Citizenship and Identity Crisis: A brief account of African Experience

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

The concept and practice of citizenship are usually associated with the relationship between individuals and the political community in which they reside. This statement can broadly be analyzed in terms of membership and identity. Furthermore different paradigms available on the intellectual discourse came up with their respective views pertinent the issue.

Towards A definition

As a matter of history definition of the term citizenship was closely associated with ancient city states of Greece. Accordingly citizens were defined as free individuals, (i.e.) men, who were involved in the public affairs of the city-state. A citizen was connected to the civic virtues of Athenian democracy, which was marked by the subordination of the private life to the dedication to public affairs and the common good. (Held, 1996).

The citizen was a "homo politicus" With the political and social hegemony of Christianity during the Middle Ages. This way of understanding citizenship eclipsed and was replaced by ("homo credens") (Held, 1996).

A public political order or public life outside the religious order of Christianity was abandoned. The order of things was not connected to the public realm of republican commitment of the citizens, but to subordination to the will of God.

The republican virtues of citizenship gained a new foothold during the Renaissance in the Italian city-states. Still, it was the French revolution, starting in 1789, that provided the framework for thinking and practicing citizenship within the formation of modern nation states. Below there is a description of how the heritage of the French revolution is still with us today, and likewise the political and social processes that constitute significant challenges to this heritage. However, before doing so, it might be a good idea shortly to explore some features of the concept of citizenship from a more abstract and politically theoretical point of view.

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From a politically theoretical point of view citizenship is what constitutes the membership of and belonging to a political community, and consequently the creation of and life as political subjects. Some of the central elements of citizenship, the formal, legal rights and duties of individuals and groups are establishing a legitimate sphere, according to which all members of the community in principle can act without arbitrary or unjust interference from other individuals or the community. In democracy it is the **autonomy** of individuals and groups as political agents that is the key guiding normative principle of the political life. The British political scientist David Held defines it in this way in his book "Democracy and the Global Order (1995):

"[citizenship is] a principle that recognizes the indispensability of "equal autonomy" for all citizens. If peoples´ equal interest in democracy is to be protected, they require an equal capacity to act across political institutions and sites of power" (Held, 1995:71).

The belonging of autonomous citizens to a political community is centered around two key aspects. The first aspect is connected to the political institutions of society. The relations of individuals and groups to these institutions are structured around the **formal, legal rights, and duties** which the members of the community possess (Held, 1995:71). The second aspect is concerned with the public activities through which the members of the community clarify and debate on affairs. Here citizenship is not related directly to the formal and institutional feeling of belonging of the political subjects, but to the discussion and deliberating of communal affairs. Citizenship, according to this second aspect, is primarily related to the political **identities** that are expressed and created through the participation in the public political life of the community.

To be a member of a national or ethnic community, understood as a historical, cultural community is not identical with citizenship membership. But it is also very important to stress the fact that categories of citizenship, i.e. membership of a political community, very often overlap those of cultural similarity. Citizenship in its stringent political interpretation can analytically be distinguished from cultural categories and identities; still, it is very difficult to do so in practice. Very often the understandings of citizenship bear more or less implicit imprints of ways in which citizenship is interpreted and understood within as specific culturally defined historical context.

Citizenship gains a specific meaning in relation to the historical settings and socio-cultural conflicts that help establish and maintain the boundaries of a community. Because citizenship functions as a way of demarcating the boundaries of a community, and as a way of pointing out its members, it seems very difficult not to operate in the context of culturally defined categories and identities. In that respect the categories of citizenship are categories of identity and cultural policies.

African experience on the institution and practice of citizenship

As the African experience in relation to citizenship is concerned the bulk of literatures are paying attention to the political complexities of colonialism in which the modern states came out with their associated challenges of legitimacy. However there are some who tried to demonstrate the pre-colonial experience despite the existence of so many differences that constrained evolution of a broad based paradigm for analytical purpose like that of the western Europe.

Hence According to Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo(2003) 'territory, and management and self-management groups'. The example of the Mandé is very illustrative of the unique nature of citizenship on the continent to the extent that 'all those who belonged to the Kingdom of Mali possessed a sort of Malian citizenship. When people travelled, they were viewed as nationals of Mali. After the last village belonging to Mali, people from elsewhere were thought of as belonging to other entities. Malian nationals

were Mandinka. The term designated both people from Mandinka land and nationals of the Empire of Mali. Everywhere in Africa, references to extended families, villages, neighborhoods, and cantons [were] highly significant'.

