



► ILO Brief

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Main features of national social dialogue institutions in selected countries of Anglophone Africa

Key points

- This brief describes the institutional landscape of national social dialogue institutions (NSDIs) in 18 countries of Anglophone Africa, including their legal frameworks, structures, and mandates.
- It analyses their functionality and effectiveness in practice, highlighting both their contributions to labour relations and policy development and the challenges that limit their impact.
- It also identifies key trends and provides forward-looking considerations to strengthen social dialogue institutions and enhance their role in governance and socio-economic policymaking.

1. Introduction

Social dialogue¹ is a crucial mechanism for promoting social justice, fostering inclusive economic development, ensuring democratic participation and strengthening labour relations. By enabling structured interactions between governments, employers, and workers, it plays a vital role in shaping fair labour policies and ensuring sustainable governance. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has consistently underscored the importance of social dialogue, most recently in its ILO Social Dialogue Report² (December 2024), which highlights

both its positive impacts and the obstacles it faces in different regions.

Around 87 % of the ILO's 187 Member States have established permanent NSDIs³ with general competence, while approximately half also maintain additional mechanisms focused on specific issues such as employment, social security, and wage setting. These specialized bodies complement peak-level institutions and play an important role in shaping policies in their respective areas.⁴ This brief focuses on the permanent NSDIs with general competence.

¹ The ILO defines social dialogue as all types of negotiation, consultation or information sharing among representatives of governments, employers and workers or between those of employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.

² See also the 2nd Edition of social dialogue flagship report for a deeper analysis (<https://www.ilo.org/publications/flagship-reports/social-dialogue-report-2024-peak-level-social-dialogue-economic-development>).

³ The widespread prevalence of NSDIs is often linked to the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). Ratified by 158 ILO Member States, this instrument calls upon governments to conduct effective consultations with the social partners on international labour standards.

⁴ See also the 2nd Edition of the Social Dialogue Flagship Report 2024 for a deeper analysis of peak-level social dialogue for economic development and social progress: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/flagship-reports/social-dialogue-report-2024-peak-level-social-dialogue-economic-development>.

In Anglophone Africa, National Social Dialogue Institutions (NSDIs) vary significantly in their effectiveness. While some function as meaningful platforms for negotiation, consultation and policy coordination, many exist only on paper, lacking the institutional strength or political commitment necessary for impact. Weak enforcement, inadequate resources, and administrative support, as well as limited transparency frequently undermine their role, raising concerns about their ability to foster genuine dialogue and influence policy decisions.

This technical brief examines the institutional landscape of social dialogue in 18 countries across the region: Botswana, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It outlines the key characteristics of these institutions, evaluates their operational effectiveness, and assesses their contributions - where present - to governance, social cohesion, and labour relations. It is important to note that this brief documents the formal existence and structural characteristics of national social dialogue institutions but does not fully assess the quality or effectiveness of social dialogue in the selected countries. The mere existence of a tripartite or bipartite body does not necessarily mean that social dialogue is functional or effective in practice. In cases for some countries, previous NSDIs have been abolished through unilateral decisions and replaced by bodies with different mandates and scope. Some institutions face significant operational challenges including irregular functioning, limited resources, lack of political will, or periods of inactivity. This brief, on the other hand, resorts to the most functioning NSDI in the country when some of the institutions are found to be inactive or replaced by different bodies.

The research underpinning this brief draws on a combination of desk research and expert consultations. Publicly available data, including government reports and comments from ILO supervisory bodies, were complemented by insights from field experts in the region. However, a notable challenge in conducting this study was the lack of transparency in many NSDIs, with limited publicly accessible information and inconsistent reporting mechanisms.

This analysis is based on findings as of late 2025. Given the evolving nature of social dialogue institutions, periodic updates will be necessary to capture future developments. The brief also aligns with the upcoming 50th anniversary of the ILO Convention No. 144 on Tripartite Consultation, which remains a key reference point for assessing the institutionalization of national social dialogue.

The objective of this policy brief is not only to map the existing NSDIs but also to undertake a qualitative assessment of their functionality and impact. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents an overview of the fundamental features of these institutions, including their legal basis, composition, and governance structure. Chapter 3 highlights key outcomes - where applicable - while also acknowledging the gaps and limitations that hinder effective dialogue. Finally, Chapter 4 offers conclusions and forward-looking recommendations to strengthen social dialogue in the region.

By shedding light on both the strengths and weaknesses of NSDIs in Anglophone Africa, this publication aims to contribute to discussions on how to enhance their role and ensure they serve as more than symbolic institutions. It also provides a foundation for deeper collaboration between the ILO and national social dialogue bodies in the region. They also complement other sources of information, such as those provided by the international network AICESIS (box 1).

