

REFA CHARTER

Rethinking Economic Futures for Africa

A Pan-African Research Network | refahub.org

WHAT IS THE REFA CHARTER?

Communities across Africa have always organised their own lives: economic coordination, trust, governance, dispute resolution, resource allocation. These systems carry deep institutional intelligence. The REFA Charter is a commitment document for institutions that recognise the need to design policies, curricula, and governance systems through genuine engagement with the knowledge systems and lived realities of the communities they are meant to serve.

Signing the Charter carries **no financial obligation** and creates no legal obligations. It is a public statement that your institution is part of a growing coalition of universities, research centres, government bodies, civil society organisations, foundations, and professional networks committed to building institutional architectures from the knowledge, practices, and systems that communities already use.

CORE PRINCIPLE: STRUCTURAL COHERENCE

Communities across Africa have always organised themselves: economic life, governance, trust, dispute resolution, resource allocation. These systems carry deep institutional intelligence. Structural coherence means building on that intelligence, designing institutions that are aligned with how people actually live rather than adopting frameworks without engaging the knowledge systems of the communities those frameworks are meant to serve. When institutions reflect the logics of the communities they serve, they work.

WHAT SIGNATORIES COMMIT TO

- 1 Grounding Institutional Design**
Supporting the development of institutions grounded in how communities actually coordinate, govern, and allocate resources, drawing on indigenous knowledge, lived practice, and embedded systems of organisation.
- 2 Advancing Research**
Supporting discovery led inquiry that begins from embedded practice, recognising informal and indigenous systems as analytically sophisticated knowledge, and coordinating with the REFA network.
- 3 From Research to Practice**
Supporting the translation of research into policy tools, governance frameworks, educational models, and institutional prototypes that are coherent with the contexts they serve.
- 4 Collaboration Through the REFA Hub**
Engaging with the Hub as a long term partner: contributing to interdisciplinary research, sharing findings openly, and participating in the co-production of knowledge.
- 5 Resource Alignment**
Within your institutional capacity, supporting the resourcing of REFA affiliated work through funding applications, in kind contributions, hosting arrangements, or access to networks. There is no fixed financial requirement.

NATURE OF COMMITMENT

Non-legal, non-financial. The Charter is a formal institutional declaration of alignment, not a contract. It creates no legal obligations and requires no financial contribution.

5 year initial term with automatic renewal for successive 3 year periods. Any signatory may withdraw with 6 months written notice.

Multi-decade vision. Signatories join a long term effort to reshape how development is conceived and implemented, measured by coherence rather than by the legibility of outcomes to external audiences.

WHAT DOES SIGNING MEAN FOR YOUR INSTITUTION?

The Charter is designed so that different types of institutions can engage in ways that are meaningful within their own operational contexts.

Universities and Research Centres

Embedding REFA principles into research agendas and curricula. Hosting or co-hosting REFA research activities. Supporting fellows and early career researchers working on structural coherence.

Policy Research Institutes

Aligning policy analysis with the principle that institutional design should reflect lived realities. Contributing to the translation of REFA research into policy tools and governance frameworks.

Government Bodies and Ministries

Supporting the piloting of institutionally coherent policy prototypes. Providing operational contexts for testing REFA developed frameworks.

Foundations and Trusts

Reviewing funding frameworks for structural coherence, ensuring that grant requirements support institutions designed from the contexts they serve. Supporting long term resourcing of REFA affiliated work.

Civil Society Organisations

Facilitating community engagement across REFA work. Ensuring that community knowledge and lived experience are centred in institutional design processes.

Professional and Diaspora Networks

Connecting REFA with expertise, institutional access, and resources across geographies. Supporting the internationalisation of the agenda while keeping it grounded in African realities.

THE REFA VISION

REFA aims to enable a future where institutions across Africa are coherent, context sensitive, and effective by design, to the point where the Hub itself is no longer needed because its principles are fully embedded in practice.

NEXT STEPS

If your institution is interested in signing the REFA Charter, or if you would like to discuss what alignment looks like for your specific context, please contact us.

admin@refahub.org | refahub.org

The full Charter document, including all articles and the signature page, will be provided upon expression of interest.