

Africa Dialogue Series 2022

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN NUTRITION ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT ACCELERATE THE HUMAN CAPITAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3-27 May 2022

Draft concept note

I. Background

The Africa Dialogue Series (ADS) was launched by the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) in 2018 as an interactive platform for policy and decision makers, civil society, experts, and the academia to discuss and debate challenges and opportunities influential to Africa's development. Ever since, ADS has become an important platform for OSAA to implement its mandate as set out in its Strategic Agenda, which was designed to help fulfil Africa's development agenda.

To ensure that ADS serves to echo the priorities of the African Union (AU) and African Member States and highlight their interrelationship with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, each year's edition of ADS focuses on the theme that the African Union has declared as the theme of the year, and analyses its interlinkages with peace and security, economic and social development. This way, it contributes to, and enhances the visibility of the AU's efforts, provides a platform to promote innovative ideas and recommendations related to each year's theme, and underscores the interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

In recognition of the United Nations strong partnership with the African Union, OSAA partners with the African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the UN, as lead ADS co-organizers.

At the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in February 2022, the AU adopted "*Strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the African continent: Strengthening agro-food systems, health and social protection systems for the acceleration of human, social and economic capital development*" as its theme for 2022. This theme will contribute towards the achievement of Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063, which envisions a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, and a key goal of which is to ensure a continent of healthy and well-nourished citizens. Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 has commonalities with Sustainable Development Goal 2, which aims to end hunger and malnutrition by 2030, as well as increase agricultural productivity and ensure sustainable food production systems.

II. Rationale

Building resilience is a cornerstone to inclusive and sustainable development. This implies that ensuring the following critical actions are triggered and coordinated at national and subregional levels on the following areas:

- Human, social and economic capital;
- Peace and security;
- Food systems and nutrition security; and
- Social protection.

These aspirations are encapsulated in the AU-UN Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

During the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, in February 2022, the Assembly underscored the importance of building resilience:

“Food and nutrition security are, in themselves, important elements of individual resilience, but they can also **enhance the resilience of whole economies** by improving the health and productivity of individuals. More efforts are needed from people, communities, countries, and global institutions to prevent, anticipate, prepare for, cope with, and recover from shocks and not only bounce back to where they were before the shocks occurred.”¹

III. **Objectives of ADS 2022**

ADS 2022 will provide a platform for partners and stakeholders to achieve the following objectives:

a. Global advocacy

With the AU’s annual theme for 2022, the outcomes of the Secretary-General’s September 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025 as a backdrop, ADS 2022 will endeavour to advocate strongly for building greater resilience in food systems in Africa for adequate and affordable nutrition for all.

b. Knowledge sharing

Through a series of policy debates and other settings designed for knowledge sharing, ADS 2022 will review achievements and challenges while identifying opportunities for building forward better. For instance, while the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly represented a tremendous challenge to the continent, the entry into force and operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has opened substantive new avenues for intra-African economic collaboration with the potential to strengthen resilience at national and continental level.

c. Partnership building

Within the context of OSAA’s partnership and technical cooperation strategy, ADS 2022 provides a platform for its many partners – United Nations system entities, African institutions, development partners, private sector, African think tanks, and civil society organizations.

d. Knowledge product

The knowledge sharing will inform the production of knowledge products such as African Union specialized technical committees issue papers, policy briefs and fact sheets.

IV. **Outcome**

ADS 2022 will culminate in a “call to action” to garner highest African governments’ engagement and rally the international community’ support in strengthening resilience of

¹ Draft Concept Note on the AU Theme of 2022: As the Year of Nutrition, EX.CL/1288(XXXIX), African Union

agro-food systems, health and social protection and other issues addressed at the joint meeting, to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

V. **Building Resilience in Nutrition in Africa**

Since 2016, progress on addressing malnutrition in Africa has stalled and, in some cases, reversed, due in no small part to climate change and its impacts and protracted conflicts. The COVID-19 pandemic has further hampered efforts to deliver healthy diets containing sufficient, diverse and safe food for all, including infants. Between 2015 and 2020, an additional 33 million people in Africa slipped into hunger, almost all of whom lived in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2019, more than one in five Africans living in sub-Saharan Africa were undernourished and consumed insufficient calories.²

In addition to existing malnutrition challenges, the global health crisis of COVID-19 has greatly exposed the economic vulnerability of African countries and the weaknesses of their health and food systems. The price to pay for keeping the virus at bay has been, in many African countries, at the expense of gains made in reducing malnutrition. It is vital that these gains are protected by increased and well-targeted official development assistance, but above all by an increase in allocations of national resources, focused on the nutritional well-being of populations, including the most vulnerable ones.³

VI. **Building Resilience for the Peace, Security, Development and Humanitarian Nexus**

The AU theme for 2022 highlights the key role that *resilience* – as seen in areas such as food systems, health and social protection systems – plays as a factor in guaranteeing societal advancement in human, social and economic capital development in Africa.