► **Box 1. AICESIS - the international network of NSDIs**

The International Association of Economic and Social Councils or Similar Institutions (AICESIS) is a global network of NSDIs and similar institutions around the world. It was established in July 1999 in Port Louis, Mauritius and is today headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. According to the AICESIS website, it has member institutions from 72 countries on four continents - Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Europe - as well as several regional institutions. Its mission is to promote dialogue, as well as to share experience and best practices among its members. More specifically, it aims to encourage dialogue among economic and social partners worldwide; support the development of their advisory role; enhance social dialogue and civil dialogue; and strengthen participative democracy and the role of social partners and other components of civil society in the world - as core factors of a genuine sustainable democratization and effective governance of modern societies.¹

In 2025, the ILO and AICESIS renewed their cooperation agreement that covers the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (the 2030 Agenda), the social dimension of globalization, the future of work and the strengthening of participatory democracy in general².

Two institutions found in South Africa, Zimbabwe in the 18 countries covered by this Brief are members of AICESIS. The ILO encourages NSDIs to join AICESIS as it can give more impetus to collaboration from and among NSDIs.

¹. [Missions-aicesis](#), ². [Social dialogue: ILO signs new cooperation agreement with Economic and Social Councils worldwide](#).

2. Overview of NSDIs

National SDIs in the region in the Anglophone Africa

The study shows that 18 Anglophone African countries have established formal institutions for national social dialogue. The majority - 13 institutions - are designated as Labour Advisory Boards or Councils, reflecting their primarily advisory and consultative role. Six countries have developed broader or more distinct mechanisms, such as the National Tripartite Committee (Ghana), the National Economic Development and Labour Council (South Africa),

and the Tripartite Negotiations Forum (Zimbabwe), which extend beyond advisory functions to address wider socio-economic coordination. Only two institutions - in South Africa and Zimbabwe - are currently members of AICESIS, suggesting scope for broader participation in international peer-learning and exchange platforms.

► **Table 1. Official names of NSDIs**

Country	Name of the NSDI	AICESIS Membership
Botswana	Labour Advisory Board	no
Eswatini	Labour Advisory Board	no
Gambia	Labour Advisory Board	no
Ghana	National Tripartite Committee	no
Kenya	National Labour Board	no
Lesotho	National Labour Advisory Committee on Labour	no
Liberia	National Tripartite Council	no
Malawi	Tripartite Labour Advisory Council	no
Namibia	Labour Advisory Council	no
Nigeria	National Labour Advisory Council	no
Rwanda	National Labour Council	no
Sierra Leone	Joint Consultative Committee	no
South Africa	National Economic Development and Labour Council	yes
South Sudan	Labour Advisory Council	no
Tanzania	Labour Economic and Social Council	no
Uganda	Labour Advisory Board	no
Zambia	Tripartite Consultative Labour Council	no
Zimbabwe	Tripartite Negotiating Forum	yes

Legal basis and date of creation

The study shows that the majority of national social dialogue institutions in Anglophone Africa were established through specific legal instruments, most often by law (16 cases), while one was created by decree (Rwanda) and one functions as an administrative unit (Nigeria). The establishment dates range from 1955 to 2023, illustrating both the early institutionalization of tripartite consultation in some countries and its more recent renewal in others. A notable wave of legal creation and reform occurred between the 1990s and mid-2000s, when over half of the institutions were formally established, indicating renewed emphasis on institutionalization following labour law reforms. More recent examples - such as South Sudan (2022) and the Gambia and Sierra Leone (2023) - reflect a continuing trend

of strengthening formal dialogue frameworks in the region.

► **Table 2 Legal basis and date of creation**

Country	Legal Basis	Date of Creation
Botswana	Law	1982
Eswatini	Law	1980
Gambia	Law	2023
Ghana	Law	2003
Kenya	Law ⁵	2007
Lesotho	Law ⁶	1992
Liberia	Law	2015
Malawi	Law ⁷	1996
Namibia	Law ⁸	1992
Nigeria	Advisory Body ⁹	1955
Rwanda	Law ¹⁰	2009
Sierra Leone	Law ¹¹	2023
South Africa	Law	1994
South Sudan	Law ¹²	2022
Tanzania	Law	2004
Uganda	Law	2006
Zambia	Law	1993
Zimbabwe	Law ¹³	1998

Type of NSDIs and membership

The study shows that all national social dialogue institutions in Anglophone Africa are tripartite in nature, with 4 institutions adopting a tripartite-plus (trip+) format that includes additional stakeholders such as civil society representatives, teachers' unions, or persons with disabilities. Out of the total, four institutions (in Botswana, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda) follow this broader composition model. Membership sizes vary considerably - from 7 members in South Sudan to 72 in South Africa - reflecting the diversity of institutional design and national priorities. The average size across the region is

approximately 22 members, with most councils maintaining balanced representation among the Government, Employers and Workers' groups.

