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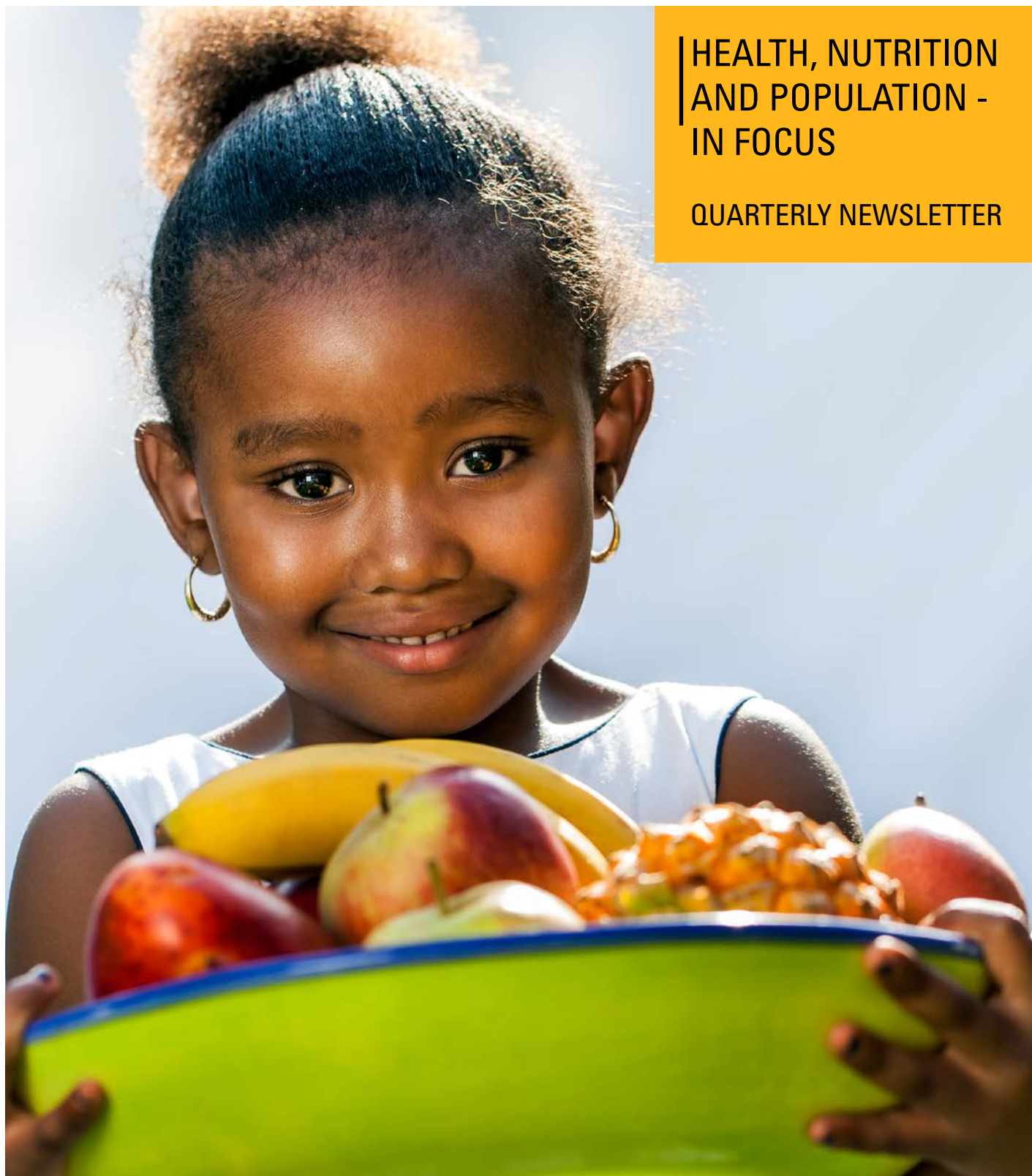
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Department of Social Affairs DSA

Newsletter



HEALTH, NUTRITION
AND POPULATION -
IN FOCUS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ADVANCING THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION IN AFRICA



The African Union Commission, Social Affairs Department, the Regional Centre of Excellence against hunger and malnutrition (CERFAM), China Centre of Excellence and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation joined efforts to advance discussions on good practices to improve food security and nutrition in Africa. A forum was held virtually on September 2, 2020, inspired by Aspiration One of African Union Agenda 2063, that envisions to completely eliminate hunger and food insecurity in Africa. The aspiration is in tune with goal two of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations that seeks to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agricultural targets.

