

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How did AGNA start?**

Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA) was created by CIVICUS to recognise the unique role of national associations of organisations in providing a collective voice for civil society. It was officially launched at the CIVICUS World Assembly in Gaborone, Botswana in March 2004.

National associations serve as key connectors to government and businesses, and help to create a strong enabling environment for civil society organisations, democracy, and the rights of citizen action and participation. They also provide a range of services to civil society organisations to help them be more effective, identify the financial and human resources they need to carry out their work, and promote their capacity to work together.

AGNA takes forward the mission and vision of CIVICUS: to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world so that there is a worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens engaged in confronting the challenges facing humanity. Its work is guided by the [same principles and values as CIVICUS](#).

### **What are AGNA's objectives?**

AGNA brings together national associations and regional platforms from around the world to foster greater cooperation across national and regional boundaries, increase their ability to collaborate on areas of mutual interest, and respond to the unique needs and challenges they face.

It aims to:

- Address the need for an international citizens' coalition;
- Reverse the current understanding of capacity-building characterized by a north-to-south flow of knowledge, information and experience sharing;
- Provide a support system for national network leaders; and
- Reduce the 're-invention of the wheel' and improvisation in the leadership of NGOs/NPOs.

You can find AGNA's current Strategic Objectives [here](#).

### **What are National Associations?**

National associations are country-based membership networks whose purpose is to represent the collective interests of members and the not-for-profit community more generally in that country. They play a critical part in bringing the sector together.

They serve as vehicles for a constructive and coordinated voice for civil society. They are well placed to play the role of interlocutor between governments and civil society, and are in a position of strength to influence public policy.

### **How does AGNA fit within the CIVICUS Alliance?**

CIVICUS hosts and coordinates AGNA, which is a network of CIVICUS members who are national and regional associations. While it is guided by an elected group of AGNA members on its steering committee, AGNA functions within the overall governance system of CIVICUS.

Similarly, its strategic plan and priorities directly contribute to advancing CIVICUS' overall strategies and goals.

### **What role does the steering committee play?**

AGNA is advised by a steering committee constituted by members of the network. These members are elected into office for a period of three years by the AGNA general membership during the annual general meeting or through a virtual election process. Each year, there is a nomination call to all members for three seats. The nominees are then elected by voting members to serve for a three-year term.

The responsibilities of the steering committee include:

- Advising on AGNA's strategic direction and the implementation of AGNA's work plan
- Assisting the coordination team to plan the Annual General Meeting
- Doing outreach and engagement with potential members for the network
- Facilitating and encouraging the flow of communication between all AGNA members
- Keeping up to date on current issues and trends emerging in their region
- Ensure the network is transparent and inclusive
- Supporting CIVICUS with resource mobilization to assist with the sustainability of AGNA

To read more about the steering committee's role, refer to the Terms of Reference [here](#).

### **Who are current AGNA Steering committee members?**

The AGNA steering committee is composed of nine elected individuals from:

- Asia: 2 representatives
- Africa: 2 representatives
- Latin America and The Caribbean: 2 representatives
- The Pacific: 1 representative
- Europe: 1 representative
- Middle East and North of Africa (MENA): 1 representative

To read more about the current Steering Committee members, please see [here](#).

### **How can we join AGNA?**

AGNA membership is open to CIVICUS voting members. AGNA voting membership is open to any national association or platform of civil society organisations, while its associate membership is open to regional platforms and thematically-focused networks.

AGNA is currently updating its membership criteria and policy. For more information on membership or inquiries to join, please write to us at [agna@civicus.org](mailto:agna@civicus.org).