



**FOURTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE SPECIALISED
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (STC-SDLE-4)
06 – 10 DECEMBER 2021
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

Theme: “Building forward Better Well Being and Living Standards in Africa”

**AFRICAN UNION COMPREHENSIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC
AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19
HEALTH PANDEMIC**

CARING FOR HUMAN SECURITY

**JULY 2020
CONTENTS**

Executive Summary	2
1. INTRODUCTION.....	8
2. FAMILY POLICY AS A CROSS-CUTTING POLICY CONCERN	10
3. GENDER EQUALITY AS A CROSS-CUTTING GOAL.....	12
4. SOCIAL PROTECTION.....	14
5. UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO BASIC SOCIETAL SERVICES/UTILITIES (WATER, SANITATION, ENERGY, HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION).....	20
6. QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	25
7. ACCESS TO GOOD AND INCLUSIVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS	27
8. ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD	30
9. FORMAL LABOUR MARKETS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP	32
10. INFORMAL AND RURAL ECONOMIES	35
11. CULTURE	29
12. SPORTS.....	30
13. GOVERNANCE, HUMAN RIGHTS, CONFLICTS AND POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS (FRAGILE STATES).....	31
14. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL RESPONSE IN VIEW OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	43
15. CONCLUSION	45

Executive Summary

The **AU Social Agenda 2063** was adopted as the blueprint policy framework on social development by the 36th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council in February 2020 (EX.CL/Dec.1074 (XXXVI)) and endorsed by the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Governments at its 33rd Session on 10-11 February 2020. In addition to covering and unpacking the social development components of the overarching developmental framework, **AU Agenda 2063**, Social Agenda 2063 builds on a range of preceding AU instruments, programmes and declarations in the social development area. Among these are theme-specific instruments in education, health, migration, population and development, food and nutrition, social protection and social security, the informal and rural economies, etc.

Social Agenda 2063 indicates eradication of poverty and inequality as its overarching goals, based upon the human rights approach. Among others, it elaborates critical factors for successful implementation, as well as cross-cutting factors very relevant to Africa in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, namely, Demographic Change and Population Development; Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change; Migration; Urbanisation; Rural Development; and Data and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

As a guide for sectorial and inter-sectorial actions and investments required for best outcomes in social development, Social Agenda 2063 identifies nine (9) pillars. The first two (2) are cross-cutting social policy pillars for African social policy, namely family policy and gender equality policy to be mainstreamed into all other sector-specific social policies. The other seven (7) sector-specific pillars or areas for purposeful planning and surgical interventions to accelerate the eradication of poverty and inequality, are social protection, universal access to basic utilities (amenities) and societal services, quality education, access to good health and wellness, access to sufficient and nutritious food, formal labour markets and entrepreneurship, and the informal and rural economies.

The Social Agenda 2063 could not have been adopted at a more appropriate time with the advent of the COVID-19 crisis. It provides a framework for a response, as well as direction and focus on short, medium and long term strategic actions and investments required to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Response was developed by the Commission, under the Department of Social Affairs that holds the mandate to coordinate the implementation of Social Agenda 2063. Other AUC departments provided excellent actionable inputs and so did stakeholder partners. Breaking down territorial silos and galvanising collective social solidarity will drive the Response to reduce the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the culture and sport sectors will play important parts. The Response concludes with a section on the human security approach as governance response to the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the institutional support required for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Social Agenda 2063 social policy pillars as basis for the AU Comprehensive Socio-Economic and Environmental Response to the COVID-19 health pandemic

Beyond the health challenges posed by the pandemic and which are addressed by the African Union, its Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), its socio-economic and environmental impacts are severely affecting the living conditions and livelihood of citizens of the continent. Based upon the social policy pillars of Social Agenda 2063, the AU Comprehensive Socio-Economic and

Environmental Response to the COVID-19 health pandemic was developed to serve as a reference and guide to Member States and RECs on interventions over the short, medium and long terms.

Family policy as a cross-cutting policy concern

Social Agenda 2063 asserts that the African family should be kept together as a unit of support to its members, in particular for children and other vulnerable members such as women, older persons and persons with disabilities. Therefore, African Governments have been advised that family members stay together to support each other during lockdown and restricted movement with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Until a vaccine is available for the Coronavirus, restricted movement and lockdowns will be enforced from time to time in Africa and families will be “grounded”. This rare opportunity of a “captured audience” has been seized by AU Member States to mobilize “social workforce” teams to do assessments of families and prioritise the most vulnerable families for the distribution of food and other necessities, assess their access to health services and to support them in adopting necessary prevention measures (hand washing, physical distancing and social isolation/quarantine). The social workforce teams also help to adapt distribution mechanisms such as for school feeding where schools are closed, and to adapt responses to child care, older persons’ care, maternity and sexual and reproductive health care provisions.

Focus on the family as a unit has paved the way for appropriate gender-sensitive interventions, social protection interventions required, societal utilities needed, as well as for access to health, education and food for relief from the adverse socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gender equality as a cross-cutting goal

Social Agenda 2063 stresses that the main objective under this social policy pillar is to remove gender discrimination and violence; strengthen economic, labour and social protection access for women and girls; and advance human security of women and girls informed by a supportive legal and institutional framework. The COVID-19 crises unfortunately resulted in a spike in gender based violence (GBV) in countries all over the world, i.e. emotional, physical and sexual abuse in the context of families being locked in or closed off. Fortunately, with the availability of mobile phones it could be reported.

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in Africa includes a) establishing or expanding the current GBV Hotline in Member States; b) reporting on the health of girl children and teenagers, and on their sudden absence and c) providing social protection measures for the family, e.g. cash transfers, feeding schemes, etc. directly to the maternal family head.

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic recommended in the social protection, societal amenities, health, education, agriculture, formal and informal economic sectors and job markets

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to worsen on the continent over the coming months. The poor and vulnerable populations will bear a greater burden of the impacts of COVID-19 in the long term. Hence the importance of a robust framework to mitigate the health, socio-economic and environmental impacts of COVID-19 in an integrated multi-sectoral response that also identifies investments required from other interconnected sectors for the best outcomes. For instance, good health needs

inputs from the agriculture and education sectors for nutritious food and health education, respectively.

Social protection as a cross-cutting social policy intervention

The main objective of social protection is to prevent and protect people against vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their lifecycles, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups. It is foreseen that the economic impact of the COVID-19 crises will disrupt contributory social insurance and that more people may need social assistance – non-contributory assistance from the state in the form of cash transfers, feeding schemes, micro loans to start businesses, etc.

Due to the pandemic, social protection should prioritize older people, people already living with other underlying health conditions (including HIV), children and girls, persons with disabilities (physical and mental), workers who are self-employed or in non-formal employment (including rural and domestic workers), the homeless, forcibly displaced people, refugees, migrants (particularly those without documentation), care workers (paid and un-paid), ethnic/indigenous groups, chronically poor persons and prisoners.

A central registry with names of the vulnerable who received social assistance needs to be established or updated to not only prevent “double dipping”, but also to plan for services in other sectors such as health and education. Social protection measures will serve as a conduit and facilitate the outputs of other sectors.

Universal access to societal utilities (water, sanitation, energy, housing and transport) as cross-cutting intervention

Social Agenda 2063 indicates the main objective for basic societal utilities as not only to keep the services intact or maintained for delivery of water, sanitation, energy, housing and transportation, but also to provide equitable services, i.e. universal access of all citizens to these services. Member States have prioritised the mentioned services during lockdowns, however the COVID-19 crisis poses a serious threat to their financing and maintenance. All these amenities are critical in keeping the economies of Member States afloat. The housing and transport sectors face peculiar challenges to enforce social distancing, with high demands and under-supplies.

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on basic societal utilities in Member States involve prioritizing the water, sanitation and energy sectors through government interventions and ensuring that contingency provisions (such as water tanks, water and sewerage pumps and generators) are available and stored safely. State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in transport and housing have to coordinate provision of these services in collaboration with governments and the private sector.

Attention to maintaining societal amenities and services in Member States have been crucial in support of other social sectors.

Access to good and inclusive health and wellness

African Governments have implemented strict regimes of isolation, lockdown and quarantine to curb the spread of the disease in view of insufficient treatment equipment and facilities and to avoid overwhelming their health systems. Public and private health care providers have been advised to treat COVID-19 patients in separate designated “red zone” facilities, preferably distanced from general hospital wards. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) service deliveries are to be prioritised as, among others complications, pregnancy could place women at risk

for COVID-19. Health care providers are urged to continue vaccination campaigns to prevent and manage communicable and non-communicable diseases that could also put people at risk for COVID-19.

Quality and inclusive education

As educational institutions were closed during the first phases of the health response to avoid spread of the Corona virus, most private and some public institutions of learning, including tertiary institutions have adapted amazingly fast to home schooling and online learning via live streaming hubs and with the use of social media and national television. Unfortunately, in most African countries a year of learning and training may be lost due to challenges with internet connectivity and soliciting student feedback. As many learners don't have access to smart phones, computers and data bundles, technology companies have been requested to consider subsidizing access to technology and mobile data for teachers and learners in basic and tertiary education. In addition, special arrangements are to be made for children with disabilities. The socio-economic effects of the pandemic will likely accelerate school dropout for economic and related reasons. Therefore, school dropout should be specifically monitored after the resumption of classes, both for girls and boys with convincing encouragement and incentives to continue their education.

