation seeks to influence.

It is clear that there is still room for improvement in the collaboration between CSOs and the ICGLR. Developing an inclusive framework for the ICGLR that recognises and encourages CSOs' capacity and role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding could make a difference.

No single actor has all the strategies and instruments for crisis prevention and peacebuilding. Efforts to prevent violent conflicts are more likely to be successful when various state and non-state actors cooperate closely. Developing more and better mechanisms for collaboration

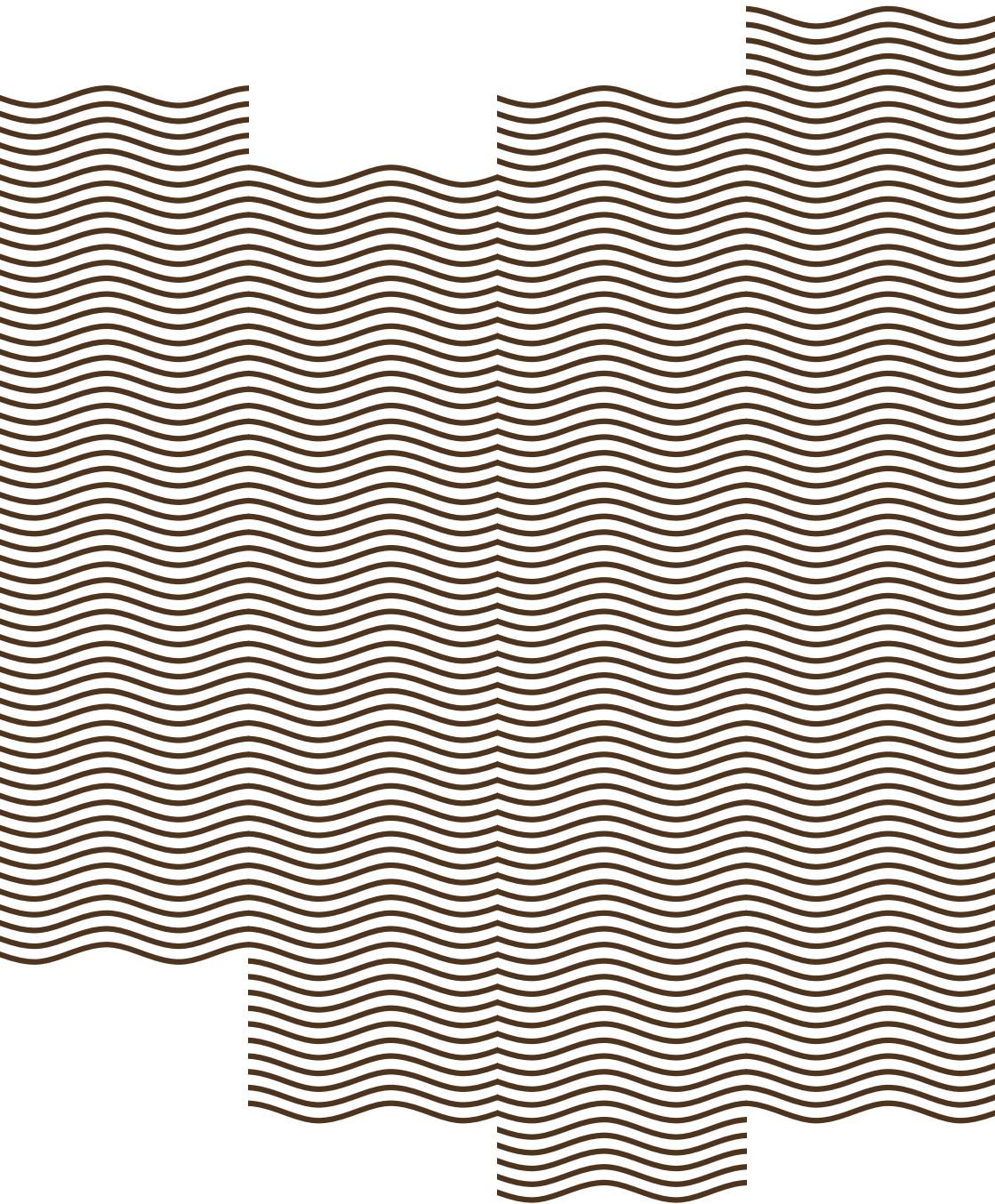
that enable greater synergies and complementarities would make the ICGLR more effective in its efforts to prevent, manage and transform conflict in the Great Lakes region.