► **Table 3 Type of NSDIs and membership**

Country	Type ¹⁴	Number of members	Breakdown by groups ¹⁵
Botswana	trip+	12	3G + 3E + 3W + 3 Indep. Persons
Eswatini	trip	12	4G + 4E + 4W
Gambia	trip	19	Chair + 7G + 5E + 5W + 1 civil society rep
Ghana	trip	16	Chair + 5G + 5E + 5W
Kenya	trip	14	Chair + 4G + 3E + 3W + 3 independent members
Lesotho	trip	27	Chair + 2G + 12E + 12W
Liberia	trip	9	3G + 3E + 3W
Malawi	trip	12	4G + 4E + 4W
Namibia	trip	13	Chair + 4G + 4E + W4
Nigeria	trip	64	40G + 8E + 16W
Rwanda	trip+	10	5G + 2W + 2W + 1CS
Sierra Leone	trip	26	Chair + 5G + 10E + 10W
South Africa	trip+	72	18G + 18E + 18W + 18CS
South Sudan	trip	7	Chair + 2G + 2E + 2W
Tanzania	trip	17	Chair + 4G + 4E + 4W + 4 independent experts
Uganda	trip+	13	Chair + 7G + 2E + 2W + 1 rep. of persons with disabilities
Zambia	trip	21	7G + 7E + 7W
Zimbabwe	trip	21	7G + 7E + 7W

⁵ Chapter 234, Part II of [Labour Institutions Act 2007](#)

⁶ Part IV, Chapter 1 [Labour Act, 2024 \(No. 3\)](#)

⁷ Labour Relations Act of 1996

⁸ Chapter 9, Part A Labour Act, 2007 (Act No. 11 of 2007)

⁹ Established as a Unit in the federal Ministry of Labour and Employment. In time, the NSDI evolved into a standing platform with the country's ratification of C144 in 1994. The Tripartite has also worked on the reviewed Labour Administration Laws to include it in the "Labour Institutions Law" in Nigeria; as soon as it passes the legislative process, it will come under that purview.

¹⁰ Article 163, of the Law regulating labour, 2009 (Law No. 13 or 2009)

¹¹ Industrial Regulations and Trade Union Act, 2023

¹² Labour Act 2017 of South Sudan, Section 24

¹³ [Tripartite Negotiating Forum Act, 2019](#). The Tripartite Negotiation Forum (TNF) of Zimbabwe was first established in 1998 as a voluntary forum. By the 2000s, it had evolved into a more structured and recognized institution. In 2019, the TNF received formal recognition through legislation.

¹⁴ tripartite representatives come from G, E organizations and W organisations exclusively; trip+ =where not only representatives of G, E and W, but also representatives of other groups, often civil society, youth or women; NI= Information is not available.

¹⁵ G = government; E = employers; W = workers.

Chairperson, Secretariat and recent activity

The study shows that all 18 national social dialogue institutions in Anglophone Africa have an established secretariat, most of which (13 cases) are hosted within a ministry or government agency. Only a smaller group of five institutions operate with a more independent administrative structure, including those in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. In terms of leadership, ministerial chairing remains the most common arrangement, observed in eight countries, while several others - such as Kenya, Namibia, South Sudan and Tanzania - entrust this role to an independent or elected figure, promoting a more autonomous form of governance.

Recent activity patterns suggest that the majority of NSDIs (15 out of 18) held meetings in 2023 - 2024, pointing to an overall active regional landscape. However, a few bodies (Botswana, Nigeria and Rwanda) reported no meetings during the same period, and information is unavailable for Liberia and Uganda. This variation highlights differences in institutional dynamism, often linked to the level of administrative support and leadership continuity.

► **Table 4 Chairperson, Secretariat and recent activity**

Country	Secretariat	Chairperson	Meetings in 2023-2024
Botswana	yes-G	Independent	no
Eswatini	yes-G	Commissioner	yes
Gambia	yes-G	Elected by peers	yes
Ghana	yes	Minister	yes
Kenya	yes-G	Independent	yes
Lesotho	yes-G	Other government official ¹⁶	yes
Liberia	yes-G	Minister	NI
Malawi	yes-G	Other government official	yes
Namibia	yes-G	Independent	yes
Nigeria	yes	Minister ¹⁷	no
Rwanda	yes-G	Minister ¹⁸	no
Sierra Leone	yes-G	Commissioner of Labour	yes
South Africa	yes	Rotational basis	yes
South Sudan	yes	Independent	yes
Tanzania	yes-G	Independent	yes
Uganda	yes-G	Independent	NI
Zambia	yes-G	Minister	yes
Zimbabwe	yes	Minister	yes

1. yes-G = secretariat of the NSDI is part of a ministry or other government agency, yes= the NSDI has an independent secretariat of its own, NI = Information is not available.