Sufficient and nutritious food

The food supply chain has been seriously disrupted due to closure of national borders and strict enforcement of lockdown and restricted movement of people and goods. Farmers could not harvest their crops in many countries, or their movements were restricted to care for their livestock. The closure of open markets has furthermore resulted in serious financial losses for farmers. To mitigate the COVID-19 impact on food supply, it is strongly recommended that agricultural activities, production and harvesting of seasonable crops should continue under strict COVID-19 prevention measures. State owned enterprises (SOEs) in transport are best placed to coordinate with the private sector transport of agricultural produce, as well as to facilitate food supply across borders, also under strict COVID-19 prevention measures. For sustainable future food supply also for times of crisis, countries need to invest in strengthening fragile food supply systems, including storage facilities to weather the current strain on food supply in crisis situations.

Formal labour markets and entrepreneurship

The COVID-19 crisis will be remembered for massive job losses in the formal sector due to diminished economic activity, among others. The formal sector, however, adapted within weeks with employees working from home, and virtual meetings provided focus and guided actions, especially in the financial sector. Job rich sectors such as tourism, ICT, construction, social care and domestic work continued to suffer blows in that restricted movement, also across country borders, prevented return to work. The broader world economy has ground to a halt, and GDP losses are predicted at high percentages. In view of these challenges, the re-opening of industries and small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs) in the majority of sectors have been recommended under strict COVID-19 prevention measures. National innovation "hubs" would furthermore support technological innovations (e.g. for the manufacturing of protective face shields with 3D printing) and to share practices (e.g. for manufacturing of N95 personal protective equipment for health care personnel). The role that skills transfer by older persons can play in these hubs, must not be under-estimated.

Informal and rural economies

The majority of Africa's workforce is engaged in informal and in agricultural employment (85.8% and 97.9% respectively) – characterized by unstable income-generation and low levels of productivity. Under normal circumstances, the focus to upgrade these sectors would be on improvement of productivity through training and acquisition of equipment, and on provision of social protection benefits as incentives to transform into the formal economy. The COVID-19 crisis has hindered efforts to upgrade the informal economy and the immediate need is for informal sector workers to start generating income again. This implies re-opening of open markets under strict COVID-19 prevention measures and the return of workers in rural agriculture. Helping workers in the informal and rural sectors with access to transport and credit services will go a long way to kick-start their economic activities. In addition, vulnerable groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons should be empowered to be included in informal sector economic activities.

Culture and the creative sectors

Among the most affected sectors by COVID-19 are the tourism, cultural and creative industries. The pandemic has forced the cancellation of Africa's well-known cultural events and many arts and cultural venues have closed. Local community arts and cultural organizations rely on in-person gatherings to conduct their activities. As these can no longer take place, income of artists has been severely impacted. The challenge is to design forms of support from artists that will alleviate the negative psychological impacts of the pandemic in the short term. For the medium and long terms, new opportunities must be identified for aspiring actors, as well as non-profit actors to use their creativity as outlet for frustration and for building of solidarity and cohesion.

Sport

The economic benefits of sport for a large number of athletes and sports people in Africa have been severely affected as sport events were cancelled and postponed. Genuine anxiety exists about the post Covid-19 period, where sport, which is already under financed by governments, would be a priority for support over other economic activities.

In this regard, the AU Commission has proactively mobilized the Sport Movement in Africa to design strategies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on sport on the continent. Several teleconferences have been held with the participation of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA), the Union of Sport Confederations of Africa (UCSA), the African Paralympic Committee (APC), the Association of Women In Sport in Africa (AWISA), the Confederation of African Football (CAF), the Confederation of African Athletics (CAA), the AU Sport Development Region Heads, and Experts from Member States. The proposed strategies will be considered by the relevant Specialized Technical Committee via teleconference later in 2020 for endorsement and shall be available Ministries of Sports in Member States.

Impact of escalating crime during COVID-19 on all the social policy pillars

The police and armed forces, having become the public face of the pandemic, have been focusing on enforcing isolation, lockdown and social distancing. With the attention of the police diverted, criminal groups have hurriedly used the opportunity to scale up their activities. Organized crime groups, some long embedded in the health sector, have quickly identified opportunities to exploit the sector (supplying counterfeit medicines, sub-standard personal protective equipment and fake Coronavirus tests). Cybercrime has also emerged rapidly as a domain for growth of criminal markets. Member States will have to push back against the fast developing illicit economy to safeguard their (licit) economy which will be devastated by the impact of the pandemic.

Sustainable Governance Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa: A Human Security Approach

The main threats to the construction of good governance and the rule of law are corruption, illicit financial flows, clientelism and capture. The COVID-19 pandemic offers a unique opportunity for African Governments to deliver services in a transparent, democratic manner. The social workforce will provide factual information on needs of the community before it can be manipulated in any way. The strategic goal is to build resilience in governance systems and institutions to effectively respond to future challenges. Capacity and resilience should be built in all the thematic areas of governance, i.e. upholding and realising human and people's rights, public service delivery, humanitarian assistance (to refugees, migrants, internally displaced persons, etc.), in accountability and responsiveness – an in separation of powers and checks and balances among the executive, judiciary and legislature. As the security forces are deployed, they should restrain from applying excessive force and to focus on saving, rather than threatening lives and livelihoods.

Implementation of the Response and international cooperation

The same reporting structures applies as indicated for implementation of Agenda 2063, (among others, AUDA/NEPAD, APRM) that will compile the report for the AU Policy organs, indicating inputs and outcomes of the Comprehensive Response to the Socio-economic and Environmental Impacts of COVID-19 in Member States. The Commission, AUDA/NEPAD and APRM will design the reporting format and guidelines.

The implementation of the Response will build on international cooperation, engaging international partners such as UN organizations that participated in its formulation. The AU-UN Cooperation Framework (2018) will serve to coordinate joint planning, joint implementation and monitoring of the Response. Other international partners, such as the European Union (EU), will also be engaged.

1. INTRODUCTION

Declared on the 11 March 2020 as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), the scale, magnitude and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are unprecedented, globally and in Africa. Much of the attention around COVID-19 has focused, and rightly so, on health issues. However, and somehow other equally life-threatening hazards have been neglected including socio-economic impacts on households and enterprises. The socio-economic impacts of the pandemic will have far reaching consequences for the world's most vulnerable people who are already exposed to human insecurity. Jeopardizing the efforts in pursuit of the relevant targets of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the UN Agenda 2030, COVID-19 has worsened the vulnerabilities of many groups in Africa, including children, women, youth, people with disability and older persons. It particularly impacts refugees and people displaced by conflict or disasters, also migrant workers and members of their families back home, domestic workers, poor and vulnerable workers in the informal economy and rural sector, cross border traders, vulnerable persons in post conflict settings, people living with HIV, etc.

The COVID19 pandemic is not only stifling the health sector and threatening livelihoods but poses a huge challenge to the socio-economic and environmental sectors. Hence there is need for a comprehensive set of interventions espousing immediate and medium-to-long term measures – anchored in an integrated and multi-sectoral approach to combat the effects of the pandemic. Considering the scope and magnitude of the pandemic, concerted efforts from the public sector, private sector, civil society and development partners will be required.

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to impose heavy human, financial, economic, environmental and social costs on Africa, part of which has already been experienced. The crisis also creates an opportunity to re-examine the continent's fiscal and economic policy priorities, to build stronger health and social sectors, driving humanity towards equality, inclusion and social cohesion inspired by the Ubuntu philosophy: **“You Are because I Am, I Am because You Are”**. In this context, following a meeting with international partners, the need was recognized to come together around a common social agenda, to include a core minimum package based on the *AU Social Agenda 2063* (EX.CL/Dec.1074 (XXXVI)), for countries to enhance resilience and respond to the COVID-19's socio-economic impacts under AUC leadership and with UN assistance.