Moreover, resilience can be seen as a necessary ingredient towards implementing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and achieving long-term development objectives:

“The best way to prevent societies from descending into crisis, including but not limited to conflict, is to ensure that they are resilient through investment in inclusive and sustainable development. For all countries, addressing inequalities and exclusion, making institutions more inclusive, and ensuring that development strategies are risk-informed are central to preventing the fraying of the social fabric that could erupt into crisis.”⁴

To that end, ADS 2022 will also address the inter-linkages between conflict, food insecurity and malnutrition in Africa. Conflict is a major driver of food insecurity and malnutrition, both acute and chronic, in addition to poverty and hunger in the continent. Evidence shows that strengthening resilience in a coordinated and coherent manner whereby development partners work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach will alleviate these challenges. To achieve sustainable development on the SDGs and Agenda 2063 Aspirations requires joint and coordinated interventions from humanitarian-development-peace actors to strengthen the resilience of food security and sustainable agri-food systems in case of crises and shocks. Moreover, joint approaches must be anchored on the principle of ‘*leaving-no-one-behind*’.

² Connecting the Dots: Policy Innovations for Food Systems Transformation in Africa, Malabo Montpellier Panel, 2021

³ From Draft Concept Note on the AU Theme of 2022: As the Year of Nutrition; https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41426-doc-EX_CL_1288_XXXIX_E.pdf

⁴ United Nations; World Bank. 2018. Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. Washington, DC: World Bank

Additionally, at the September 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, the building of resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses was highlighted as one of the most significant means to help inform the transitions needed by Member States to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda.⁵ Along those lines, the Secretary-General highlighted that many Member States had begun rallying around universal access to nutritious meals in schools. This movement, he noted, demonstrates how social protection can support resilience, food security and the rights of children and young people.

VII. Social Protection

The African Union framework for African Food Security promotes social protection interventions as critical components of an effective food security architecture, with programmes and policies aiming to promote a comprehensive and simultaneous improvement of the living and working conditions of the workforce engaged in all agricultural occupation. This will further stimulate decent working conditions and the wellbeing of rural workers and members of their families.

Evidence shows that social protection measures, such as cash and in-kind transfers, have a positive impact in the fight against hunger and undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. In fact, social protection beneficiaries tend to increase the number of meals per day, diversify their diets, reduce negative coping mechanisms that affect nutrition and health in times of crisis, such as reducing children's food intake, or pulling them from school to support family income generating activities.⁶

COVID-19 led to the introduction of a certain number of new social protection measures, and ADS 2022 will discuss whether they will lead to strengthening social systems or are just temporary.

Ultimately, nutrition should be integrated into resilient and strong health systems through universal health coverage; healthy, inclusive, sustainable, environmentally and climate sensitive food systems; sanitation and sanitation systems inclusive of drinking water supply; effective social protection systems ensuring that no one is left behind, including the poorest and most nutritionally vulnerable; and investment in nutrition education for all.⁷

VIII. ADS 2022 Structure

ADS 2022 will feature a variety of activities and events articulated around following sub-themes, delivered by lead entities.

Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa	Building Resilient Socio-Agricultural Food Systems: The Key to Nutrition
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Strengthening the Resilience of Farming Systems: Land, Digital transformation and Access to Finance – Making Small Holder Farmers the Back Bones;
World Food Programme	Social Protection, Resilience and Nutrition
International Labour Organization	

⁵ Secretary-General's Chair Summary and Statement of Action on the UN Food Systems Summit, 23 September 2021

⁶ <https://www.fao.org/social-protection/thematic-priorities/nutrition/en/>

⁷ Ibid

UN Economic Commission for Africa	Human Capital Development, Climate, Energy and Food Systems
AUDA-NEPAD	
Office of Special Adviser on Africa	

Activities under each sub-theme which will include the following elements:

- State of play on building resilience in nutrition in Africa: Achievements and challenges by African institutions and Member States;
- Role of UN entities, development partners and other stakeholders in building resilience;
- Experts panel discussions on building resilience in nutrition;
- Advocacy for building resilience in nutrition in Africa – an online exhibition of ongoing projects, initiatives and programmes and best practices in building resilience in Africa by all stakeholders; and
- Adoption of a call to action by all stakeholders on building resilience in nutrition in Africa.