Furthermore, it seems that, despite the frictions that may have existed between them, African

Peoples were most often 'in a state of osmosis and symbiotic exchanges, in terms of social uses, languages, dances, ideologies, religions'. This inter-ethnic solidarity, of which 'joking relationships' represented one of the most highly perfected forms, explains why foreigners were always granted special protection in many pre-colonial States (AC HPR, 2014). Colonization, with its laws and practices, changed the situation and imposed a new philosophy of nationality whose roots were fundamentally Western. In the Common Law countries, nationality as a concept of law developed from the concept of allegiance, whose origins can be traced back to feudal England. It consisted of an obligation of loyalty and obedience owed by a vassal to his liege lord in exchange for the protection afforded by the latter. When the king became the feudal lord, all of the population in the kingdom, including aliens, were placed under his protection and became 'subjects' of the crown (British Subjects).

No one could escape this unique allegiance. However, for the system of allegiance to work as intended, it had to be real, i.e. effective within the boundaries of the kingdom, personal, in the sense that allegiance was owed to the person of the king rather than to the crown, and perpetual, because the bond could not be broken or suspended. This doctrine was subsequently extended to the British territories acquired through colonial conquest. Individuals born in those territories known as 'crown colonies', became British subjects, whatever the status of their parents, because all subjects owed a 'natural' allegiance to His Majesty in return for the protection he granted them. This

rule was maintained for the colonies' that became independent 'dominions'.

However, most British territories in Africa were 'protectorates', i.e. foreign territories under the protection of the British Crown. Here, the system of 'indirect rule' was applied and the people had the status of 'British protected persons', which granted them certain rights in Great Britain, although those rights were inferior to those of British subjects. During this early period, there were two procedures whereby a non-national by birth could become a British subject:

- Naturalization, which required a decision of Parliament and allowed the beneficiary to enjoy all rights except for political rights;

- 'Denization', granted by the crown, allowed the beneficiary to enjoy all of the rights of British subjects, excepting political rights.

In 1870, legislation introduced the concept of renouncing British citizenship and provided, for the first time, for the possibility that a British woman married to a non-national might lose her nationality. However, the rules relating to nationality were based more on Common Law and the principles of Case Law as opposed to any form of legislation. The British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of 1914 confirmed the principle of the acquisition of nationality by:

- Birth;

- Naturalization;

- Marriage to a British national.

Conversely, nationality could also be lost, in the event of renunciation, acquisition of another nationality, women's marriage to a non-national, or loss of the nationality by one's parents. In 1948, comprehensive legislation was adopted for the first time following a decision by one of the territories, namely Canada, to establish its own law on nationality. Henceforth, the status of British subject was replaced by the status of 'Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies' and the right to

nationality was fully codified for the first time. Thus, British nationality was acquired:

- Upon birth in the territory of the United Kingdom or one of its colonies;

- Through naturalization;

- Through birth, abroad, to a father who was a British citizen;

- Through marriage.

One of the consequences of the British Nationality Act of 1948 was the creation of a sort of common citizenship, that is, citizenship in the Commonwealth, which could be seen as the sum of British citizenship and citizenship of the former British Crown colonies and whose 'chief benefit was to grant nationals of member States residing in another Commonwealth country a different status from that of aliens'.

In civil law countries, such as France, nationality was also used, under the absolute monarchy, to define one's relationship to royalty and the king. During this period, the French were 'régnicole', an old French term meaning that they 'were born and lived in the kingdom and recognized the sovereignty of the king by recognizing themselves as his subjects'. Beginning in the 17th century, French nationality could be independently transmitted to an individual through descent, although birth on French soil remained the dominant criterion for the granting of French nationality. Unlike children born on the territory of the kingdom to non-national parents, children of French parents born abroad were obliged to request a *lettrede naturalité* from the king to confirm their nationality on returning to the territory of the kingdom. The French Revolution of 1789 harmonized the criteria for granting nationality, opened it up to foreigners (Jews and people of colour) and slaves, and created the concept of the 'citizen'. This introduced a new conception of nationality whereby all individuals who agreed to obey the rules set forth by the laws of the country and, above all, its Constitution, were considered citizens and therefore

nationals. Under this system, nationality and citizenship were indistinguishable.