Panel speakers included representatives from the African Union Commission, United Nations Office of South-South Cooperation, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the WFP Centre of Excellence in China.

The main aim of the forum was to focus on the importance of sharing good practices amongst member states, in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, to inform decision making for better investments and to identify platforms for sharing good practices and their crucial role in providing access to knowledge and networks.

Representing H.E Amira El Fadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs, Dr. Margaret Agama-Anyetei, Head of Division for Health, Nutrition and Population called for all players to act and prioritize nutrition in ending hunger and malnutrition as evidenced by the huge cost of malnutrition, at social and economic scale.

“Africa is full of good practices and endogenous solutions which deserve to be better recognized, valued and shared. Reaping the benefits brought by a good dissemination of good practices will require investing in research and expertise and in the development of knowledge management platforms easy to access, networks of specialists and communities of practice that meet the needs of different

stakeholders,” she stressed.

She also acknowledged that while significant progress has been made, production of and access to reliable and quality evidence-based data for effective programme and policy implementation remains a challenge due to the costs involved. In addition, the lack of a systematic approach and insufficient financial resources allocated to high-quality assessments, documentation and dissemination of good practices and lessons learned remains a major setback.

The African Union Commission is committed to strengthening its strategic and operational partnerships to work hand-in-hand with its member states in their efforts to meet the Malabo Declaration targets and accelerate progress towards the achievements of the Agenda 2063 and SDGs 2030. At continental level, identification, documentation and sharing of good practices can play a key role in informing decision makers with evidence-based examples.

In contributing to the agenda 2063 and the SDGs 2030 targets, many countries are making strides in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Aligned to these goals, member states have adopted strategies to eliminate hunger and food security as highlighted on the revised African Unions’ Nutritional Strategy (2015-2025) and the Comprehensive Agricultural Development Program (CAADP). To enhance and strengthen the sharing of good practices and knowledge on Zero Hunger in paving a sustainable way for achieving Agenda 2063, good practices will be better collected, disseminated and made accessible in Africa.



CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS ON THE CAMPAIGN ON ACCELERATED REDUCTION OF MATERNAL, MORTALITY IN AFRICA (CARMMA) 2021-2030 ROADMAP

The Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal, Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) has been making strides in promoting and advocating for renewed and intensified implementation of the 2006 Maputo Plan of Action (MPoA) to reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality by improving health outcomes for women and children in Africa (Assembly/AU/Decl.1(XI)). The evaluation of the campaign was undertaken in 2019 to determine the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the campaign. The evaluation reveals that member states that embraced the campaign at the highest political levels made significant improvement in their maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (MNCAH) indicators.

Following consultations held with partners and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to review the 10-year evaluation (2009-2019) report, the recommendations provided are now informing strategies

for re-strengthening the campaign 2021-2030. In shaping the pathway for the next phase of the campaign, the Commission organized more virtual consultations with the African Union recognized RECs and partners on the draft proposal to re-strengthen CARMMA (2021-2030) and its draft Accountability Partnership Framework. The consultative meetings sought to determine ways to strengthen the CARMMA campaign and to articulate the roles of the African Union Commission recognized RECs and partners in ensuring that all preventable maternal deaths end by 2030. The partners and key stakeholders had an opportunity to provide suggestions, comments and recommendations on how to design the second phase of the CARMMA campaign. The next phase of implementation will focus on unfinished Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) health agenda for women, newborns, children and adolescents. Similarly, it will take into account the sustainable and transformative agendas of the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and Agenda 2063 for women and children with a specific focus on adolescent health.

The consultative meetings further facilitated dialogue among senior experts in the area of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) on the draft Accountability Partnership Framework. Guided by the recommendations from the campaign evaluation, an accountability mechanism is imperative in monitoring campaign implementation progress, and more specifically in identifying key elements measured against various sound practices both at continental and international standards.

