

Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)

ECA's contribution to the Report of the Secretary-General

Progress made in implementing the inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for eradicating poverty in accordance with the mandate

A. Capacity-building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda

Key activities, assessment of results and impact

ECA has been at the forefront in developing indicators for measuring and reporting on both the 2030 Agenda and Africa Agenda 2063 and developed the integrated planning and reporting toolkit, which is designed to facilitate the integration of multiple development frameworks into national development plans and to track progress in their implementation (ECA 2019).

ECA's engagement with member states extends to assess progress towards all SDGs given the COVID-19 pandemic and in particular, the multidimensional nature of poverty and its improved alignment from proposed development agendas into national plans, identifying reasons for partial or non-integration, and track progress on the implementation of the national development plans.

ECA supported a shift in culture around the importance and ownership of government data and started a poverty clock to assess real-time changes in poverty with emphasis on Open Government Data projects.

As it champions integrated solutions to poverty reduction, ECA also strengthens the statistical capacity of countries in the region to monitor economic, environmental and social trends in order to formulate improved evidence-based policies. For instance, ECA provides specific technical assistance and more recently, the context of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the possibility of National Statistical Offices to continue the implementation of their regular activities, such as the measurement of employment, household income or the Consumer Price Index.

ECA has assisted the African Union in the development of the Continental Digital Strategy and has a designated Centre of Excellence on digital technologies as they pertain to data collection, service delivery of public goods and employment creation.

In the current context of COVID-19, ECA leads the component on 'poverty measurement' as part of the Development Account 13 project, *Strengthening Social Protection for Pandemic Response* which has produced several methodological guidelines and conducted capacity building seminars and technical assistance. Further in the statistical domain, ECA is strengthening collaboration with other international agencies, such as ILO, UNFPA, UNWOMEN, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (Paris 21), UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and international expert groups, such as the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts, the Inter-agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators, the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGGIM) and the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics.

ECA in collaboration with UN Development System in Africa has created an online knowledge hub as a one-stop shop on information and resources relevant to the continent in collaboration with WHO, regional UN agencies, Ministries of health of member states.

UN Women and ILO have developed guidance tools to assess gender impacts of COVID-19 response that focus on unpaid care work; engendering fiscal stimulus packages; and employment impacts of the crisis. The guidance notes are being disseminated and used for capacity development and policy dialogue in Senegal, Niger, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Africa.

UN Women developed and delivered an on-line course on Gender and macro-economics training in collaboration with the IMF for government staff and is working with the IMF to make their programmes more gender-responsive.

In addition, UN Women supports women entrepreneurship through Affirmative Procurement Reform across the region. It provides advice and technical assistance to governments in changing laws and regulations to improve women's access to procurement and build government capacities to implement such legislation. UN Women commissioned a study to explore the Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs in the context of African Continental Free Trade Area. UN Women and UNDP are supporting the AfCFTA Secretariat in the development of a Women and Trade protocol for the AfCFTA.

Gaps and challenges

- Overall, there are only 96 indicators out of the 167 for which there is data. When this is the case comprehensiveness and consistent to monitor trends remains a challenge (Brookings 2021).
- Statistical capacity in African countries remains weak, and African experts experience challenges in aligning 2030 Agenda targets and indicators.
- Funding for surveys depends heavily on donors; therefore, this has reduced the quality of the survey work, the ownership of the survey program and methodologies and, more seriously, the consistency and comparability of the surveys.
- Donors often come with their own priorities for survey design, their own objectives (which change over the years and reflect changes in questionnaires), and schedules, and sometimes even undermine statistical capacity by diverting scarce national human resources to work on their survey program.
- Various methodologies are used leading to non-comparability of surveys in time within the same country and across countries. The use of national poverty lines makes comparability across surveys rather challenging. Recent researches explore the use of tax or assets or satellite imageries or big data such as using mobile phone records, tweets, blogs, etc which is important for policy formulation given the span of time between survey years.

B. Poverty, food security and climate change

Key activities, assessment of results and impact

ECA in collaboration with the AUC, DESA, OSAA and UNDP have conducted training of African Voluntary National Review (VNR) countries to carry out and follow-up on inclusive VNRs aimed at inclusive implementation of SDGs and agenda 2063 within the context of living no one behind and reaching those furthest behind first. In 2021, the partners have supported 10 African countries namely, Angola, Cabo Verde, Chad, Egypt, Madagascar, Namibia, Niger, Sierra Leone, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

ECA in collaboration with UN-Habitat are supporting subnational governments including cities to localize and track and report progress in the implementation of SDGs including poverty eradication and goals of Agenda 2063. So far five localities have been supported. These are Accra (Ghana), Harare and Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe), Ngora District (Uganda) and Yaoundé (Cameroon).

ECA convened a Regional Dialogue on Food Security as part of the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in 2021 to build consensus on the priority investments required for food security on the continent and develop key messages for the UN Food Systems summit.