The Napoleonic Code (French civil code of 1803) distinguished citizenship from the fact of being French: 'The exercise of civil rights is independent of the quality of citizenship, which is only acquired and preserved in conformity with constitutional law. Every Frenchman shall enjoy civil rights'. Descent remained the principle means by which nationality was transmitted. The distinction between nationality and citizenship was enshrined in colonial law. From 1865to 1946, all colonized peoples, with the notable exception of the Senegalese people of the Four Communes, were treated as 'subjects': deprived of fundamental democratic rights and freedoms and subjected to discriminatory and repressive provisions. 'Natives' ('*indigènes*' in French) were French nationals but not citizens unless they acquired citizenship through very exceptional circumstances. They were not subject to the French civil code but rather to local law (either Muslim or customary). They had no political rights but could be subjected to various obligations, notably including military service. The French law of 26 June 1889 introduced significant innovations:

- It established birth on French territory as the fundamental criterion for granting French nationality;

- Individuals born in France to non-nationals born in France were French by descent;

- Individuals born in France to non-national parents born outside of France became

French on condition that they legally resided in France on reaching the age of majority. At the end of the Second World War, when everything seemed to indicate that the country was moving towards the realization of equal rights for 'natives' and 'citizens', France persisted in its legal particularism according to which it was 'assimilationist and striving for unity' notably through the distinction between the *Départements et Territoires d'outre-mer*

(Overseas Departments and Territories). While the Constitution of 1946 provided that 'all inhabitants of the Overseas

Territories were granted French citizenship', the Nationality Code of 19 October 1945 was declared applicable only to the inhabitants of the Overseas Departments. This anomaly was only corrected by a decree on 24 February 1953 that made 'the Code of 1945 the Charter of French Nationality in the Overseas Territories'. The French Constitution of 4 October 1958 finally grouped together the Overseas Departments and Territories as defined by the Reform Act (*Loi-cadre*) of 23 June 1956 and its implementing instruments to form a 'Community' within which they enjoyed a degree of autonomy that allowed them to conduct their own administration and freely and democratically manage their own affairs. Article 77 of the Constitution took care to stipulate that 'there is in the Community only one citizenship' namely French citizenship, and that 'all citizens are equal before the law, whatever their origin, race or religion'. However, Community citizenship was soon abandoned with the decision by the French authorities to authorize the trust territories, placed under French jurisdiction by the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations, to legislate on nationality before they attained international sovereignty and the will of the other member States to become sovereign States and therefore able to determine the conditions for acquiring their nationality. This historical background on the concept of nationality can help shed light on the legal problems that arose when African States replaced the colonial authorities in determining the content of national laws on the issue.

Challenges of citizenship in Africa

In order to discuss about problems pertinent to citizenship in African context, it better to look at developments associated with the evolution of nationhood and national identity. Accordingly Much of Africa as presently constituted, owes its formation and perhaps evolution to the Berlin Conference of 1884 where Africa was shared among competing imperial powers which was the beginning of administrative boundaries as political boundaries and also marked the beginning of the effective implementation of capitalism in terms of mode of production that forever impacted on African economy and society. Thus, the European imperial powers brought colonialism to Africa and colonialism then disorganized African pre-colonial societies, imposed capitalism when there were no capitalist institutions or capitalist social classes to grow capitalism. Indeed, colonialism brought capitalism to Africa when the pre-colonial societies were basically feudal. Consequently, capitalist state formation became inverted, and till date, those with no economic power are with political power which makes politics, the struggle for power, to be severe, violent and bloody because any faction with political power uses the state to amass wealth. (Fadakinte, 2013). Thus, soon after independence factional struggle for power, among the dominant class, became severe and violent, precisely because no particular class had hegemony, with the needed apparatuses of state, to be in charge of the society and be in a position to provide leadership, organize the different nations within the same country (nation-sate) and socialize them to have a common identity and evolve meaningful policies for development.