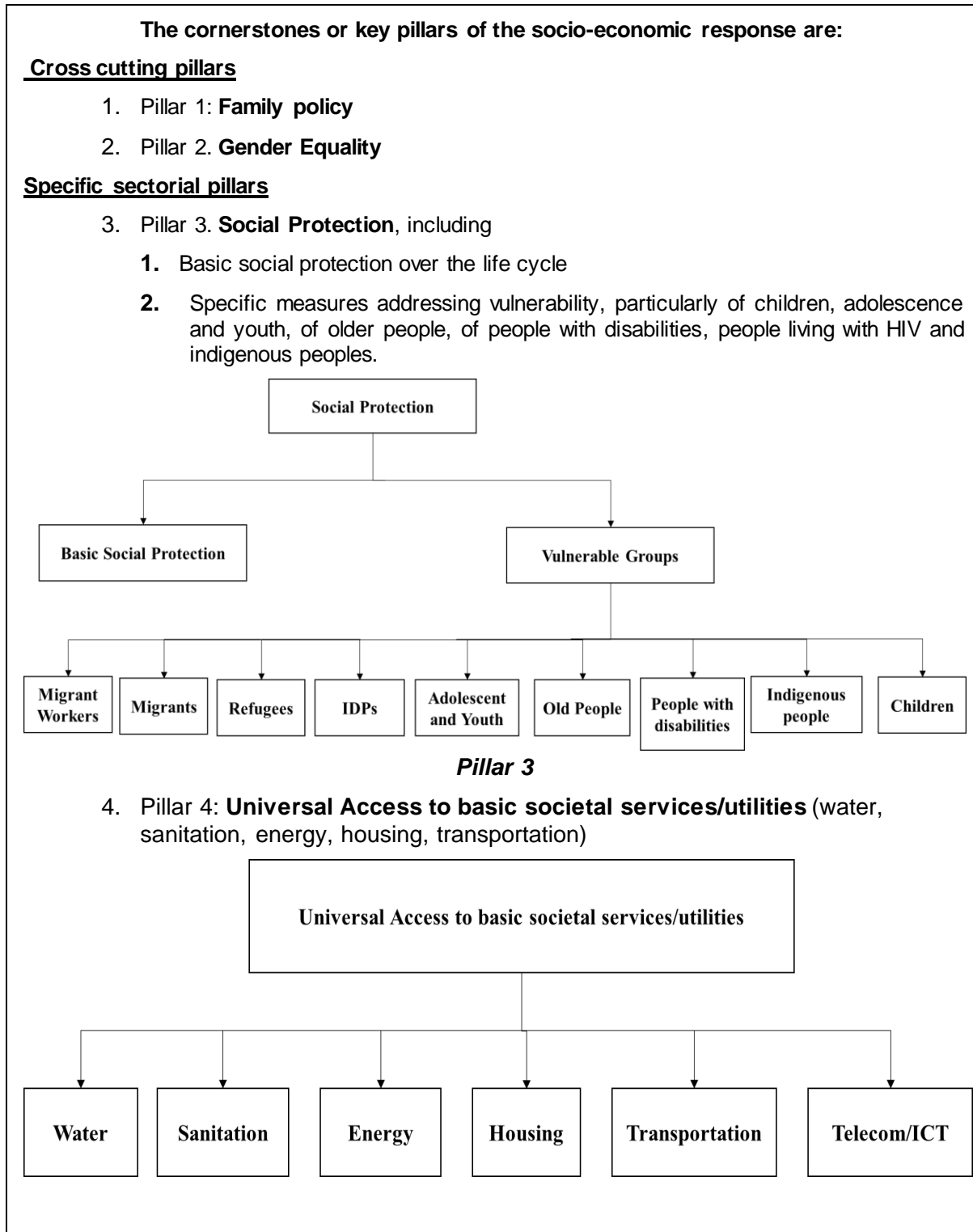
The overall goal of the comprehensive socio-economic response plan is to a) provide immediate relief measures to persons and communities impacted by the current disease; and b) build and enhance the resilience capacity of Member States, a recovery strategy for the medium and long term laying foundations for more resilient health systems and focuses on human capital development and capacities to preserve and rebuild livelihoods, especially of vulnerable people and communities. The response plan builds on the AU Agenda 2063 and its Social Agenda 2063, the UN Agenda 2030 and also considers UN Resolutions on Human Security, allowing for a reset in order that it will be possible to better respond to future crises.

The ultimate goal of all interventions in both the fight against COVID-19 with immediate measures and in the post-COVID-19 period over the next 2-3 years, is to equalize opportunities and to ensure **human security** through a fair distribution of outcomes of development¹. Hence, interventions will include not only social

¹ African Union Commission. 2020. *Social Agenda 2063*. Adopted by the Thirty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council. February 2020. P39

protection and social welfare services, but also the promotion of equality and equity in all societal sectors.²

In the paragraphs to follow, a brief analysis of the situation under each of nine (9) key themes of a socio-economic response is presented and a number of actions that can be taken are enumerated under each of the areas described in the table below. In addition, the important and very relevant domains in these crisis times of culture, sports and human rights will also come into focus.



² <http://www.indsocdev.org/defining-social-development.html>

5. Pillar 5: **Access to quality education**
6. Pillar 6. **Access to good health and well-being**; including nutritious food and ensuring its agricultural base; access to health care and essential medicines; effective drug control and demand reduction services; and sports
7. Pillar 7: **Access to sufficient and nutritious food**
8. Pillar 8. **Formal employment and entrepreneurship policies**
9. Pillar 9. **Informal and rural labour market policies**

Threats beyond COVID-19

Africa is exposed to multiple threats beyond COVID-19. This requires an African Resilience Strategy over the long term with a Resilience Priority Agenda addressing the main threats for the continent, which are:

- Health epidemics and communicable diseases (including HIV, TB, Malaria) and non-communicable diseases
- Food insecurity
- Climate change, and disaster risks (locusts, droughts, floods, maritime erosion) and maritime security
- Terrorism, insurgence, radicalism, violent extremism and cyber threats
- Violations of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
- Discrimination and inequalities in all its forms
- Gender inequalities, discrimination and all forms of gender-based violence
- Demographic boom
- Threats caused by and management of major industrial risks
- Disruptions in sustainable provision of public amenities: Energy, Water, Transport, Telecommunications

2. FAMILY POLICY AS A CROSS-CUTTING POLICY CONCERN

Envisioned outcome: To keep the African family together as a unit of support to its members, in particular children, the sick, including people living with HIV, persons with disability and elders.

Challenges to the family in Africa in view of COVID-19

Families who already struggle to afford basic necessities will be hard hit by sickness, restrictions of movement and subsequent loss of income, creating a vicious circle of economic and health shocks, and poverty.

The most devastating effect will be on diminished or loss of family income, including family income from the informal sector and remittances, disproportionately affecting women, due to the secondary economic crisis. This in turn may affect family housing or shelter in that rent or bonds cannot be paid. For families, access to nutrition and affordable health care will be impacted negatively as well, particularly as these are usually out-of-pocket expenses in African households, representing more than the

health budget spending in most countries, putting people at increased risk of impoverishment.

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the family in Africa

Implement deliberate appropriate social protection³ measures for families, prioritizing the most vulnerable, and in particular consider⁴:

- *Existence and implementation of family-friendly, youth-friendly and gender-responsive comprehensive responsive health policies, which includes specific mitigating measures for the family and the most vulnerable to face health outbreaks and emergency situations.*
- *Existence and implementation of comprehensive social protection policies targeting the family as the foundation of society with suitable measures aiming at building and enhancing family resilience regardless of the health, social and economic statuses of the family members;*

Immediate Relief actions for vulnerable families impacted by COVID-19

- *A clear policy announcement is to be made that members of one family should stay together to support each other;*
- *All children under 18 years in all communities are to be registered under a family head;*
- *All missing family members are to be reported and registered; likewise, the disappearance of family members should be reported to police;*
- *People without families are to be registered in their local ward or neighborhood;*
- *Institute family reunification programs, focusing on children, adolescents and family members with disability;*
- *Institute a social workforce with unemployed health and social workers in an extended public works programme;*
- *Registered social workforce workers to assess in each family: sources of income, housing or shelter, access to education and health services, and technical skills available to forge a livelihood for that family;*

Medium-Long Term Actions: Build and enhance the resilience capacity of families in Member States (2-3 years)

- *Ensuring income security for vulnerable families and secure equitable and affordable access to essential goods and services (health, education, water, sanitation, decent housing) and protect their human capabilities and livelihoods, which involves:*
- *Further to the assessment of families, information gathered to be transmitted to the district commissioner/local authorities or assigned administrator with a*

³ Social Protection is defined as the set of policies and programs aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability, social exclusion throughout their lifecycles, placing a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups. Social protection can be provided in cash or in-kind; through non-contributory schemes, such as providing universal, categorical, or poverty targeted benefits such as social assistance; contributory schemes (commonly social insurance), and by building human capital, productive assets, and access to jobs.

⁴ Social Protection Inter-Agency Coordination Board (SPIAC-B). 2020. *A Joint Statement on the Role of Social Protection in Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic*. New York. <https://www.ilo.org/newyork/at-theun/social-protection-inter-agency-cooperation-board/lang-en/index.htm>

guarantee of confidentiality and strict use for a) mapping and organizing the service sectors, including in the private sector and the informal economy; and b) planning of training and service delivery undertakings;

- *Electronic media and ICT providers to facilitate production and dissemination of programmes to support mental health of families, e.g. topics on mindfulness, parenting skills, peer support and counseling, serenity and value clarification and to offer online counseling for treatment of substance use disorders.*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required

The first layer will consist of local government workers who will work towards adapting its capacity and systems to link up with the family as a social and economic unit. The second layer of assistance will constitute the social workforce team, consisting of social workers or welfare assistants, health, education and employment/labour extension social workforce workers. The third layer, distribution team, will include agriculture and transport extension social workforce workers. Private sector ICT companies can assist social workforce teams to have access to mobile phones and relevant educational and communication applications in their line of duty.