ECA is at the forefront in the application of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA), a new approach to guide necessary changes to agricultural systems to jointly address challenges of food security and climate change. It focuses on cutting emissions from agricultural sources/practices which is very important and is leading the way to resilient agricultural transformation. Sustainable agricultural and rural transformation are a pathway for Africa out of poverty and food insecurity. It is worth noting that core CSA investments such as irrigation, agricultural R&D,

innovative use of inputs and extension services could potentially promote CSA practices more effectively. UN Women, in collaboration with a number of UN agencies across countries is supporting women's participation in climate resilience agriculture value chains. The program in 15 African countries works to improve women's access to land, finance, skills and technology for climate resilience and markets. UN Women has conducted an analysis of The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agriculture in 7 countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Rwanda, Mozambique (forthcoming) and Zimbabwe (forthcoming)) which highlighted that the gender disparities in the sector have result in loss of between 11 and 28 per cent of GDP and in 2020 in collaboration with the AfDB, UN Women has developed a methodology and conducted a regional study to map opportunities for women's participation in the green economy transition in Africa.

ECA in collaboration with the AU Commission, the African Development Bank and the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance organises the annual Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa, whereby African priorities to address climate change are deliberated and coordinated with a view to optimising potential outcomes from the Conference of Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Combatting Climate Change (UNFCCC).

As part of its support to member states, ECA assists in the formulation of Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement and also supports member states to align these NDCs in the context of their national development plans and is fostering the development of climate information services across the continent to improve outcomes in key economic activity linked to food security and to also build resilience to natural disasters through the support of green recovery investments.

C. Structural transformation, productive employment and decent work in the context of a changing world

Key activities, assessment of results and impact

ECA has assisted member states in resource mobilization to meet development needs and value addition to increase employment creation.

ECA together with member states has analysed sectoral impact on employment and labour productivity given COVID-19. This provides improved targeted sectoral policies in mitigating the effects of the pandemic.

Complementary to that, ILO in Africa is working actively to advance in the implementation of policy measures in order to promote decent work in rural areas, including employment-intensive investment programs (EIIP), rural development strategies and programmes to promote productive transformation, transition to formality and decent work in the agri-food and rural sectors most affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

In response to the sectoral impacts of the pandemic, ILO has undertaken an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on specific social and economic sectors and industries, which is captured in a series of sectoral briefs and checklists. ILO has also developed sector-specific guidance and tools for COVID-19 prevention and control, providing practical tools for constituents to take steps towards safe working places, including through workplace cooperation and dialogue.

ECA organized the Seventh Session of the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Congo Brazzaville in March 2021¹ with specific focus on the need for structural transformation in building back better.

¹ The following entities of the United Nations system were involved as partners in that process: United Nations Development Coordination Office, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, United Nations Office to the African Union, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Volunteers programme, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, World Food Programme and World Trade Organization.

Employment has been expanding at a rate of less than 1.8 percent per annum which is less than the nearly 3 percent annual growth in the labor force.²The current session of the Forum therefore offered an opportunity for dialogue and a quest for solutions to accelerate and expand the scale of implementation within the narrow window of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

ECA has played a critical role, along with the AUC and other UN agencies, in encouraging member states to ratify the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as an instrument to fight poverty and spur economic growth on the continent. ECA supported five member States in preparing AfCFTA national implementation strategies, and has finalized a study on the implementation of the AfCFTA within the East Africa Community as Regional Economic Communities are the AU's building blocks in the implementation of the continental AfCFTA.

ECA has advanced analytical research elucidating on the drivers of intra-African investment to understand what motivates such investment within the continent and identify how the AfCFTA could be instrumental in increasing and deepening this type of investment.

ECA has also reviewed the drivers instrumental for leveraging intra-African investment in ECOWAS, SADC and CEN-SAD regional economic communities. It was found that education policy being a main driver for investment, and that in particular, gender sensitive and inclusive policies are determinants of greater intra-African investment.

ECA jointly with AUC, AUC-NEPAD, WHO and UNAIDS among others has leveraged the AfCFTA for pooled procurement of pharmaceuticals that is estimated to increase affordability and accessibility of medicines by 25 percent and tap into a continental market of 16 million jobs in the health and wellness sector estimated by 2030. This work has gained momentum in the current pandemic with the possibility of collective action with AUC, AUC-NEPAD, WHO on health supplies and policy responses.

Gaps and challenges

- The lack of an employment-intensive structural transformation that builds the capacity of the labour market to employ young people is a serious challenge;
- The lack of an inadequate social protection coverage, especially among informal workers, is a serious challenge;
- All regional UN agencies agreed to link decisive public policies to accelerate structural transformation and building Africa's long-term productive capacities in a way that also leverages opportunities for green transition;

² African Economic Outlook 2019, AfDB.