What all this means is that colonialism and subsequently colonial rule, made it difficult to have a well-defined class structure in Africa. Consequently, the emergent dominant class was amorphous, made up of all manner of individuals with no class consciousness and with no class solidarity. Thus, the emergent dominant class did not possess hegemonic values and was without hegemonic culture which made it difficult for them to create hegemonic process for the society. Therefore, the apparent lack of hegemony in post-colonial Africa, occasioned by the problem of disorganized and in-cohesive dominant class,

that could not evolve a ruling class, resulted in the development of an incipient post-colonial state. And today, the post-colonial state is fraught with complex crises, so much so that more than five decades into their flag independence African states are yet to find their bearing. Thus far, it can be argued that the post-colonial state in Africa lack hegemony in view of the fact that no one class is able to dominate and take control of the society, due to the rancorous and violent factional struggle for power by the dominant class. And that is because, as noted by (Ihonvbere, 1989) the inability of the state to be neutral reflects the nature and development of the productive forces and also reflects the rudimentary development of commodity production which threw up an amorphous class formation and fierce struggle for hegemony by the various factions. Thus, in view of the absence of a cohesive dominant class and the existence of incipient ruling elites that lack viable and strong economic base, the emergent post-colonial state became involved in capital accumulation which provided veritable ground for competing factions of the dominant class for economic ascendancy. This in turn, fuel violence as winning political power becomes a Zero sum game. Nwabueze's, (2010) work on colonialism in Africa is also apt here. According to him, the privatization of the state through one- man- rule affects the ideological, intellectual and political life of the state and it creates atrophy and also the inability of the state to maintain its crucial existence that is, maximal utilization of resources for its people, in terms of the provision of adequate security for life and property, safeguarding the territorial integrity and effective execution of policies.

Consequently, the post-colonial state does not have the capacity to mediate conflicts within and between political communities. What it does is to punish perceived vulnerable groups, suffocate civil society and ultimately, choke the political space. All this development exacerbates the tendency towards monumental conflicts within the polity rather than the cultivation of national identity and culture. Thus, there is hardly any rule of law, no plausible system of justice, no transparency and all the coercive institutions of the state are above the law, with the civil society below it, and ordinary people are out of sight, far beyond the protection of the state, while the judiciary is dissociated from justice and the bureaucracy is oppressive and arbitrary. (Ake, 1985).

Identity crises in Africa stem from pluralism and multiculturalism and that is because there is no cohesive state to mediate unhealthy competition between ethnic groups thereby putting citizenship in a serious crisis. And most of African countries like Nigeria, Uganda, DR. Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Rwanda, Burundi, Mali. Cote'd Ivoire Cost, Libya, Kenya, Ethiopia Burkina-Faso, etc… are multicultural and plural in structures and institutions which creates multiple and competing identities that attenuates the citizens loyalties and allegiance to the state. In other words, since most of the African states consist of a number of nationalities with no hegemonic leadership, the problem generates sectarian identities in form of tribal, ethnic or religious exclusive identities. Thus, primordial groups take precedence over the state as primary object of identity and allegiance, which seek to contest political space within the state.

The consequence of this situation is the apparent lack of hegemonic process that ought to transform the post- colonial state into a nation-state, the failure of which throws up the crisis of citizenship as each nationality maintains its identity. (Ekeh, 1978) reinforced this development by pointing out that in Africa, the concept of citizenship had dual derivative Primordial (common ancestral, ethnic affinities) and Civic Citizenship(Egalitarianism). It is the primordial, as noted by (Osaghae, 1998) that often serves as the functional basis of defining citizenship especially in the distribution of public goods and constitutional issues. In DR. Congo as in Cote D' Ivoire,Uganda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria

etc… it is the same issue of "natives versus settlers" where , settlers are regarded as non-citizens while the natives, who are the "real" citizens are to be entitled to all that the state can provide including political power. Beyond that, (Nwabueze, 2010) asserts that none of the so called states are nations or one people because, apart from the extent of territory and differences in language between the ethnic groups within each state, is the remarkable and fundamental differences in character, attitude, habits, feelings, way of life and social conditions between them, that make them to be antagonistic, mutually antipathetic, utterly in compatible and even bitterly hostile to each other. And this is evident in the way pluralism is creating violent conflicts between the population of the same country, such as, Nigeria, Sudan, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Central African Republic, Mali, Cote d' Ivoire etc. According to (Otite, 2010), with different groups within each country in Africa, of varying degrees of loyalty either to the village, town or society, ethno –occupational, ethno – religious differences as well as ethno – economics conflicts become rife. For example, some Tutsi communities in Eastern Zaire (Congo) of over 600,000 who relocated over more than a century ago from Rwanda, according to (Herbst, 2000), have not been able to become Congolese and have engaged the original Congolese inhabitants in armed conflicts to this day and have thus, become sympathetic to Rwandese government. Again, to (Wilmot, 1979), almost all African leaders failed to develop a consistent and enduring platform for nationalism because most of the political institutions that were put in place were fragile and lacked the needed sophistication that will assist in the realization and attainment of nationhood. Although, nationalism is critical to the development of nationhood, African leaders did very little to promote the values of nationhood because they were mostly tribal chiefs in their political calculations and strategies. Also, the leaders were bereft of

hegemonic capacity which ought to fashion out the social order that will permeate the society and later create dominant values for state formation, engender and galvanize the citizenry to nationhood. Diamond, (1988) also argued that there had been more conflicts generated by the artificial nature of the country, the absence of any colonial effort to lay the required foundation and inculcate some semblance of nationhood in Africa and this became unattainable after independence which continue to worked against national unity and identity.

As a matter of fact, the challenge of integrating African states around a common ground of nationhood remains formidable. Ayoade's, (1988) seminal work on States without Citizens perhaps captures the dilemma of citizenship situation in Africa. According to him, of the three component elements of the State – people, government and territory, the first two are largely denuded of all meaning as functional entities. As a result, they are divorced and alienated from the state as the people exist not as citizens with a claim against the state to be matched by reciprocal duties to it but as individuals struggling for survival. Konneh, (1998) examined the citizenship issue in Liberia with particular emphasis on the Mandingo people. His analysis was confronted with the issue of "who is a real citizen of Liberia". His penetrating analysis revealed the alienation and seclusion of various indigenous ethnic groups while the settlers from the U.S, the Caribbean and other African states were eligible for citizenship until recently. Konneh attributes this development to the constant conflict between legal stipulations and perceptions especially after the civil wars. Konneh's discussion shows some level of inter connectedness between citizenship and nationhood. The fragility of the African state explains why the state cannot resolve and mediate between the feuding citizens in any African country. Again, the crisis of nationhood, to (Agbaje, 1997), is responsible for apathy,

mass alienation, violence and mistrust which encourage and deepen hostile cleavages and sharpen the overall contours of ethnic, tribal, religious, and ideological divides in Africa. For example, in Rwanda, the genocidal dimension of human decapitation in 1989which reached an apogee in 1994 where Muslims Tutsi were wiped out by the Hutus, according to (Mamdani, 1998), was the resultant effects of crisis of citizenship fuelled by lack of sufficient platform for the formation of hegemonic process, which is a demonstration of the absence of nationhood, thereby pushing citizenship into deep crises. Again, according to (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004), Kenneth Kaunda, a former leader of over three decades was excluded from presidential elections because his parents migrated from Malawi. (Onah, 2011) situates Alasssane Ouattara's predicament on the belief that he migrated from Burkina Faso despite the fact that he was once the head of Government under Houphet- Boigny the legendary leader of that country. And this is because in Africa, the concept of nationhood is absent unlike in the mold of European –nation - building process.

Thus, (Dowden, 2004) noted that the future of the state in Africa will depend on the resolution of identity. In other words, until the sub- ethnic and ethnic nationalities of African countries are able to forge a common idea of what it means to be a Nigerian, Angolan, and Ugandan or Malian, nationhood will continue to be a mirage, a situation, where, for instance, the Muslim northerners in Cote d'Ivore are unequal to their Christian southerners or Congo, where the Banya Mulenge in the East are refused citizenship, will continue to fuel and intensify bitter conflicts and struggles. Thus, the relationship between the state and citizenship in Africa and the synergy or a symbiotic relationship that is expected between the two is virtually absent and hence, loyalties are primordial and ethnic based rather than to the state. Therefore, post-colonial Africa, being with weak capitalist formation, without a class to create hegemony that will weld the various

belligerent nationalities, will continue to witness unabated crisis of citizenship in the form of bitter conflicts and even wars. Today, what dominates post-colonial Africa is a plethora of cleavages of inter and intra-ethnic struggles amongst the various nationalities which have thrown 'grenades' on the path of national integration.