Key Actors: *Member States (MS), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), AU, concerned AU Organs, African Development Bank (AfDB) concerned UN Agencies and other international organizations AU Diaspora Network, NGOs and CSOs, other Non-State Actors.*

Organized crime threats to the family and mitigation thereof

- *Manipulating correct information on families in the neighborhood – correct information to be supplied to a designated focal point;*
- *Syphoning off benefits such as cash transfers, food – family members to be included in transparency and delivery mechanisms;*
- *Soliciting members into human trafficking, drug production and sales, sex work and gangs – reporting mechanisms to law enforcement in place, same mechanisms for missing family members, prosecution of perpetrators of human traffickers and smugglers.*

3. GENDER EQUALITY AS A CROSS-CUTTING GOAL

The envisaged outcome is that gender discrimination and violence will be removed from African society; women's access to health and reproductive services, labour and social protection provisions are strengthened; and the human security of women and girls is advanced, informed by a supportive and protective legal and institutional framework.

Challenges to Gender Equality in Africa in view of COVID-19

Women are more vulnerable to economic fragility and are under greater threat during confinement and movement restrictions, for reasons that include not only gender inequalities and inequities in their access to economic opportunities, for example lack of access to internet, has had a debilitating impact on their businesses. Their far greater representation in informal sector jobs, particularly in Africa, also resulted in women not benefitting from labour protection laws and benefits in the time of COVID-19, such as quality health care services This vulnerability in turn affects family income and food availability, and leads to malnutrition, especially for children,

and pregnant and breastfeeding women. Furthermore, since women represent nearly 70 per cent of healthcare workers globally, it is critical to protect their health and support their needs, including on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response. In addition, COVID-19 will result in early childcare facilities to be closed, which disproportionately affects women who are the primary caregivers of children in African society.

The COVID-19 crises unfortunately resulted in a spike in gender-based violence (GBV) in all countries over the world, i.e. emotional, physical and sexual abuse in the context of being locked in or families closed off. This picture is replicated across numerous countries in Africa and globally⁵. Fortunately, with the availability of mobile phones and peer support, this can be reported.

Prevention, protection, response, coordination and capacity development to combat GBV in COVID-19 response plans is crucial. Member States are advised to incorporate gender perspectives in all responses to COVID-19 to ensure that actions during, and after the COVID-19 crisis aim to build more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies.⁶

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality in Africa

- *Existence and implementation of gender responsive and social protection policy and legal measures that address health, social and economic risks specific to women and girls;*
- *Institutional mechanisms are in place to ensure physical, emotional, psychological and mental security of women and girls, in particular against all forms of GBV;*
- *Ensure continuity of health and nutrition services and programs for pregnant women, adolescent girls and young children through enactment of emergency measures that protect access to health facilities and feeding programs.*

Immediate Relief actions for vulnerable women and girls impacted by COVID19

- *A clear policy announcement that Gender Based Violence should be reported*
- *Establish command centres for Gender Based Violence during the lockdown/ state of emergency period, including a GBV Hotline, peer support, and that a specially trained female-led police unit will offer support to victims; prioritizing the hearing and determination of GBV cases;*
- *Ensure referral pathways and update risk-mitigation information regularly to facilitate access to services during the pandemic;*
- *Disseminate messages on gender-based violence in the context of COVID-19 through social media, radio and/or TV programmes; establishing remote social/psychosocial support such as virtual chat groups; peer support groups; supporting shelters or one-stop centres, safe spaces for survivors, etc.);*

⁵ <https://www.unfpa.org/covid19>

⁶ African Peer Review Mechanism. 2020. *Governance Response to Covid-19 by African Union Member States, Preliminary Report* April 2020, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Midrand, South Africa

- *Integrate supply of reproductive health services within the community based response;*
- *Expand emergency cash transfer programs to vulnerable women, pregnant women, adolescent girls and children to mitigate income insecurity particularly in camps.*

Key Actors: *MS, RECs, AUC, concerned AU Organs, AfDB, concerned UN Agencies and other international organizations, NGOs and CSOs, other Non-State Actors*

Medium-Long Term Actions: Build and enhance the resilience capacity of women and girls in Member States (2-3 years)

- *Assess Resilience Content of Women Empowerment Programmes to scale up and diversify innovative schemes for resilience building;*
- *Support the establishment and strengthening of women owned social/care economy businesses to provide sanitation and water facilities, and social care in communities;*
- *Prioritize gender equality principles to gender responsive work styles and enhance social protection measures (e.g. cas- based transfers for social assistance and social services);*
- *Utilize existing risk and vulnerability assessment methodologies, in particular in rural settings;*
- *Support the AU Women Fund to enhance resilience of women and girls in all sectors of life;*
- *Continue education of girls and young women during lockdown and restricted movements and monitor school dropout of girls and actively address the barriers to girls re-entry into schools, including among married adolescents, those who experience early pregnancy or require child care;;*
- *Incorporate gender perspectives in all responses to COVID-19 to ensure that actions during, and after the COVID-19 crisis aim to build more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies*

Organised crime threats to women and girls and mitigation thereof

- *Soliciting females into human trafficking, drug production and sales and sex work – reporting mechanisms to law enforcement in place, same as mechanisms to report on missing family members*

Key Actors: *MS, RECs, AUC, concerned AU Organs, RECs, AfDB, NGOs & CSOs, other Non-State Actors*

4. SOCIAL PROTECTION

The envisaged outcome of social protection interventions is to prevent and protect people against vulnerability, discrimination and inequality and social exclusion throughout their lifecycles, placing a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups such as children, older persons, persons with disabilities, refugees, forcibly displaced persons (IDPs), migrants (in particular undocumented migrants, people living with HIV , etc.). Social protection is provided in the form of social insurance, social assistance (cash transfers, public work programmes, feeding schemes) and social services (conducted by health, education, social workers). Broader components of social protection are provision of energy, IT, water, sanitation, transportation and housing.

Universal access to these basic societal services/ utilities is of paramount importance for resilience building, including in the supply chain.

Challenges to Social Protection services in Africa in view of COVID-19

The COVID-19 crises with its economic impact will disrupt contributory social insurance as paid benefits for individuals may run out over the next two years and contributions may have ceased due to job losses and financial constraints. Hence, more people will be in need of social assistance – non-contributory assistance from the state in the form of cash transfers, feeding schemes, micro loans to start businesses, etc. and the assistance will need to be monitored – needing social workforce workers, in addition to social workers, nurses and teachers – services than will need to be accessed for free.

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Social Protection in Africa

- *Putting in place multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholders, robust, vulnerability tailored, efficient, transparent and well-coordinated adaptive social protection policies;*
 - *Adjust policy frameworks to facilitate expansion of cash transfer programs horizontally (through enrolling additional groups in the population affected by COVID-19 socioeconomic impact) and vertically (through increases of benefit level or packages) and introduce emergency cash transfer programs where necessary*
- *Establish early warning and preparedness strategies with risk and vulnerability assessment methodologies in countries to enable them to better respond to future disasters and emergencies in a coordinated manner. Responses should be tailored with the special vulnerabilities of children, including children without family care, children living and/or working on the street, girls, children living with HIV, children with disabilities, children on the move, children living in rural areas, children incarcerated with their parents and care givers, children of economically disadvantaged parents, children of indigenous communities, and children affected by conflict situations;*
- *Facilitate risk communication and ensure key messages reach to the most vulnerable, including maintaining social distancing in an event of evacuation as a result of other disasters that may occur amid COVID-19 crisis;*
- *Monitor, collect data and analyze discriminatory incidents related to corona virus, including people targeted as vectors of the virus. Special attention should be given to discrimination against people suffering from the disease, survivors and their families, as well as members of specific race, ethnic or national groups;*
- *Build and or strengthen coordination between Disaster Risk Management agencies/ministries and public health institutions in responding to disasters, building on lessons generated from COVID-19 response;*

Immediate Relief actions regarding provision of Social Protection services for vulnerable groups impacted by COVID-19

- *Expand or establish a central registry of beneficiaries of social assistance and social services;*

- *Develop a citizens' approach which includes the NGOs, CSOs, health workers, social workforce assists in targeting of the vulnerable in need of assistance and reports on the impact and outcome of assistance on monthly basis;*
- *Conducting rapid socio-economic impact assessment and policy/action responses to COVID 19, including through real time monitoring;*
- *Provide social assistance and social services to vulnerable family members such as older people, people already living with other underlying health conditions (including HIV), persons with disabilities (physical and mental), workers who are self-employed or in non-formal employment and cannot work due to restricted movement and lockdown (including rural and domestic workers), the homeless, forcibly displaced people, refugees, migrants (particularly those without documentation), care workers (paid and un-paid), ethnic/indigenous groups and chronically poor persons,*
- *Grant a basic minimum income or cash transfer as social safety nets towards severely affected low-income households as to sustain purchasing power for the needy;*
- *Activate/convene social networks, religious groups, national human rights institutions in order to integrate them in community mobilization and to gather data on the impact of the virus, to relay the voices of affected communities, and to identify communities/people that have been left behind or issues that have not been considered and be equipped based on data to carry out constructive advocacies with authorities.*

Medium/Long Term: Build and enhance the resilience capacity of vulnerable groups in Member States further to the provision of Social Protection (2-3 years)

- *Assess performance of social protection policies and programmes on addressing short, medium and long term needs of the populations and communities, and their ability to build sustainable resilient persons, communities, etc.;*
- *Extend the ongoing social safety net programme to build resilience of the affected communities and persons by COVID-19 and reduce their vulnerabilities to other natural disasters;*
- *Strengthen the shock-responsive capacity of social protection systems through all its components, including targeting, registries, administration of programs, coordination, governance, monitoring & evaluation, and financing mechanisms;*
- *Review disaster risk financing and social protection strategies, taking into account growing threats by pandemic, and expand the African Risk Capacity (ARC) insurance scheme to cover for pandemic risk index.*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required

The same composition of the social workforce team as for the family is required, but with the inclusion of a documentalist or data specialist, to feed data into the central registry.