The Framework seeks to build on existing structures, partnerships and events to provide a roadmap for how a mechanism can effectively hold all parties involved to account. Deliberations were made on the need for a regular monitoring process that ensures learning, continuous improvement and harmonization of goals at a continental, regional and country level.

The Commission will further be engaging the member states on the draft proposal to re-strengthen CARMMA (2021-2030) and its draft Accountability Partnership Framework for their consideration, adoption and endorsement. Three years of the work plan will be developed and shared with partners for inputs. In addition, a five-year work plan (2020-2025) will be developed and presented to the AU policy organs for endorsement.

Internal annual assessment of progress based on the five-year work plan and the deliverables for each year will be carried out as well as mid-term evaluation in 2025 to assess the progress made. The campaign will continue to utilize its communication platforms to provide timely, informative and regular updates on the progress being made in re-strengthening CARMMA.

The key recommendations from the consultative meetings include redefining the scope of CARMMA clearly and having more stakeholders including private sector, civil society organizations (CSO's) and non-governmental organizations involved in the new campaign. Promoting the use of data from member states was also recommended in order to have stronger ownership and buy-in by the member states. Further, a key recommendation was strengthening resource mobilization in sustaining the CARMMA campaign. In addition, another key recommendation is the need to have a plan in the recovery from the losses made in Sexual Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (SRMNCAH) due to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information kindly visit CARMMA Website on: <http://www.carmma.org/>

ASSESSING THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN OF ACTION OF THE SECOND DECADE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE 2011-2020



Mrs Cisse Mariama Mohamed, Director for Social Affairs at African Union Commission

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the series of Ebola outbreaks experienced in the continent have accentuated the need and potential benefit of embracing traditional medicines (TM) in addressing disease burdens in Africa. It is against this background that in July 2020 the African Union Commission (AUC) Department of Social Affairs, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Africa Regional Office joined efforts in launching the Regional Expert Advisory Committee on Traditional Medicine for COVID-19 response. The committee will provide independent scientific advice and support to countries on the safety, efficacy and quality of traditional medicine.

Speaking during the virtual launch Mrs Cisse Mariama Mohamed, Director for Social Affairs at African Union Commission, noted that COVID-19 has over stretched and exasperated the health system resource of the continent. "It is critical for us to pool our resources together in order to institutionalize mechanisms for defining, producing and utilizing African research in ways that can transform the health sector as well as African economies and society as a whole as set in the Africa Health Strategy (2016-2030)," she underscored.

African Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union, declared, the decade 2001-2010 as the Decade for African Traditional Medicine (AHG/Dec 164 (XXXVII)), in July 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia. A plan of action (PoA) was further developed to provide general framework to guide member states in formulating national

strategies in translating the objectives into quantifiable services and products within specified timeframe.

The decade of Traditional Medicine was renewed by the Conference of Africa Ministers of Health from 2011-2020 (CAMH/MIN/CP(V) in Windhoek, Namibia, in view of the considerable progress that was made during the first decade on Traditional Medicine.

In 2018, the Commission in collaboration with WHO's regional offices in Africa, undertook a mid-term review of the second decade of African Traditional Medicine that was completed by 39 member states (DSA/PMPA/47/2354.18). The report was presented to the 3rd Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control (STC-HPDC-3) and endorsed by the Executive Council in February 2020 (EX. CL/Dec.1074(XXXVI)).

Preliminary findings of the review have underscored that despite progress in some member states on the mainstreaming of traditional medicine, there are still areas that need further investment such as putting in place a comprehensive policy and legal framework, adequate regulation, funding and research for traditional medicine development.

The Commission and WHO's regional offices in Africa are in the process of preparing the end of decade report on the implementation of the PoA of the 2nd Decade on Traditional Medicine (2011-2020). The aim of the end of decade review is to record the progress made by member states in implementing the PoA of the 2nd Decade of Traditional Medicine.

The review will also seek to identify successes, challenges and constraining factors and lessons learnt. In addition, the review will make recommendations to sustain the achievements made and mitigate the challenges and constraining factors.

Member states are invited to participate in the end of decade review that will allow them to assess the level of implementation of priority interventions of the Plan of Action of the Decade of African TM (2011-2020) in advancing the goal of Agenda 2063 of "an Africa whose development is people-driven, and relying on the potential of Africa people."



REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE COMMON AFRICAN POSITION (CAP) ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

On 14 March 2018, member states convened at the Africa Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in New York under the auspices of the AU Bureau to prepare for the 51st session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD).

One of the recommendations from that meeting was that Africa develops a Common Position of Population and Development issues. Later, the 2019 status of Africa's Population purposed to have a Common African Position on Population and Development report that will deal with issues related to advancing Agenda 2063 and the population related sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Africa.

Against this background, the Department of social affairs of the African Union Commission (AUC), under the leadership of the African Population Experts Committee (APEC) has undertaken five (5) regional consultations and consultative meetings with the island states and the civil society towards the development of the Common African Position on Population and Development. The virtual consultative meetings with various member states representatives were held from September 2019 and more consultations convened from September to October 2020.

The consultative meetings provided a platform for civil society and key regional population representatives on the continent to exchange their experiences and share challenges. This is with the view of identifying population and development issues that are of concern and existing approaches towards advancing Africa's population and development agenda.

Recalling the Constitutive Act of the African Union the consultations aimed to advance the Heads of State and Government, commitment in emphasizing Africa's place in the world. They endeavored to have Africa take her rightful place in political, security, economic

and social systems of global governance towards the realization of its renaissance and establishing Africa as a leading continent.

The meetings further provided member states the chance to identify contentious and diverging issues aligned to population and development within their regions and establish possible solutions and recommendations to address them.

Member states aim to use the CAP on Population and Development to facilitate the building of consensus on matters of population and development in order to 'speak with one voice' on Population and Development issues at national, regional, and global fora.

Furthermore, the Commission has undertaken the development of a Common Africa Position on Population and Development under the theme 'Status of Africa's Population: A Common African Position on Population and Development'. The CAP will be guided by policy frameworks linked to population and development issues, shared values and the various commitments both at continental and international forums.

The final draft Common African Position on Population and Development shall go through a validation process in 2021 by the fourth Specialized Technical Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control (STC-HPDC-4) before its onward adoption by the Assembly.

THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES RATIFIES THE TREATY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AFRICAN MEDICINES AGENCY (AMA)



H.E Amira El Fadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs (3rd from left) receives the instrument of accession from H.E David Pierre, Ambassador of the Republic of Seychelles to Ethiopia

The Republic of Seychelles becomes the fourth AU member states to ratify the Treaty for the establishment of the African Medicines Agency (AMA) on 13th August 2020, in Victoria, Seychelles and deposited the instrument of accession

to the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union on 23rd November 2020 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Commission encourages all its Member States to sign and ratify the treaty for the establishment of AMA in the interest of public health, safety and security. The treaty is available for signature at the Headquarters of the Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The African Medicines Agency, will enter into force once ratified by fifteen African Union Member States. The AMA will serve as the continental regulatory body that will provide regulatory leadership, to ensure that there are harmonized and strengthened regulatory systems, which govern the regulation of medicines and medical products on the African continent.

The Agency will provide regulatory oversight through strengthened regulatory guidance and the coordination of on-going regulatory initiatives in order to improve access to safe, effective, good quality and affordable essential medicines, medical products and health technologies. AMA will partner with and coordinate existing harmonization efforts in the AU recognized Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional Organizations (RHOs) and member states.

PROMOTING PRIMARY DATA SOURCES IN AFRICA IN IMPROVING HEALTH STATISTICS



Quality statistics is significant in all areas of the socio-economic, political and cultural integration. Integration of statistics constitutes an important part of the program for the development of statistics in Africa. Over the years, Africa has been faced with a challenge of relying on secondary data sources in producing harmonized, high quality and comparable data. Health data particularly has experienced technical, logistical and technological capacity challenges and further lack of adequate and sustainable financial resources.

It is against this backdrop that on October 14, 2020 the African Union Commission (AUC) Department of Social Affairs and Department of Economic Affairs - Statistics Division together with the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), African Peer Review Mechanisms (APRM) and South African Medical Research Council (SA-MRC) organized a virtual meeting for member states to update them on derived health indicators and the Strategy for Harmonisation

of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA). SHaSA is a continental effort that directly supports the African integration agenda by identifying key priority areas of the African integration process that need to be supported by statistics through promoting and coordinating the production of quality statistics for Africa. The meeting also aimed to establish a roadmap on continental sources of data from member states.