Structures and competencies of NSDIs

The study shows that most national social dialogue institutions (NSDIs) operate through a plenary body, often supported by sub-committees or technical working groups, which enable more specialized or sector-specific deliberations. Countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe display more complex institutional architectures that include executive or management committees and task teams, allowing for broader thematic coverage and implementation follow-up.

In terms of competencies, the prevailing mandate is advisory or consultative, reflecting the institutions' primary role in providing recommendations on socio-economic and labour matters. However, several countries - most notably South Africa, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Gambia - also attribute negotiation and decision-making functions to their NSDIs. A few cases, such as Rwanda, go further by incorporating arbitration or redress mechanisms into their remit. Overall, the diversity of structures and mandates demonstrates that while most NSDIs serve advisory purposes, some have evolved into hybrid bodies combining consultation with policy negotiation and dispute-resolution capacities.

¹⁶ Secretary General

¹⁷ Minister of Labour and Employment

¹⁸ Minister of Labour

► Table 5 Structures and competencies of NSDIs

Country	Structure	Competency
Botswana	plenary and sub-committees.	advisory
Eswatini	plenary, sub-committees, technical task teams, and the Officers of the Board comprising of the Chairperson and the two Vice-Chairpersons.	advisory/consultation, negotiation
Gambia	NI	advisory/consultative, negotiation, decision-making
Ghana	plenary and a technical sub-committee.	consultative-advisory, decision making
Kenya	plenary and committees of the board	advisory
Lesotho	plenary and sub-committees	consultative/advisory
Liberia	plenary ¹⁹	advisory
Malawi	standing or ad hoc committees may be established to assist the council	advisory
Namibia	two tripartite committees ²⁰	advisory
Nigeria	plenary and the technical committee ²¹	consultative & advisory
Rwanda	plenary and the bureau	consultative & advisory and arbitration/redress function ²²
Sierra Leone	plenary	consultative-advisory, negotiation and decision-making power
South Africa ²³	executive council, the management committee ²⁴ , four chambers ²⁵ , task teams and work streams responsible for specific policy issues ²⁶ , standing committees for governance or for specific tasks as per the Labour Relations Act ²⁷	consultative, negotiation, and decision-making power
South Sudan	plenary	consultative-advisory, negotiation and decision-making power
Tanzania	plenary	consultative/advisory
Uganda	plenary	advisory
Zambia	plenary and sub-committees.	consultative/advisory
Zimbabwe	technical committee and management committee	consultative/advisory, negotiation

Mandates of NSDIs and inclusion of Convention No. 144 issues²⁸

The study shows that most national social dialogue institutions (NSDIs) in the selected countries are endowed with a broad mandate, allowing them to deliberate on a wide range of economic, social, and labour-related issues. Only a few institutions—such as those in Eswatini and Gambia - operate with a narrower scope, focusing mainly on specific areas of employment or labour relations.

In many countries, NSDIs are entrusted with a broad mandate, enabling them to engage not only in discussions on industrial relations and working conditions, but also on wider economic and social policies shaping the world of work. Such a scope places them in a strong position to give effect to the core principles of Convention No. 144, including consultations on labour legislation, the application of international labour standards, national development strategies, and policies related to employment and social protection.

In contrast, some NSDIs operate within a more limited mandate, often restricted to labour law reforms or specific labour relations issues. This narrower scope may constrain their ability to function as fully-fledged tripartite platforms for consultation on broader socio-economic policies.

Almost all NSDIs explicitly address or integrate the principles of ILO Convention No. 144 within their frameworks, confirming their alignment with international standards on tripartite consultations. This reflects a general trend in the region toward embedding the Convention's objectives - particularly the promotion of dialogue on labour standards and socio-economic policy - within national institutional arrangements.

¹⁹ The quorum for a meeting of the NTC shall be five members, provided that there is at least one member each representing the Government, employers and workers.

²⁰ Committee on Dispute Prevention and Resolution and Essential Services Committee.

²¹ which performs the preliminary work for any proposed meeting.

²² The NSDI's competencies are consultative and advisory but has also an arbitration and complaints/ redress function. its Bureau considers claims of employees or employers who feel aggrieved by the decisions taken by relevant authorities.

²³ Currently, NEDLAC also houses the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), an advisory body to the President made up of 42 Commissioners of which 28 come from social partners and civil society. The PCC will in time be set up as a separate state-owned entity.