Key Actors: *MS, RECs, AUC, concerned AU Organs, concerned UN Agencies and other international organizations, NGOs & CSOs, other Non-State Actors*

Organised crime threats to social protection services and mitigation thereof

- *Cash-in-transit robberies, robberies at food storage facilities*

Financing of Social Protection, Social security and Employment creation:

- *Build financial mechanisms such as the ARC that supports scaling up of social safety nets significantly;*
- *Facilitate the dialogue between ministries of finance, labour and social development by implementing the earlier resolutions of Ministers of Finance on financing social protection and social security.*

Vulnerable groups

Children

Challenges in relation to children's right to education- With closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, not only the right to education, but also to adequate food will be compromised as many children rely on free or subsidized school meals. Girls may face more vulnerability to abuse, domestic work, and harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. Temporary closure of schools may lead to permanent school dropout, particularly for girls, children with disabilities and children from economically disadvantaged families.

Interruption of essential services which are crucial to life, survival and development of children - Essential services, such as neonatal care, and immunization programs may be interrupted, resulting in increased morbidity and mortality of children.

Challenges regarding the right to parental care and protection- Children run the risk of family separation due to death of their parents or caregivers, or as a result of the public health measures undertaken to control the spread of the COVID-19 disease.

Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) - Many schools have now switched to home schooling with online lessons and the digital learning methods may expose children to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA).

Adolescents and Youth:⁷

Young people, in particular young women and adolescent girls, youth with disabilities, are equally hard hit by COVID-19 as it affects the lives, livelihoods and lifestyles of young people in specific ways. Consequences are felt on health, education, employment and social lives. The Scope of the Youth Response is constructed around (i) Reduce health risk of COVID-19 and its response measures among young people; (ii) Minimise the Impact of COVID-19 and its response measures on Young people; (iii) Mobilize and engage Youth to be actors in the fight against COVID-19.

Four strategies are put forward in order to channel youth energy, drive and digital fluency towards solving problems and engaging communities:

Ensure Youth Safety; The strategy Be Safe is based on a COVID-19 communications campaign on knowledge and self-care.

⁷ African Union Commission.2020. *COVID19: The AU's Youth Sector Response, Young Africans taking responsibility towards solving the Coronavirus pandemic*, AUC HRST Department

Continue Learning: The strategy consists of providing opportunities, support and capacities for young people to continue learning through non-traditional channels. Activities are based on (i) a communications campaign to encourage learning; (ii) advocacy and engagement with countries; and (iii) Be online initiatives e.g HP BeOnline

Be an innovator: The strategy aims to provide opportunities for young people to be creative and innovate around COVID-19 challenges. The key activities are (i) Initiatives from emerging partnerships such as with HP BeChangeMaker; and (ii) New contest to identify and accelerate innovations from young people.

Be a responder: The objective is to mobilize young people to safely respond in supporting young people and communities to deal with COVID-19. This pursued through activities on (i) Mobilization; (ii) Orientation; (iii) Activation and (iv) Conversation.

Refugees, IDPs, Migrants and Diaspora

Migrants, refugees and displaced communities may be disproportionately vulnerable to both COVID-19 transmission and the secondary effects of the measures taken to curb the virus' spread. These groups are likely to experience heightened risk of transmission due to limited access to health, sanitation facilities or meaningful prevention, often residing in overcrowded and high-density locations. Heightened levels of stigmatization, discrimination and xenophobia can lead to further marginalization from social and economic activities or relief packages, exclusion from national COVID-19 policy responses (wage subsidies, unemployment benefits or social security, social protection measures). They are usually concentrated in sectors of the economy with high levels of temporary, informal or unprotected work, low wages, including in care and domestic work, usually occupied by female migrant workers.⁸

The AU Commission conducted a Citizens Preparedness Survey⁹ targeting different non-state actors, resulting in a citizens' response (bottom-up). Complementing the current work of Africa CDC, it builds on strategies such as (i) Awareness Raising by Non-State Actors, i.e. the faith based community, CSOs, Trade Unions n; diaspora health officials; (ii) Citizen **Responses** during lockdown/isolation targeting the vulnerable and taking into consideration how to tap into the local economy, and **Recovery**- particularly looking at the (1) Economy and at Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME)s and the informal sector; (2) the role of the Diaspora as humanitarian actors; (3) role of Faith Based organizations.

Remittances are an important source of resilience for African households. Job losses coupled with lack of mobility in sending countries are causing immediate reduction of remittance transfers. With movement restricted, remittances may not reach the families it is destined for.

Immediate Relief actions

- *Promote the inclusion of diaspora networks and intellectuals as recognized humanitarian actors during emergencies and pandemics i.e. COVID19;*
- *Document the role and impact of Diaspora Humanitarianism during COVID19;*

⁸ International Labour Organization. 2020. *Policy Brief "Protecting Migrant Workers during the COVID Pandemic"*. Geneva, Switzerland

⁹ African Union Commission. 2020. *Citizens Preparedness Survey*, CIDO, AUC

- *Develop an AUC guideline/ position paper on migration, displacement and COVID-19 response which highlights protection needs of vulnerable groups and directly addresses the Member State level;*
- *Create awareness on all relevant information concerning actions, models, and best practices to ensure access for migrants and their families to lowest cost and efficient sending and receiving channels;*
- *Engage sending or host countries for flexible regulations in ensuring social protection of migrants as well as allowing them to use digital technologies to send money home irrespective of their immigration statuses;*
- *Launch campaigns on social media to advocate and highlight the role of all the diaspora and migrant workers who are part of the response to COVID by providing essential services i.e. bus drivers, cleaners;*
- *Develop and implement training packages for policy makers on migration and health policy mainstreaming, including on the current COVID-19 situation;*
- *Assess modalities how all migrants, regardless of their status, can be ensured legal and verifiable identity to ensure access to health care and other basic social services;*
- *Provide protection and assistance services ensured for unaccompanied children in displacement and humanitarian contexts;*
- *Enhance the availability of COVID19 testing, isolation and treatment facilities in and near refugees and hosting areas;*
- *Advocate for inclusion of IDPs and refugees in formal employment and entrepreneurship schemes; identifying ways and means on how diasporas, refugees and displaced persons who have skills such as health workers can find gainful employment while supporting national COVID19 response;*
- *Advocate for the extension of business relief packages (i.e. stimulus packages) to Diaspora owned charities, NGOs and businesses;*
- *Engage with local chiefs, authorities and organizations to promote co-existence, understanding and knowledge about the contributions by displaced persons towards local communities;*
- *Monitor developments and identify and advocate for opportunities for case resolution – including temporary or permanent regularization of status, extension of visas or amnesties (countries of destination) income generation activities, and helplines, website, focal points, information services, legal assistance and humanitarian support to returned migrant workers (countries of origin);*
- *In cooperation with relevant consulates and embassies, organize voluntary returns whenever feasible, providing migrants who can return voluntarily with information material on key prevention strategies related to COVID-19 and return and reintegration programmes;*
- *Conduct virtual counselling for returnees to identify their needs and develop reintegration plans, involving community members where feasible.*

Medium/Long term Measures:

- Promote public investments in early years including early childhood development, nutrition, pre-primary education, child health and protection.

- A 'Remittances Community Task Force' should be established in collaboration with partners including African Institute for Remittances, International Food and Agriculture Development (IFAD), World Bank, Financial Action Task Force (FATF), IOM, UN Women, Universal Postal Union, private sector players and others;
- Adapt existing or develop new policies to allow for temporary or longer term regularization of irregularly staying migrants due to COVID-19-like movement restrictions, at the minimum for a duration and aftermath of the pandemic and with an option to extend beyond, in case grounds for stay are ensured (through employment, study, marriage, etc.);
- Engage AU Member States and the private sector for flexible social protection mechanisms benefitting remittance recipient families (i.e Welfare schemes);
- Maximize remittance families' resilience in the long run by linking remittance flows with financial inclusion opportunities and related benefits, by supporting micro, small and medium sized businesses, using future remittances as collaterals;
- Governments to enhance the labour market reintegration/ employability of returnee migrant workers (mainly involving Public Employment Services, Vocational Training Institutions, Skill Councils, Social Security Institutes and other labour market institutions);
- African governments are supported in negotiating new, and revising existing bilateral labour migration agreements between African Union Member States and countries-of-destination to include appropriate social protection measures or to develop social protection and related support to their own migrant workers abroad;
- Provide stimulus packages and e-commerce training to support diaspora businesses in destination countries.

