



Policy Dialogue forum concept note

A joint Afrobarometer and Amani Africa Media and Research Services event

Leveraging Citizen Engagement for Democratic Governance and Conflict Prevention: Insights from Afrobarometer's 2025 flagship report for the APSA and AGA

Background

Africa stands at a critical juncture in its democratic journey. Despite persistent challenges such as democratic backsliding, socioeconomic hardships and uneven political freedoms, African citizens demonstrate remarkable resilience and commitment to participatory governance. Afrobarometer's 2025 [Flagship Report](#), 'African Insights 2025: Citizen Engagement, Citizen Power - Africans Claim the Promise of Democracy,' launched on 8 July 2025, in Accra, Ghana, provides compelling evidence from over 53,000 interviews conducted across 39 countries - more than three-quarters of Africa's population. The findings show that while more than 80% of Africans engage in at least one form of political or civic activity - most commonly voting - participation is often strongest among poorer and less-educated citizens, underscoring a broad demand for accountability. Engagement rises where governments are perceived as responsive, elections are free and fair and democracy delivers, but unmet socioeconomic needs such as inequality and poor services often push citizens to demand change. Yet, significant inclusion gaps persist: youth participation, particularly voting, trails older generations by 18 percentage points and women also remain underrepresented, raising concerns about the inclusivity and sustainability of Africa's democratic trajectory.

The Report offers a sobering yet hopeful view of Africa's democratic course. While citizens remain active - voting, engaging in community meetings, contacting leaders - their confidence in institutions and political processes continues to erode. Declining trust in parties, disillusionment with democratic delivery and the growing perception of corruption and state capture point to deep governance gaps.

Rationale

The insights from the report are particularly useful for thinking about the quality of elections, how citizens expectation of democracy goes beyond elections, and where the gap lies between the promise of national legal frameworks and the African Union's African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and African Governance Architecture (AGA) on the one hand and the lived realities of citizens on the continent. The report's evidence highlights that governance deficits are not only democratic concerns but also early warning signals of instability, requiring attention from the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) and AGA institutions alike.



In this context, Amani Africa Media and Research Services and Afrobarometer are co-convening a policy dialogue forum on Monday, 3 November 2025 - in a hybrid format - at Ramada Hotel, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and via Zoom starting from 2:00 PM EAT. This forum will serve as a critical platform to bridge these findings with AGA-APSA implementation.

Objectives of the Policy Dialogue

1. To facilitate dialogue between research and policy through policy dialogue on Afrobarometer's findings for the delivery of APSA and AGA, especially regarding citizen trust, inclusivity and institutional responsiveness.
2. To identify policy entry points for strengthening AU governance frameworks, including addressing corruption, state capture, leadership deficits and the influence of external actors.
3. To promote citizen-centric approaches within APSA-AGA by positioning citizen voices as legitimate and complementary indicators in the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and in AU election observation activities for governance monitoring and preventive action.

Strategic Issues for Discussion

- Citizen engagement as early warning: Afrobarometer highlights that the most politically active are often the rural, poorer and less educated. How can these overlooked voices strengthen APSA's conflict prevention tools?
- Democratic disillusionment: Declining confidence in elections and political parties risks undermining the AU's core norm against Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG). How can APSA-AGA respond to prevent disaffection from turning into instability?
- Corruption and state capture: The rise of money politics and capture of institutions by narrow interests erodes legitimacy. What mechanisms within AGA and PSC practice can counter these trends?
- Leadership and accountability: Weak institutions and leadership crises perpetuate distrust. How can AU frameworks incentivize ethical, responsive leadership?
- External influence: From geopolitical rivalries to disinformation, external actors exploit governance vulnerabilities. What safeguards can the AU deploy to protect democratic governance from undue interference?



Format and Participants

Relevant stakeholders and policymakers from the AU (AU Commission, AU member states) and Regional Economic Communities and Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), as well as international organizations, the diplomatic community, think tanks, academic institutions and civil society organizations will take part in this dialogue. The working language of the discussion will be English, with simultaneous interpretation available in French.