Over the course of each week, the following logistical structure is proposed:

- Monday: Screening of contextual videos
- Tuesday: Interviews with subject matter experts
- Wednesday: Live global webinar
- Thursday: Young twitter stage
- Friday: Cultural event

IX. **Sub-themes description**

A. Sub-theme 1: Building Resilient Socio-Agricultural Food Systems: The Key to Nutrition

- **Week One – 3 to 6 May 2022 – led by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)**

Building resilience goes beyond crop diversification and productivity increases. It calls for building social and human capital and understanding that food systems are more than value chains – they are socio-ecological systems, and ecological sustainability results directly from the level of human capital. In this respect, social and human capital addresses the non-monetary dimension of poverty and is an important requirement to build capacity in terms of absorption, recovery, adaptation, and transformation – the four dimensions of resilience.

It is necessary that stakeholders focus their efforts on “resilience thinking”. Absorption, recovery, adaptation, and transformation are the elements that feed policy making in Africa, particularly in terms of:

- Gathering, processing, and analyzing data;
- Improving the decision-making process;
- Building structured scenarios;
- Promoting active adaptive management; and
- Embracing long-term thinking to tackle transformative solutions.

This planning must be done in an interactive, systemic, and holistic way. In essence, it calls for a policy-making reboot in Africa to move from a reactive response to crises to proactively preventing and anticipating them.

Resilience bridges short-term emergency and long-term development interventions. Ultimately, zero hunger, ecological sustainability, climate change adaptation and inclusive socio-economic development cannot be achieved without resilient agricultural livelihoods.

B. Sub-theme 2: Strengthening the Resilience of Farming Systems: Land, Digital transformation, and Access to Finance – Making Small Holder Farmers the Back Bones

- **Week Two – 9 to 13 May 2022 – led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

Productivity-enhancing technologies and practices are an important starting element for agricultural transformation. However, even once they are on the market, there are still major gaps in farmer access to and adoption of these solutions, particularly for women who comprise most smallholder farmers and who would benefit the most. Women farmers in many African countries provide 50 to 80 per cent of productive labor but receive a fraction of extension services (seven per cent), access to finance (one per cent) and access to inputs as compared to men. Giving women farmers the same inputs and education as men could increase their yields by more than 20 per cent.

Therefore, smallholder farmers' yields in most African countries remain low, and technologies and practices that have long been replaced in favor of more productive and efficient ones in other parts of the world continue to be used in Africa. The challenge is creating the conditions for smallholder farmer adoption of new inputs and practices by developing and strengthening systems and institutions that delivery technologies and impact at farm level.

Scaling technologies needs both public and private sector investment into the following priorities: well organized input delivery systems, mature and functional market outlets, conducive policy environments for private sector investments to thrive, and functional and efficient regulatory environments.

With information, access, and confidence of returns, smallholder farmers will in general proactively invest in activities that increase their income. The process of technology-transfer and adoption along integrated value chains with adequate market access at local levels, when multiplied across millions of farms across the continent, contributes to economic stimulation in rural areas and ensure greater food security at national levels.

C. Sub-theme 3: Social Protection, Resilience and Nutrition

- **Week Three – 16 to 20 May 2022 – led by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO)**

Social protection can significantly reduce families' vulnerability, severe food insecurity and exposure to risk. In recent years, threats, and crises - due to both natural and human-made disasters - are not only more frequent but also increasingly complex. As such, the international community is progressively facing the need to tackle emergencies that

combine several vulnerability drivers: chronic poverty, food insecurity, inequality, violence, instability, displacement, climate change, natural hazards, and weak governance.⁸

The following thrusts will be important to mainstream into national development policies, to achieve a sustainable and inclusive development of African countries leaving no one behind.

- Social Protection policies and their inter linkage with the use of ICT and data,
- Governance and management for enhancing Social Protection systems
- Synergies between Social Protection and public finance management

D. Sub-theme 4: Human Capital Development, Climate, Energy and Food Systems

- **Week Four – 23 to 27 May 2022 – led by the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD, UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA)**

Enhancing agriculture productivity and food systems in general requires appropriate and affordable technology and innovations supported by sound policies and functioning institutions. Use of modern irrigation systems, mechanization of farming and reduction of post-harvest losses are high priorities for the continent. Adoption of sound policies and practices which enhance management of natural resources, identify and enhance innovative financing models and boost regional value chains are key to the desired agriculture transformation in the continent.

Education, vocational training, and access to health services are major factors contributing to increased agriculture productivity, eradication of poverty and lifting communities out of a place of constant strife.

Developing resilient agriculture systems will require technologies and practices that build on agro-ecological knowledge and enable smallholder farmers to counter environmental degradation and climate change in ways that maintain sustainable agricultural growth. It also requires that supporting systems are functional to help cushion the effects of change and to facilitate transformation of systems.