Member states undergoing and or recovering from disasters

Countries undergoing other disasters, such as droughts are particularly vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. The confluence of COVID-19 and other disasters would likely create unprecedented longer term socio-economic challenges that would not only undermine recovery from COVID-19 but, could also lead to severe depression and compounded vulnerability. While all countries should be given the due attention they deserve, countries undergoing or recovering from disasters require special attention.

Key Actors: MS, RECs, AUC, concerned AU Organs, AUDA-NEPAD, concerned UN Agencies and other international organizations NGOs & CSOs, other Non-State Actors

5. UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO BASIC SOCIETAL SERVICES/UTILITIES (WATER, SANITATION, ENERGY, HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION)

The main objective regarding basic societal utilities is not only to keep continuity of important services in the short and medium term while ensuring preparedness and resilience for delivery of water, sanitation, energy, housing, IT and digitalization related services and transportation, but also to provide equitable services, i.e. universal access of all citizens to these services. Transportation and energy, that are essential services for the responsiveness of the supply chains which were hard hit by

the COVID-19 crisis. Sustainable and safe access to ICT and ICT-based applications and tools to manage the COVID-19 crisis, is also essential.

Challenges to basic societal services in Africa in view of COVID-19

Although pronouncements and provisions (personnel of these services are allowed to travel) have been made by Governments to facilitate ongoing services during the State of Emergency, or lockdown, the COVID-19 crisis firstly poses threats to financing of these services, and secondly with regard to their maintenance in the long run. All these amenities are critical in keeping the economies of Member States intact. Supply chain disruptions affected the delivery of social protection provisions in food, nutrition, health products, etc. as well as the outreach activities to the vulnerable groups for assistance. The improvement in access to sanitation and hygiene, from both rural and urban populations, was very substantial, averaging above 80% in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.¹⁰

Supply chain disruption is caused by closure of important transport infrastructure and services (closure of major international airports for passenger flights, closure of important transport corridors affecting directly the landlocked countries and interruption of maritime and land transport corridors). This led to shocks in terms of important job losses in the transport services including ports, airports, air navigation services, and public transport services.

Adding to disruptions in global supply chains, the situation will delay investments, affect electricity provision for rural health, education, other frontline facilities and critical services. A lack of energy will affect water and sanitation services.

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that the digital divide exacerbates economic inequality and lack of opportunity and it curtails access to health care and pandemic information. Furthermore, the unprecedented demand for digital technologies to facilitate containment of the spread of COVID-19 calls for increasing bandwidth and to manage congestion.

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Basic Societal Utilities in Africa (transport, energy, ICT, Postal Services, water/sanitation, housing, etc)

- *Policies for universal access to basic societal utilities are in place with safe, responsible and environmental friendly strategies on consumption of basic societal utilities;*
- *Uniform and harmonized Emergency Response Measures are established in the Transport industry*
- *COVID-19 Guidelines by Africa CDC and WHO are implemented in the Transport industry; Comprehensive Post-COVID-19 National Recovery Plans are implemented in the Transport and Tourism industries;*
- *Existence and implementation of guidelines on continuity of services related to ports, airports, land transport services;*
- *Existence and implementation of policies and regulations to facilitate deployment of digital tools and enable cross sector and interoperability of data to improve COVID-19 responses;*

¹⁰ African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). 2020. *Governance Response to Covid-19 by African Union Member States, Preliminary Report*, April 2020, African peer review Mechanism (APRM), Midrand, South Africa.

- *Relevant infrastructures are in place with enhanced broadband and affordable connectivity, increased bandwidth capacity, network resilience and security;*
- *Safeguard social sector spending to avoid regression in outcomes of availability of societal amenities.*

Immediate Relief actions regarding provision of basic societal utilities as impacted by COVID-19

- *Urgently assess the living conditions, hygiene and sanitation conditions in the urban slums, and implement urgent measure to ease the application of precautionary and prevention measures; this may require measures to reduce the population density in slums*
- *Conduct an assessment of COVID-19 impact on the labour market in Transport and Tourism industries.*
- *Facilitate opening of airspace, airports, ports and land transport corridors to keep the supply chain open, including financial support for maritime shipping services for medical supplies and foodstuffs; Enforce preventive measures established by the Africa CDC (social distancing, masks, etc) in public transport (trains, buses, taxis);*
- *Implement exceptional administrative and costumer regimes to allow for easy movement of humanitarian goods and foods along the humanitarian corridors, including land-locked countries;*
- *Ensure all AU Member States adopt uniform and harmonized Emergency Response Measures to keep supply chains open, facilitate landing permits for cargo flights, manage crews harmoniously and adopt stepped-up security screening measures as communicated by Africa CDC and WHO;*
- *Family social workforce teams to assess access to water, sanitation and energy for families and provide information to the requisite Government team;*
- *Professionals of technical services and social services workforce teams to assess housing and transport challenges and provide information to the requisite State Owned Enterprise (SOE)/ private sector team;*
- *Ensure contingency provisions in urban settings (such as water tanks, water treatment plants water and sewerage pumps and generators), vehicles for the facilities, treatment chemicals, water quality testing equipment and kits, operation and maintenance parts);*
- *Ensure contingency provisions in rural settings (such as water tanks, underground water, rainwater harvesting and improved latrines, hand wash facilities with hand soap, adequate maintenance parts, etc) procured and safely stored, also applicable to urban congested slums;*
- *Ensure that all under-roof structures in each community are mapped for contingency housing of destitute citizens;*
- *Unlimited interest-free loans to Small and Medium sized businesses operating in the Tourism sector as a stimulus to prevent them from collapse first and recovery;*
- *Establishment of a special fund dedicated to tourism sector, that will be dedicated to support the most affected African countries;*
- *Engage Member States, International finianiale institutions and other partners to put measures in place to facilitate power utilities as well as off-grid and mini-grid*

service providers to overcome impacts of low electricity demand and drop in revenues;

- *Introduce Policy and Regulatory instruments to ensure continuity of provision of electricity to low income populations during the crisis;*
- *Support programmes for electrification of health and critical facilities and provide renewable energy solutions for the Displaced and Vulnerable Communities in Africa (Refugee Camps) – mainly water pumping, portable water stations and lighting using micro grids, and solar stand-alone solutions;*
- *Strengthen digital capacity of the health sector for diagnostic and laboratory workers ;*
- *Use digital platforms, portals and applications especially those developed by Africans for Africans, that can help Trace, Track and Test people who have come into contact with an infected person while balancing health imperatives and privacy concerns and data protection;*
- *Encourage the design of new applications and services to facilitate services such as delivering food and other essential items to those most in need by optimizing the entire supply chain via digital government services;*
- *Implement policies and regulations to enable cross sector data transfer, interoperability, aggregation, encryption and anonymization of location/ mobile data as a valuable asset necessary for the development of African digital solutions to improve COVID-19 responses;*
- *Build partnerships with private technology companies, social entrepreneurs, national and international organizations to make use of existing technologies to manage the COVID-19 crisis; and connect the unconnected to ensure all citizens benefit from the use of digital technologies in the management of pandemics;*
- *Work with African ICT and Communication stakeholders to develop a continental digital platform to serve as a secured virtual space to disseminate existing data bases, technical solutions and information on ways and means to combat COVID-19 crisis;*
- *Connect and involve post offices in the implementation of strategies to fight against COVID-19, including remittances and e-Services.*

Medium term – 2-3 years

- *Develop a Supply Chain Resilience strategy for water and sanitation services*
- *Build Resilience of the Transport Industry (Air, Maritime, Road, etc)*
- *Develop an Energy Resilience Strategy*
- *Develop an emergency shelter/housing strategy;*
- *Support workers in the AUDA-NEPAD Labour Intensive Infrastructures projects (Assess employment, job losses, impact on communities, mitigation measures, identify support to laid off workers, and to impacted communities, Advocate for social protection scheme around public employment programmes using labour intensive public works);*

- *Implement medium to long term relief measures to assist transport companies recover from the impacts of COVID-19 (airlines, airports operators, ports authorities, public transport companies, tourism companies, hotels, etc.);*
- *Increase advocacy for implementation of the comprehensive Post-COVID-19 National Recovery Plans in the Transport and Tourism industries;*
- *Establish a platform to share policy and regulatory experiences and best practices that can improve COVID-19 responses in the tourism sector.;*
- *Put measures in place to ensure business continuity for key energy institutions and retention of human resources;*
- *Support Member States to develop strategies for clean cooking solutions;*
- *Implement Africa's Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) and adopt national digital strategies and policies to strengthen epidemic preparedness.*
- *Ensure reliable and affordable access through the use of USF funding notably to health, education, humanitarian and emergency services and people and communities with special needs;*
- *Support urgent requirements to expand bandwidth and connectivity to respond to the increasing demand and promote greater digital inclusion to enable all African citizens to benefit from the use of digital technologies in the management of pandemics;*
- *Work towards the development of a continental data policy framework to increase demand for data, help AU Member States to achieve uniform data processing system and harmonized legal and regulatory frameworks that enables an effective use of digital technologies in countering epidemics (COVID19) and integrates data protection and privacy-by-design principles;*
- *Operationalize the project on electrification and connectivity of Post Offices in Africa to facilitate the delivery of e-services for underserved areas;*
- *Enhance digital postal transformation and pursue policy and regulatory reform of postal financial services.*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required