This is quite clear in Sudan, Kenya, South Sudan, Nigeria, Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Central African Republic, Burundi, Cot d'Ivoire, Mali. DR. Congo, Ethiopia. The combined effect of the issues discussed so far is the threat of cases of statelessness which stem from many factors, which could be viewed from the State as well as continental levels. At State level, the following factors could be mentioned:

- Weakness, inability or shortcomings of a large number of African States in the organization and maintenance of effective civil status registers, particularly in provinces that are far from the capitals;

- Weakness, inability or shortcomings in responding appropriately to migration issues in Africa, mainly by putting in place real naturalization procedures, particularly for refugees;

- Existence in some States of gender-based discrimination in the area of nationality by descent (discrimination particularly against women);

- Explicit recourse to racial or ethnic criteria in the laws on nationality in some African countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Democratic Republic of Congo);

- Frequent lack of protection within the framework of safeguard clauses on individual freedoms, particularly when the government wants to revoke an individual's nationality;

- In addition, there are problems of nationality arising from colonial history and the territorial division resulting from the Berlin Conference, as well as problems due to state succession.

African union and citizenship

The state of affairs concerning the situation of statelessness in African States and the African continent can be viewed in two ways from the African Union stand point. On the one hand, it calls for African awareness in order to define an African approach to the right to nationality and combatting statelessness, based on an appropriate strategy for the protection of fundamental human rights and combatting the many harmful effects of the absence of the right to nationality in the Continent, taking into consideration the specifically African aspects of the issue of the right to nationality and combatting statelessness in Africa. On the other hand, it calls for awareness for the effective implementation of continental and regional initiatives on the right to nationality and combatting statelessness, with a view to eliminating the problem of statelessness in Africa. Such initiatives can only be effective if they build on recently established African Union humanitarian frameworks and policies as well as the vision for Agenda 2063.

An Approach Based on Safeguarding Fundamental Rights and

Combatting Discrimination

At its 20th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa in November 2012, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child organized a general debate resulting in the elaboration for State Parties of a general comment which spelt out, taking African realities into consideration, the contents of Article 6 of the Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child. In fact, under this Article, the right to nationality is perceived as a fundamental human right, including in particular, the right to acquire nationality. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child goes further to observe that as a fundamental human right, the right to nationality is not really protected in Africa for reasons related to arbitrary denial or deprivation of nationality on racial, ethnic, linguistic or religious grounds (…), but also the failure to carry out systematic birth registration in many African States. The absence of a genuine right to nationality therefore explains the persistence of statelessness in the African continent.

Equally concerned by the cases of absence or denial of enjoyment of the right to nationality in the Continent, the African Commission on Human and Peoples 'Rights adopted, at its 54th Ordinary Session in 2013, Resolution 234 on the Right to Nationality, which called for a study on the issue. In the study it is observed that there is no continental treaty which recognizes the right to nationality as an individual's basic right.

The absence of an appropriate legal framework is an obstacle to the effective protection of persons who are victims in exercising their right to nationality, and is a flagrant denial of their fundamental rights. Addressing possible solutions, the study recommends that at continental level, a protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights should be drafted on the right to nationality in Africa. The preference for a protocol rather than a convention in the establishment of an African legal framework on the right to nationality is justified by the need for speed and effectiveness. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which entered into force in 1986, is an African legal instrument that has already acquired a sound legal base as an African reference instrument in most African States. The drafting of an additional protocol to the Charter would appear to be more rapid and effective than drafting an African convention on the subject. The other justification, which is more practical, is that of filling the legal vacuum in the Charter concerning the right to nationality.

An Approach Encouraging Regional Initiatives on the Right to Nationality

and Combatting Statelessness

Regional initiatives can be analyzed from the perspective of African Union efforts as well as

that of the Regional Economic Communities and the African civil society. Among the eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) which form the pillars of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is the most advanced regional organization in the area of combatting statelessness, and has significant potential advantages for resolving the issue. It is the REC which has made the most progress in the area of regional integration and free movement, residence, work, and the right of establishment. Furthermore, it has a protocol that deals with the notion of ECOWAS citizenship.

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