The virtual meeting was attended by designated representatives of member states from the National Statistical Offices (NSO) and Ministries of Health. Collectively, they established the existing structures and capacity within member states to collect, analyse and utilise data on the selected indicators for informing policy and practice. Through this participatory process the representatives identified potential bottlenecks in domesticating the proposed indicators in member states for harmonised and sustainable data processes.

Speaking at the opening session of the meeting Dr. Jose Awong Alene, Senior statistician at the Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union underscored the significance of health data for both decision and policy making. "In order to govern one must have solid and relevant data in which the diagnosis is made. Therefore, the AUC is committed to promoting statistics on the continent with the establishment of Africa bureau of statistics in Tunisia and Pan African statistics training centre in Cote D'Ivoire," he said. He further stressed that quality statistics has always been at the helm of concern for African leaders as evidenced through the adoption of African charter on statistics 2009 and the strategy for Harmonisation of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) 2010.

Recognizing that the availability of free and easy to access data contributes to greater public accountability the member states proposed to have a reliable and sustainable process for data collection, analysis and utilisation at the national, regional and continental levels. Member states consequently discussed a clear coordination mechanism, roles and responsibilities as well as integration of new developments in the statistical domain. The participants came up with an action plan with concrete and realistic activities; data sources and application of data analysis and visualization software. The member states focal persons will reconvene in January for a training to build their capacity on reporting on the health indicators.

The need for Africa to provide and contribute to the availability of data that can be accessed through its African Institutions including CARMMA Platform, Africa Health Stats, and CARMMA Scorecard is imperative and the data should be sourced and collected from the Africa Statistical Institute. One of the recognized African Union Commission's (AUC) data visualization platform is the African Health Stats <https://www.africanhealthstats.org/> of the Department of Social Affairs. This evidence - based online health data platform allows users to chart, map and compare key health indicators across all 55 African Union member states. African Health Stats shows progress and commitments on the global and African Union health policies and monitoring framework indicators across African Union member states. The site provides vital evidence for the AUC to influence and motivate policymakers to take action on health challenges in the continent.



Dr. Margaret Agama-Anyetei, Head of Division for Health, Nutrition and Population, African Union Commission (centre) during the signing of the AMA Treaty by the Republic of Congo

THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO SIGNED THE TREATY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AFRICAN MEDICINES AGENCY (AMA)

The Republic of Congo becomes the eighteenth AU member state that have signed the Treaty for the establishment of the African Medicine Agency (AMA) on 15 October 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The AMA treaty was adopted by Heads of States and Government during their 32nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly on 11 February 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Member States are able to sign the treaty at the Headquarters of the Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The African Medicine Agency, will enter into force once ratified by fifteen African Union member states. Instruments of ratification have been deposited by three member states at the Commission. AMA will serve as the continental regulatory body that will provide regulatory leadership, to ensure that there are harmonized and strengthened regulatory systems, which govern the regulation of medicines and medical products on the African continent.

The Agency will regulate the access to safe, effective, good quality and affordable essential medicines and health technologies. AMA will do this through coordination of on-going regulatory systems, strengthening and harmonizing efforts of the AUC, RECs, Regional Health Organizations (RHOs) and member states, providing regulatory guidance.

AFRICAN UNION NUTRITION CHAMPION CALLS ON LEADERS TO EMBED NUTRITION WITHIN THE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

His Majesty King Letsie III Head of State of the Kingdom of Lesotho, African Union Nutrition Champion and also a champion of African Leaders for Nutrition (ALN), has issued a position paper titled, "Embedding Nutrition within the COVID-19 Response and Recovery". The position paper which has been sent to all the African Union Member States calls on all Heads of State and Governments to ensure the incorporation and promotion of nutrition smart interventions within COVID-19 response and recovery action plans.

The paper recommends that countries maintain and increase the level of funding allocated to nutrition to safeguard previous efforts to address malnutrition and ensure there are no gaps within their multi-year nutrition programmes in immediate, medium-term and post-pandemic recovery COVID-19 response plans. To effectively embed nutrition in the COVID-19 response and strategies calls for the prioritizing of nutrition in the national health sector, food systems and social net response interventions.