As the provision of water, electricity and sanitation (WES) is intricately linked, the WES cluster may either be merged over the short term, or work closely together to protect the underbelly of societal functioning in times of disaster. The same goes for the Transport and Housing team. *Collaboration with the COVID-19 Recovery plans under the framework of AfCFTA to ensure continuity of cross border trade as a way to assist the quick recovery*

- *Coordination between the Air transport recovery plan and the tourism recovery plans, with the private sector and UN World Trade Organisation (WTO) recovery plan;*
- *Coordinate COVID-19 actions and guidelines with the Africa CDC and WHO.*
- *Identification of rural health clinics and critical facilities;*
- *Digitalization being cross-cutting, there will be inter-sectorial collaboration between ICT & health and other socio-economic sectors;*
- *Capacity sharing and cooperation to meet supply chain needs during COVID-19 period.*

Organized crime threats to Basic Societal Utilities and mitigation thereof

Destruction of schools, warehouses and other storage facilities to access stored utilities such as generators and water tanks - armed forces to safeguard these facilities.

Key Actors: MS, RECs, concerned AU Organs, AUDA-NEPAD, AfDB, UNHABITAT, UNDP, WFP, FAO, UNHABITAT, AUC, UNECA, ATU, SMART Africa, PAPU, UNECA, ITU, GIZ, Broadband Commission, Telecom operators, AfDB IEA, IRENA, EU, GIZ, AfDB, EU, WB, AREI, WB, EU. UNWTO, AFCAC, AFRAA, IATA, ICAO, PAPU, AFRAA and UPU, Private Sector, Academia, NGOs & CSOs, other Non-State Actors

6. QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The main objective for education on the Continent is that it be of quality standard, affordable, accessible to all, including for persons with disabilities, and be available at early childhood, basic and tertiary education levels; the education system to be Science Technology and Innovation (STI) skills driven as education is the strongest driver for economic advancement and knowledge-driven economies.

Challenges to Quality and Inclusive Education in Africa in view of COVID-19

With schools and institutions of higher learning ordered to close to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, public education systems have shut down across the continent. African governments in all countries, supported by members of education development partner groups (including Bilateral donors, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, UNHCR, WFP, NGOs) proactively set in motion the development of response plans to ensure the continuity of learning in all countries through distance learning. Building on lessons from available pilot experiences, governments flexibly adopted digital learning platforms, TV and Radio, and printable material as pathways to enable the continuity of learning. Coping strategies were used through home schooling and online learning via livestreaming hubs and with the use of social media - short lessons sent by video or YouTube on WhatsApp groups and photos taken of learners' school work for marking by teachers. National television in some countries have started broadcasting lessons for learners in public schools. The greatest threat is high school dropout, especially among adolescent girls, resulting from the COVID-19 crises, where already one-third of learners leave school before they can read or write. It will also be more difficult to enroll those in higher grades back to school if they were forced to carve out a living for themselves and had to contribute to the family income resulting from the pandemic.

A good example is the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Secretariat-UNESCO Action Plan that aims for ensuring continuity of learning in the context of COVID-19. The partnership will focus on making distance learning possible for all learners at all levels; create awareness on the importance of health and hygiene, and on COVID-19 prevention by support to teachers and teacher educators through access and capacity building in the use of relevant technologies to facilitate and support distance learning, among other interventions.¹¹

¹¹ African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). 2020. Governance Response to Covid-19 by African Union Member States, Preliminary Report. April 2020, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Midrand, South Africa

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Quality and Inclusive Education in Africa

- *IT policies and Infrastructures to enable equitable and inclusive provision and delivery of remote services, including education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Radio and TV Policies and Infrastructures supportive to remote learning.*
- **Indicators for Continuity of Education and Safe reopening**
- *Number of children reached with different modalities of distance learning in short term school closures*
- *Number of teachers trained to provide distance support to learners*
- *Number of children provided with teaching and learning materials to support home study in short term school closures*
- *Number of schools implementing safe school protocols (COVID-19 prevention and control)*

Immediate Relief actions regarding provision of Quality and Inclusive Education as impacted by COVID-19

- *Education fees waived for vulnerable families, or education offered freely to all in public institutions, or tuition to be highly subsidized;*
- *Identify beneficiaries of school feeding programmes and implement alternative mechanisms for food assistance provision;*
- *Teachers and Family social workforce teams to encourage and monitor ongoing education in families, including for children and young people with disabilities;*
- *Guide Member States and partners to ensure school feeding continuity through an operational plan that includes food provision- take home ration approach of school feeding, designated door collection points or door to door distribution, as part of water, sanitation and health services being provided to households.*

Medium-Long term actions: Build and enhance the resilience capacity for Quality and Inclusive Education in Member States as impacted by COVID-19 (2-3 years)

- *African Union/Ministers of Education conference/policy dialogue on the COVID Response; provision of policy recommendations on distance learning with a particular continental focus on digital learning*
- *Global Framework for the Re-opening of Schools defined by multiple partners and disseminated to guide preparations for the re-opening of schools*
- *Development of innovations to build back better: Improvements in Foundational literacy and numeracy; digital learning and skills development for children and adolescents in and out of school , with particular attention to Children with Disability;*
- *Education Ministry and Teachers' organizations to establish a mechanism to share learning materials and to develop curricula that supports STI driven education;*
- *Create mechanisms through which the impact of the pandemic is minimized on accessing, transitioning, and completing education for all children, with particular attention to early grade and children with disabilities;*

- *Identify cutting-edge modern technologies including digital and distance education for the delivery of relevant education, training and certification for children and teachers, and for monitoring and evaluating the learning outcomes;*
- *Strengthen the integrated and multi-sectoral approaches in school health, Nutrition, WASH, Child Protection and sector1alsector1al approach of sustainable Home-Grown School feeding interventions across Africa to complement improvements in learning opportunities;*
- *Promote teacher policies development for better understanding and response to their needs, specially during difficult times, including emerging issues; Reinforce community engagement using decentralization and other existing mechanisms to build more resilient education systems at local levels and ensure continuity of education in case of crisis;*
- *Improve the supply of education services including through construction of more schools and purchase of chairs and desks to reduce high-pupil classroom rations.*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required

The family social workforce team to provide ongoing assessment regarding status of education in families of communities. At a higher level, education, health and ICT technology service providers to collaborate in service delivery.

Organised crime threats to Quality and Inclusive Education and mitigation thereof

Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) to children who spend much time online for education purposes – awareness raising, reporting hotline and victim support services to be instituted.

Key Actors: MS, RECs, AUC, AUDA-NEPAD, concerned AU Organs, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, Islamic Development Bank, WFP, UNHCR and other international organizations NGOs & CSOs, other Non-State Actors.

7. ACCESS TO GOOD AND INCLUSIVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The **goal** of this social policy area is for all citizens to have universal access to health services, leaving no one behind, to achieve good health care and support services; to access medicines for prevention and treatment of illness and management of pain, as well as to prevent and treat substance use disorders; and to have access to sport for the promotion of health and wellbeing. To better protect the continent against similar health emergencies in the future, the African Risk Capacity should be supported to launch an outbreaks and epidemics insurance product to strengthen country preparedness and provide early intervention funding for future epidemics and pandemics on the continent.

Challenges to Good Health and Wellness in Africa in view of COVID-19

In the absence of a vaccine against the coronavirus infection, the current focus of health systems in the Continent is on COVID-19 prevention measures, testing, isolation, contact tracing and testing, on symptomatic treatment – and on treatment of pulmonary effects, focusing on life-saving breathing equipment and the availability thereof. There is a great risk that treatment of other health conditions such as TB, Malaria, HIV and AIDS, non-communicable diseases, vaccination services to children and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services for

women will be put on hold with devastating consequences. The mentioned services are to continue which would include continuous availability of essential medicines and vaccines.

The challenge is to avail facilities dedicated to COVID-19, in addition to existing health infrastructure. Already the continent's health system is vulnerable because of low rates of hospital beds, ICUs and health professionals; dependency on imported medicinal and pharmaceutical products; and weaker economies unable to sustain health and lockdown costs.¹² Of these vulnerabilities, the most serious challenge, apart from the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), is the availability of medical staff (already with a shortfall of approximately 6-8 million on the continent) and moreover, to keep the current medical workforce from becoming infected with the coronavirus.