The regional issues are immense, so we need to effectively and contextually address them. The state and non-state actors must each bring their efforts to the same table. To this end, working together through the existing structures provides the best mechanism of achieving our common objectives.



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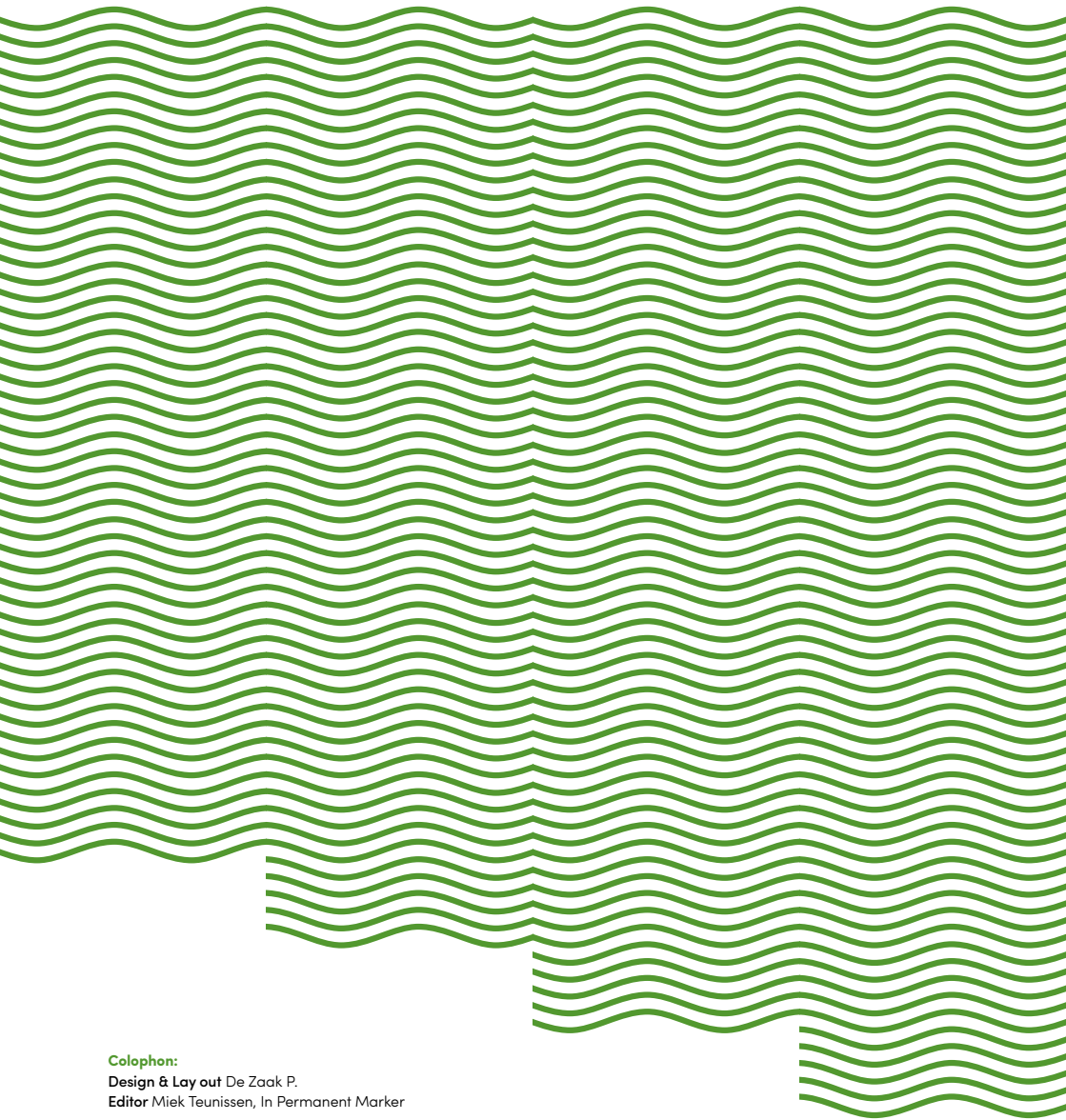




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