The paper further highlights the role of high-level political leadership, in particular Heads of State and Government and Ministers of Finance, as Nutrition Champions. These efforts coupled with a robust nutrition strategy will galvanize action into proper nutrition for children through the availability of nutritious foods for all. Proper nutrition is a vital component of the general health for both children and adults. Undernutrition compromises immune systems, making bodies vulnerable to infection, reducing the effectiveness of vaccines, and impeding recovery. Consequently, stunting among



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children, low birthweight and wasting are existing challenges that have been affecting children in Africa leading to decreased productivity in adulthood.

The pandemic has created major global health and economic shocks, with unprecedented impacts on people's health, nutrition and livelihoods. As a result, Africa is experiencing negative economic growth, primarily as a result of the sharp decline in productivity, jobs and revenues. At the same time, recent data shows that Africa has the highest prevalence of malnutrition and may soon overtake Asia as the region with the fastest-growing number of hungry and undernourished people. Therefore, nutrition cannot be left behind in the COVID-19 response in Africa.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a chance for Africa's leaders to reshape and spearhead high-level sensitization, advocacy and resource mobilization efforts towards securing increased investments in nutrition.

About the African Leaders for Nutrition (ALN)

The African Leaders for Nutrition (ALN) is an initiative by the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission which was endorsed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of the African Union (AU) in 2018 (Assembly/AU/Dec.681(XXX)). The ALN Initiative was established to rally high-level political engagement to advance nutrition in Africa. It is led by a group of ALN Champions, comprising current and former Heads of State and Government, Finance Ministers and eminent leaders with the power to catalyze and sustain high-level political leadership

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, PROMOTING AND SCALING HIGH IMPACT HEALTH POLICIES IN AFRICA



Agenda 2063, The Africa we want is anchored on seven aspirations with set goals for achieving this vision. Aspiration one is premised on the ambition to have a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. To achieve this aspiration, one of the key goals for Africa is to have healthy and well-nourished citizens expanding access to quality health care services, particularly for women and girls.

The achievement of the goals enshrined in this aspiration is accelerated by the African Union division of health under the Department of social affairs. The department takes leadership to ensure the implementation of the health objectives in strengthening health systems in Africa through various strategic approaches. Two health divisions under this department; Health, Nutrition and Population and the HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis and Other Infectious Diseases have a mandate of addressing broad health policies on the continent. Through a multi-faced and coordinated approach the two divisions work closely in the harmonisation and coordination of public health and strengthening of health systems including human resources for health, medicines, e-health and traditional medicine as well as population, reproductive health and nutrition issues.

The two health divisions are steered by key continental and global health commitments that aim to ensure proper implementation of

continental health policy frameworks. Chief among these is the African Health Strategy (AHS 2016–2030) that advocates for and promotes member states action to prioritize and invest in specific social determinants of health through better inter-sectoral collaboration. The strategy further highlights the central importance of prioritizing health systems strengthening, calls for better leveraging of community strengths, public private and other partnerships as well as recommending a major paradigm shift that helps member states manage more effectively the risks of disasters in a more systematic manner.

Other policy frameworks from which AHS 2016–2030 reinforces include the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Continental Policy Framework and its revised Maputo Plan of Action 2016–2030, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA), African Regional Nutrition Strategy 2015–2025 (ARNS), the various AU Abuja commitments aimed at combating AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in Africa, the Catalytic Framework to End AIDS, TB and Eliminate Malaria in Africa by 2030 as well as the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescent’s Health (2016–2030).




The two divisions work in consultation with AU member states, AU recognized Regional Economic Communities (RECs), development partners, private sector and Civil Society

Organizations (CSOs) in advocating for the implementation of various continental health strategies. The divisions collaborate in the execution of various health campaigns and in commemorating continental and global health days. Similarly, the two divisions encourage the sharing of sound health practices that can be scaled up at regional and national levels.

The division of Health, Nutrition and Population and the division of HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis and Other Infectious Diseases serve as the Secretariats for the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa and AIDS Watch Africa (AWA) respectively.

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