²⁴ Responsible for the operations of NEDLAC

²⁵ Public Finance and Monetary Policy Chamber; Trade and Industry Chamber; Labour Market Chamber; Development Chamber

²⁶ e.g. Covid-19

²⁷ e.g. management of socio-economic disputes

²⁸ While Convention No. 144 is widely ratified, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) has noted persistent challenges in its implementation. According to NORMLEX, these challenges are reported in several countries, mainly concerning Article 5 and 2 of the C144, and to a lesser extent Articles 3, 4, 6 and 1. For further details and country-specific observations, readers should consult [NORMLEX](#).

► **Table 6 Mandates of NSDIs and inclusion of Convention No. 144 issues**

Country	Mandate	Convention 144 ²⁹
Botswana	Broad mandate ³⁰	yes
Eswatini	Narrow mandate ³¹	yes
Gambia	Narrow mandate ³²	yes
Ghana	Broad mandate ³³	yes
Kenya	Broad mandate ³⁴	yes
Lesotho	Broad mandate ³⁵	yes
Liberia	Broad mandate ³⁶	NI
Malawi	Broad mandate ³⁷	yes
Namibia	Broad mandate ³⁸	yes
Nigeria	Broad mandate ³⁹	yes
Rwanda	Broad mandate ⁴⁰	yes
Sierra Leone	Broad mandate ⁴¹	yes
South Africa	Broad mandate ⁴²	yes
South Sudan	Broad mandate ⁴³	yes
Tanzania	Broad mandate ⁴⁴	yes

Main social dialogue conventions – Regional ratification trend

Conventions 144, 87⁴⁵, and 98⁴⁶, are among the most widely ratified ILO conventions, reflecting their global

importance in promoting effective social dialogue. Both Convention No. 144 (Tripartite Consultation) and Convention No. 87 (Freedom of Association) have been ratified by 158 countries worldwide, covering 84.5% of ILO member states, while Convention No. 98 (Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining) has received 168 ratifications, representing 89.8% of ILO members.

For the purpose of this brief, the data show that ratification of the main ILO Conventions on social dialogue and freedom of association is almost universal across Anglophone Africa. Among the 18 countries, **16 have ratified Convention No. 144** on tripartite consultations, while two countries (The Gambia and South Sudan) have not yet done so. Ratification of Convention No. 98 on the right to collective bargaining is universal - all **18 countries are parties to it**. Convention No. 87 on freedom of association has been ratified **by 16 countries**, with Kenya and South Sudan remaining the only exceptions.

The ratification timeline shows two main periods of engagement: an initial wave between the 1960s and 1980s, during which most countries ratified Conventions 87 and 98, and a later wave from the 1990s to 2010s, marked by wider adherence to Convention 144 as

²⁹ In this context, alignment with Convention No. 144 refers both to adherence to its principles of tripartite consultation and to engagement with the core matters it covers, including international labour standards, reporting obligations, ratification and denunciation processes, and consultations on labour and socio-economic policy.

³⁰ Advises the Minister on the fixing, adjustment, or abolition of minimum wages; reviews employment conditions; promotes wage equality; and ensures fair remuneration and employment growth.

³¹ Advises on employment legislation, ILO Conventions, and amendments to labour laws; reviews government action on ILO agenda items.

³² Capacity building, vocational guidance, and vocational training.

³³ Determines the national daily minimum wage; advises on employment, labour laws, and OSH, promotes employment development and labour peace.

³⁴ Advises on labour laws, trade unions, ILO matters, labour inspection, training, productivity, and workplace relations.

³⁵ Considers and advises on proposed labour legislation, ILO standards, industrial relations, and workers' compensation.

³⁶ Advises on employment, labour laws, international labour standards, Article 22 of the ILO Constitution, collective bargaining, industrial relations, OSH, dispute prevention and resolution, labour inspection, unemployment, and National HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy.

³⁷ Advises the Minister on labour and employment matters, including human resources development, collective bargaining, and employment legislation.

³⁸ Advises on labour policy, employment, collective bargaining, ILO conventions, unemployment reduction, OSH, labour law amendments and applications, legislation under Article 95 of the Namibian Constitution, collection and publication of information and statistics, and other labour matters referred by the Minister.

³⁹ Advises on all labour-related issues, including trade union matters, employment and productivity policies, and workplace relations; reviews existing labour laws; monitors tripartite compliance with workplace regulations; receives and resolves complaints against tripartite bodies; and advises the government on all workplace-related matters.

⁴⁰ Advises on labour and social security legislation, employment, vocational training, social security, OSH, provides opinions on labour market studies, statistics, and minimum wage setting; establishes and oversees arbitration committees for collective disputes; and advises the Minister of Labour on any matters within its remit.

⁴¹ Formulates and implements policy on basic employment conditions and workplace health, safety, and welfare; proposes the adoption and amendment of legislation affecting labour or industrial relations; and promotes collective bargaining.