While adopting an integrated approach to the implementation of SDG 7 on energy, it is critical to ensure coherence and align energy, economic, social, and agriculture policies to promote a synergistic approach to structural transformation. Equally important, the creation of the enabling conditions, including through strengthening data systems, policies and regulations and harnessing the interlinkages between energy and other economic sectors like agriculture, energy governance.

Considering the interlinkages between drought, land degradation and energy, is an important element to building resilience.

Connecting renewable energy investments with food system value chain, will pave the way for integrated approaches for energy strategies and agriculture policies anchored on water, energy and food nexus.

It is important to consider the energy-food linkage connecting the production, the processing, and the preservation of food, and to support the smallholders to scale up innovative and alternative practices.

⁸ <https://www.fao.org/social-protection/thematic-priorities/resilience/en/>

Therefore, policy formulation to integrate clean energy technology in agricultural development should be a key priority for a sound food system, and resilience development in Africa. In this context, the following streams are worth considering.

- Strengthen policies and institutions
- Enhance agricultural skills, education, and R&D
- Dissemination and adoption of technologies and innovations, including indigenous knowledge
- Promote investment in cost-effective and quality agricultural inputs
- Application of post-harvest loss management technologies
- Promote natural resource management and practices appropriate for African agricultural
- Disaster risk mitigation

On 26 and 27 May, a High-Level Policy Dialogue will be held to further integrate the views of Member States into the examination of the four ADS 2022 sub-themes.

- Sub-themes 1 and 2 will be covered on 26 May; and
- Sub-themes 3 and 4 will be covered on 27 May.

Annex**UN priority actions to accelerate Africa's recovery from COVID-19⁹**

Promoting access to the vaccine for all is a leading recommendation for controlling the virus. It is essential to facilitate the production and equitable access to African people by bringing the production closer to the base and facilitate access to licensing similarly to the Astra Zeneca and Serum Institute model. It is also important to provide UN technical support to establish the production facilities in Africa. Once the supply is addressed it is important to look at the logistics issue in place to administer the vaccines. It is crucial to join the global call for vaccine equity to save lives and protect the health systems.

In the context of inclusion, the vaccines should be made available. On recovery, it is essential to have a more coherent and a human rights-based approach since it leads to better and sustainable solutions especially in the context of Africa. The 6.5 million refugees and 22 million of internally displaced persons (IDPs) should not be excluded from the process. It is important to highlight that the continent has been very open and inclusive and that refugees and IDPs have been working and contributing to the informal sector, which has been dearly affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19. In the long run, it will be important to include them in the social protection mechanisms.

It is important to mobilize adequate additional resources to support Africa's response and recovery from COVID-19 including through debt relief, increased investment flows to Africa, and SDRs on-lending. While considering bankability of projects, it is important to consider the needs of African countries and facilitate their access to liquidity. Several African countries have gone back to mobilize capital from the markets. African countries need cheaper financing.

It is critical to have the right narrative about Africa based on facts from Africa and in support of African priorities including access to cheaper financing. It is important to make a case to access a stimulus and crowd investment in one health and blue economy.

Addressing socio-economic response and resilience is a priority for Africa. It is essential to put productive capacity in the health sector, support the cashflow for the SMEs and Smallholder Farmers.

It is important to address the food insecurity and famine that are looming in some regions of Africa. In addition to climate, natural disasters and conflicts, the cost of fertilizers and inputs are aggravating the food insecurity. It is therefore important to create impact investment fund or mainstream impact investment to cover market failures out of this carbon negotiations.

⁹ 2021 Compendium Report of the United Nations Inter-Departmental Task Force on African Affairs (IDTFAA), representing consensus reached amongst United Nations systems agencies during principal and technical level meetings in 2021. IDTFAA members identified key gaps and opportunities, shared knowledge including, data, facts, and advice, to backstop the UN system response to COVID-19.

Energy is considered as an entry point to building forward better, and the IDTFAA members identified concrete support mechanisms to the UN Energy by mobilizing the UN system around the implementation of the UN Energy flagship projects in 2022.

It is critical to invest resources in agri-inputs, leverage the digital technologies, mobilize public banks in smart partnerships to crowd in much needed support to smallholders to gain access to stimulus.

Recovery must include the strengthening of national data and statistical systems to generate and analyze and promote the use of disaggregated data, evidence, and knowledge to guide targeted intervention across the humanitarian, development, and peace settings on the continent.

Energy is a key enabler for the socio-economic recovery in Africa. Africa would need to significantly increase its energy production and distribution to achieve sustainable development; particularly considering the perspective of constant demand increases linked to the population growth. The role of SDG 7 in the fulfilment of human rights, particularly with regards to equal access to resources, is crucial to an inclusive economic and social development in Africa. Strengthened and innovative financial solutions would be required to mobilize the funds that Africa needs to scale up green energy production for an equitable social protection.