⁴² Promotes economic growth, participation in decision-making, and social equity; seeks consensus and agreements on social and economic policy; considers all proposed labour legislation and significant changes to social and economic policy before parliamentary introduction; and promotes the formulation of coordinated social and economic policy.

⁴³ Operates the employment service and develops employment service policy; formulates policies and mediates disputes between workers and employers; reviews and monitors the implementation of collective bargaining agreements; oversees the dispute settlement process; and provides recommendations to Ministers.

⁴⁴ Advises the Government through the Ministry, on economic growth and social equity and policies, coordinated policy on labour and labour market issues, unemployment prevention, ILO matters, provides guidance on data collection on labour law and social and economic affairs, cooperates with bodies engaged in labour, economic and social policy.

⁴⁵ C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)

⁴⁶ C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)

institutional frameworks for social dialogue matured. Overall, the region demonstrates a strong ratification rate with regards to ILO standards related to tripartism and collective labour rights, even if practical implementation continues to vary across national contexts⁴⁷.

► **Table 7 Main social dialogue conventions – Regional ratification trend**

Country	C 144 - Status and year of ratification	C 87 - Status and year of ratification	C 98 - Status and year of ratification
Botswana	yes, 1997	yes, 1997	yes, 1997
Eswatini	Yes, 1981	yes, 1978	yes, 1978
Gambia	No	yes, 2000	yes, 2000
Ghana	yes, 2011	yes, 1965	yes, 1959
Kenya	yes, 1990	no	yes, 1964
Lesotho	yes, 1998	yes, 1966	yes, 1966
Liberia	yes, 2003	yes, 1962	yes, 1962
Malawi	yes, 1986	yes, 1999	yes, 1965
Namibia	yes, 1995	yes, 1995	yes, 1995
Nigeria	yes, 1994	yes, 1960	yes, 1960
Rwanda	yes, 2018	yes, 1988	yes, 1988
Sierra Leone	yes, 1985	yes, 1961	yes, 1961
South Africa	yes, 2003	yes, 1996	yes, 1996
South Sudan	No	No	yes, 2012
Tanzania	yes, 1983	yes, 2000	yes, 1962
Uganda	yes, 1994	yes, 2005	yes, 1963
Zambia	yes, 1978	yes, 1996	yes, 1996
Zimbabwe	yes, 1989	yes, 2003	yes, 1998

3. Achievements

Selected country results over the last few years⁴⁸

The ILO has identified several essential preconditions⁴⁹ for social dialogue's effectiveness and ability to drive meaningful policy outcomes: a supportive legal framework ensuring respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining;

- strong, independent, and representative organizations of both employers and workers;
- political will and commitment from all stakeholders to engage in genuine and constructive dialogue;
- adequate institutional support to facilitate structured negotiations; and
- mutual trust among the parties involved.

Facilitated by National Social Dialogue Institutions (NSDIs), the institutionalization of social dialogue in the countries under review has advanced considerably, although its effectiveness continues to vary across contexts. Several factors influence its impact, yet in recent years, notable achievements have emerged, demonstrating the growing importance of NSDIs in shaping national policy and labour relations frameworks.

The NSDI in **Botswana** has played a pivotal role in shaping the country's labour policy framework. Its major achievements are drafting of key labour laws and policies governing the world of work, and the ratification of ILO Conventions Nos. 81 and 129. The institution has also supported compliance with international labour standards through its advisory work and recommendations to the Government.

The NSDI in **Eswatini** has made significant legislative and policy contributions. It oversaw the adoption of the Employment Bill 2022, the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2022, and the Unemployment Insurance Fund Bill 2022 - all key reforms under expert review. It also endorsed the second-generation Decent Work Country Programme (2022–2026) and approved major policies on

⁴⁷ For further information on the application of ratified Conventions, including observations by the ILO supervisory bodies, see [NORMLEX](#)

⁴⁸ The highlighted achievements should be interpreted with caution, as they do not necessarily guarantee the effective implementation of Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 in practice. Furthermore, this brief does not aim to assess compliance with the aforementioned conventions but rather focuses on the institutional arrangements of NSDIs in the region. For more information on compliance, please consult the supervisory body comments available on [NORMLEX](#).

⁴⁹ ILO. [National tripartite social dialogue: an ILO guide for improved governance](#). Geneva. ILO, 2013.

social security, labour migration, occupational safety and health, and wellness.

In **Gambia**, the NSDI helped mediate a major industrial dispute involving the MRC-G Workers' Union⁵⁰ and management, coordinating with the Ministries of Employment and Health to de-escalate tensions. Although the institutions require capacity strengthening, their conflict-resolution role has proven critical to restoring workplace stability.

The National Tripartite Committee in **Ghana** successfully negotiated a 10 percent increase in the national daily minimum wage, raising it from GHS 18.15 to GHS 19.97 (approximately 10 %), effective 1 March 2025 - a key step toward protecting workers' purchasing power and reinforcing the relevance of social dialogue in wage setting.

Kenya's NSDI achieved notable progress through the approval of 11 Wages Council⁵¹s, a COVID-19 Memorandum of Understanding between government and social partners, and the development of the Wages and Remuneration Policy and the National Productivity and Competitiveness Centre Bill. The NSDI also contributed to the reform of the National Labour Board, although its regular meetings have been constrained by funding limitations. Most recently, from 25 to 27 March 2025, during the induction meeting of the Seafarers' Council in Nairobi, Kenya, the ILO provided technical assistance on international labour standards and wage-setting mechanisms.

In **Lesotho**, tripartite consultations under the NSDI framework have guided the drafting of Decent Work Country Programmes, labour laws (Labour Act 2024 and the OSH Act, 2024), policies, and related regulations, reinforcing institutionalized participation of social partners in national policy development. ILO has supported the NSDI in Lesotho through the ratification of three conventions, namely Conventions No. 151, 187 and 190, in 2023.

The NSDI in **Malawi** has been active in advancing labour and social policies. It deliberated on the National Child Labour Policy, the second National Action Plan on Child Labour (2020 - 2025), and the National Child Labour Mainstreaming Guide. The Council also contributed to the

second Decent Work Country Programme and supported Malawi's ratification of three ILO Occupational Safety and Health Conventions and the ILO Forced Labour Protocol in 2019.

Namibia's NSDI has been proactive in advancing tripartite consultations on international instruments. Following the ratification of Convention No. 144, it advised the Minister of Labour on the ratification of Conventions Nos. 183 and 190, with Convention 190 having entered into force in December 2020. The 15th Labour Advisory Council, newly inducted in July 2023, is now functioning effectively, demonstrating renewed institutional capacity. Notably, through a series of tripartite social dialogue processes, Namibia introduced a landmark national minimum wage of \$18 per hour on 1st January 2025, addressing the previous gap where only a few sectors were covered by collective bargaining or special regulations. The implementation includes gradual provisions for domestic and agricultural workers.

In **Nigeria**, the NSDI completed a comprehensive review of key labour laws - including the Labour Act, Trade Union Act, and Pension legislation - laying the groundwork for upcoming National Minimum Wage negotiations. The NSDI also urged the Government to avoid the use of security agencies in tripartite engagements, reaffirming the importance of social dialogue and trust.

The NSDI in **Rwanda** supported the approval of several important instruments, including the assessment report on Convention No. 190, the 2022 ILO national report, and the National Labour Law (2018). These efforts have reinforced the institutional commitment to promoting safe, equitable, and rights-based workplaces.

Sierra Leone's NSDI contributed to policy and legislative processes, Decent Work Country Programmes, and industrial-conflict mediation. It has proven essential in maintaining social harmony between employers and trade-union organizations.

In **South Africa**, NEDLAC has demonstrated significant policy influence through key social pacts, such as the 2020 Social Partners' Economic Recovery Plan and the December 2020 Framework Agreement for a Social Compact in Supporting Eskom for Inclusive Economic Growth, which provided a turnaround strategy for the

⁵⁰ [MRC Unit The Gambia Ensures Continuity of Essential Services Amidst Industrial](#)

⁵¹ Concerning Minimum wages specifically:

Kenya has a Complex system of minimum wages based on two Wage Orders (General and agricultural).

The General Wages Order establishes wage levels for fifteen sectors and sets three different rates per sector for cities, municipalities and other towns. The agricultural Wages Order sets wage levels for eleven sectors without multiplying rates"

public power utility amid severe power shortages. It has also driven comprehensive labour law reforms, including the Climate Change Act (2024) that formalised the Presidential Climate Commission. In November 2024, the Labour Law Reforms Task Team concluded its work on finalising extensive amendments to four key labour statutes. In 2025, NEDLAC has revised and adopted the Protocol for the Tabling and Considering of Matters at NEDLAC, to strengthen governance and dispute resolution, and extensive amendments to four major labour statutes.

In **South Sudan**, the NSDI has contributed to policy formulation and legal drafting, labour-administration improvements, and engagement in Decent Work Country Programme and collective-bargaining activities, thereby reinforcing nascent mechanisms for dialogue and coordination.

Tanzania's NSDI initiated the Minimum Wage Order (GN No. 687 of 2022) through the Wage Board, later submitted to the Minister for publication, marking an important policy achievement in wage regulation.

The NSDI in **Uganda** provided input to national policy and legislation, while also contributing to the implementation of the Decent Work Country Programme, maintaining tripartite collaboration in national labour policy development.

Through its deliberations, the NSDI in **Zambia** facilitated the Cabinet Memorandum for the ratification of Convention No. 190 and supported the revision of the national minimum wages, expected to be promulgated shortly - illustrating tangible results from dialogue. The Tripartite Consultative Labour Council adopted a new national minimum wage for truck drivers, which became effective in January 2025.

Zimbabwe's Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) adopted several important measures, including the Labour (Amendment) Act, 2023, which incorporates ILO Conventions Nos. 100, 111, and 190 on equal pay and protection against violence and harassment at work; Statutory Instrument No. 186 of 2024, setting a national minimum wage for employees not covered by agreements or regulations; and employment and labour measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Other key initiatives include the Formalisation Strategy (2023) to support transition to formality, the Employment Policy (2025) to promote job creation, and Labour (Retrenchment) Regulations (2024) establishing a Retrenchment Board and minimum retrenchment packages. Recently, TNF adopted the Occupational Safety

and Health Bill and the Public Service (Amendment) Bill, both currently under debate in Parliament and expected to be promulgated in early 2026.

4. Conclusions and Way Forward

The analysis of National Social Dialogue Institutions (NSDIs) in Anglophone Africa confirms that almost all countries in the region have established formal tripartite frameworks for consultation and negotiation, though their effectiveness and influence vary widely. While some institutions operate as active mechanisms for consensus-building and policy coordination, others remain largely advisory or inactive, constrained by limited resources and administrative dependence. The diversity of structures, mandates, and performance reflects both national political traditions and the ILO's principle that there is no single model for social dialogue.

Several key trends emerge from the study:

Institutional consolidation and renewal. A number of countries have recently created or revitalized their NSDIs, including The Gambia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Eswatini, demonstrating sustained political will to institutionalize dialogue at the national level.

Predominance of advisory functions. Most NSDIs fulfil primarily advisory and consultative roles, providing opinions on draft labour legislation, wage adjustments, and employment policies. A smaller but growing group - including South Africa, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Zimbabwe and Gambia - exercise negotiation or decision-making powers, indicating an evolution toward more robust engagement.

Policy and legislative influence. Several NSDIs have contributed to major national reforms, such as the revision of labour laws (Eswatini, Lesotho and Nigeria), the introduction of wage-setting mechanisms (Ghana, Tanzania), and the ratification of international labour standards (Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia). These examples highlight the tangible contribution of institutionalized dialogue to policy development.

Variation in functionality. Although most bodies held meetings during 2023–2024, others remain irregular or dormant, reflecting persistent disparities in administrative capacity, financial autonomy, and leadership continuity.

Alignment with international standards. Ratification of ILO Conventions Nos. 87, 98 and 144 is almost universal across the region, illustrating commitment to ILO standard on freedom of association, collective bargaining, and tripartite consultation. Nonetheless, translating these

commitments into consistent practice remains a challenge.

Expanding inclusivity. Several institutions - such as those in Botswana, Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa - have adopted tripartite-plus formats that involve representatives of civil society or other groups, signalling a gradual move toward more participatory and inclusive dialogue frameworks.

Despite these positive developments, many NSDIs continue to face constraints related to limited funding, weak follow-up mechanisms, and insufficient visibility of their work. In some cases, overlapping institutional mandates and changes in political leadership further hinder continuity and impact.

Looking forward, the following priorities stand out for strengthening NSDIs and enhancing their contribution to governance and labour relations:

- **Reinforce institutional capacity and resources.** Dedicated budgets, technical training, and permanent secretariats are essential to ensure regular meetings, evidence-based deliberations, and systematic implementation of decisions.
- **Ensure comprehensive mandates.** NSDI frameworks should explicitly cover the full range of tripartite consultation functions envisaged under ILO Convention No. 144 - particularly consultations on the formulation, ratification, and application of international labour standards - while also fostering dialogue on related employment and social policies.
- **Promote inclusivity and balanced representation.** Strengthening the participation of women, youth, and under-represented groups will improve legitimacy and align social dialogue with modern labour-market realities.
- **Enhance monitoring, transparency, and communication.** Establishing clear mechanisms for reporting and dissemination of outcomes can increase accountability and public confidence in social dialogue processes.
- **Link dialogue with national development strategies.** NSDIs should be systematically connected to policy-making and implementation processes to ensure that tripartite recommendations inform laws, collective agreements, and national plans.
- **Encourage regional and international cooperation.** Greater engagement with AICESIS and similar networks will enable peer learning, exchange of experience, and the spread of innovative practices across the region.

By advancing these priorities, NSDIs in Anglophone Africa can strengthen their institutional resilience and policy relevance. The ILO can further support these efforts through the Self-Assessment Method for Social Dialogue Institutions (SAM-SDI), which provides a structured approach to identifying strengths, addressing gaps, and guiding continuous improvement in national dialogue mechanisms.



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