The COVID-19 health pandemic and shortages experienced with health workers globally is expected to lead to an exodus of African health workers to seek employment in the global North. It is important that measures are put in place that leads to win-win partnerships for both the individual and the country, with opportunities for skill and knowledge transfer and for medical innovation.

In the East African Community (EAC), partner States are directed to support local companies, to ensure the local production and availability of key consumables / products used in COVID -19 response including hand sanitizers, medical products, soap, among others¹³. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) provides substantial support to the social sectors (distance learning tools, strengthening of health systems and facilities, easy Internet access, etc.) and for the most disadvantaged segments of society (social safety nets).

The current state of emergency has placed enormous stress on the mental health of family members, also on those suffering from substance use disorders resulting in depression, obsessive-compulsive and violent behaviors. The maintenance of good mental health in households needs to be addressed urgently and programmes in the electronic media, as well as messages on social media, coupled with regular physical exercise at home, will be crucial.

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Inclusive Health and Wellness in Africa

Health policies are in to place ensure continuity of prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases, and protection of women against specific risks (pregnancy, etc) in public and private health care establishmenst, with effective health information systems.

Immediate Relief actions regarding provision of Good and Inclusive Health and Wellness impacted by COVID-19

¹² Economic Commission for Africa. *COVID-19: Protecting Lives and Economies*. Report of 16 April 2020. www.eca.org, P1

¹³ African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). 2020. Governance Response to Covid-19 by African Union Member States, Preliminary Report, April 2020, African peer review Mechanism (APRM), Midrand, South Africa.

)

- *Health workers and social workforce teams encourage and monitor health conditions in families, including for older persons, children and young people with disabilities;*
- *Health care professionals establish virtual teams for sharing information on health care practices, access to equipment, medicines and good practices;*
- *Ensure continuity of essential services such as access to safe birth, antenatal and postnatal care and immunization programmes;*
- *Governments, both national and local, to revise their budget allocations to prioritize spending in emergency health services, particularly in medical supplies such as testing kits, medication, and personal protective equipment for frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19;*
- *Avail cultural content to mental health and well-being messaging - many cultural institutions in Africa have provided online and free content in recent weeks for that purpose;*
- *Include people affected by HIV/AIDS to ensure treatment continuity in view of expected shortages of medicines in the COVID-19 context (advocating to provide medicines for 6 months), in pursuit of close collaboration with Africa-CDC;*
- *AU to appeal to MS to exempt citizens from paying hospital fees and school fees.*
- *Health of IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees need attention in the COVID-19 context.*

Medium/Long term:

- *Increase investment in the health sector toward provision of universal health coverage by allocating at least 15% of their annual budget to improve the health sector;*
- *Harmonize regulation of treatment / medicines, coupled with harmonized policies and standards – e.g on national medical insurance schemes among AU Member States;*
- *African Risk Capacity (ARC) in collaboration with the Africa CDC to provide disease spread data and analytics for various policy interventions based on modelled scenarios tailored for African countries, with user friendly templates and tools for analytics for COVID-19 and other diseases of outbreak and epidemic potential to aid governments in decision making;*
- *Strengthen international cooperation and take steps towards the provision of universal health care, collaborate in developing a vaccine and treatment for the pandemic, expedite trade and transfer of essential medical supplies and equipment;*
- *Build and enhance the resilience capacity for Good and Inclusive Health and Wellness in Member States as impacted by COVID-19 (2-3 years);*
- *International Classification of Disease (ICD) data gathering and collation should be maintained to facilitate equitable planning of health care services, including for the allocation of the staff component for these services and for procurement of essential medicines;*

- *ICT companies to fast-track e-health service delivery in collaboration with health service providers by creating hubs for training, advisory and communication services;*
- *Provide skills training through partnerships that support health workers, and in this regard, tap into diaspora health networks.*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required

- *Employment of the family social workforce team to families to do regular situation assessments on physical and mental health in communities. At a higher level, health, education, nutrition and ICT technology service providers to collaborate in service delivery - sharing of equipment and resources.*
- **International organizations** to provide inputs/ capacity building for the health and wellness social workforce teams: WHO, UNAIDS

Organized crime threats to Good and Inclusive Health and Wellness and mitigation thereof

- *Spreading of false information on COVID-19 and other health conditions to raise fears and insecurity in communities – involve electronic media to disseminate correct information with criminal justice consequences to those contravening;*
- *Theft of medicines, equipment – To be kept safe at fortified medical storage facilities;*
- *Surge in production and distribution of counterfeit medicines, PPE, COVID-19 and other test kits – quality control to be increased by National Medicines Control or Regulatory Authorities with criminal justice consequences for those who distribute it;*
- *Production and distribution of illicit drugs – to be reported and problematic users to be referred for treatment.*

Key Actors: MS, RECs, AUC, AUDA-NEPAD, concerned AU Organs, AfDB, concerned UN Agencies and other international organizations NGOS & CSOs, other Non-State Actors

8. ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Food security in Africa will be attained through production of sufficient staple and nutritious food with modern agro-technology, high productivity and resilience to climate change, and access to affordable and quality food secured for all citizens.

Challenges to access to Sufficient and Nutritious Food in Africa in view of COVID-19

The supply chain of food has been seriously disrupted due to closure of national borders and strict enforcement of lockdown and restricted movement of people and goods currently in AU Member States. Food supply to families is compounded by lack of income and money to buy food due to the economic crunch, and by the lack of availability of public transport and at the same time, public announcements are made to discourage mass procurement or “panic buying” which creates further confusion. Access to food and nutrition exposes the ugly face of inequality in African societies most vividly under current circumstances and children are most negatively affected. During the rainy season, it will become critical to measure the impact of border closures on nomadic livestock herders. The closure of markets is already dramatic for nomadic herders who cannot access grain supplies for their cattle or sell their goods (i.e. milk and meat). Severe income losses can have a direct impact on food

and nutrition security in the continent. Sensitization of herders poses a challenge as they are hard to reach because of the nomadic nature of their livelihood.

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Sufficient and Nutritious Food

- *Sustainable Agricultural Policies at national level emphasizing secure food production and distribution, aiming at a resilient food supply chain;*
- *Integrated Agricultural Policies in RECs and at continental level to ensure cross border food supply and secure a resilient food supply chain with the required infrastructures and logistics.*
- *Prioritize irrigation where irrigation and water is available to increase productivity and output of food production, also to counter food import from outside the continent*

Immediate Relief actions regarding provision of Sufficient and Nutritious Food in Africa impacted by COVID-19

- *Prioritize local purchase of food to mitigate the negative disruption of the food supply chain and access to markets resulting from the pandemic;*
- *Operationalize a humanitarian corridor and logistical hub that facilitates procurement, transportation of and distribution of food assistance;*
- *Resume harvesting of current seasonal crops that are ready and continue with preparation for planting under strict COVID-19 prevention measures to secure food supply;*
- *Village/ city councils to provide food bank storage facilities for subsidized food;*
- *Village/ city councils to secure space for street sales of agricultural produce and for food stalls (cooked food) under strict COVID-19 prevention measures;*
- *Farmers' Unions and Associations to stay intact and maintain virtual contact with their members to exchange information and good practices on counteracting current climate change impediments, and on planting and harvesting practices under COVID-19 prevention measures;*

Medium/Long term:

- *Build and enhance the Resilient Food Supply Chain for Sufficient and Nutritious Food in Africa as impacted by COVID-19, with provision of small irrigation systems to advance food production and prioritize the financing of national projects that promote sustainable food security and production;*
- *Rural development structures to provide assistance to female farmers in the form of transport, seeds and fertilizers, as they make up most of the small-scale farmers in the rural areas;*
- *Cooperatives to enhance negotiation power of rural workers for affordable access to inputs, equipment and transport and to establish partnerships with social security institutions to channel social security benefits to rural workers in line with the Social Protection Plan for Informal Economy and Rural Workers (SPIREWORK);*
- *Facilitate Weather Risk Management through the use of ARC Insurance to reduce the potential impact of food insecurity in the midst of managing COVID-19*

- Implement the AU/FAO with MS (Ministries of Agriculture) five priority commitments in a multi-sectorial and integrated manner:
 - *Social protection: ensuring effective response and inclusive recovery in the context of COVID-19 in Africa;*
 - *Crop calendars and recommended actions during the COVID-19 outbreak in the Africa region;*
 - *Measures for supporting domestic markets during the COVID-19 outbreak in Africa;*
 - *Taking advantage of the mechanism of the newly created African Continental Free Trade area (AFCFTA);*
 - *Safeguarding input supply chains for small-scale agricultural producers, poultry and livestock in the context of COVID-19 in Africa.*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required

- *At a higher level, agriculture, transport, health, SMMEs and ICT technology service providers to collaborate in service delivery;*
- *Provide inputs/ capacity building for the sufficient and nutritious food social workforce teams.*

Organised crime threats to Sufficient and Nutritious Food and mitigation thereof

- *Organised theft of agricultural produce – involve armed forces in transport and safe storage of produce*
- *Falsifying of food import permits to transport counterfeit goods – to be controlled by customs authorities*
- *Manipulation of food prices – to be controlled by trade officials*
- *Syphoning of subsidized food – controlled by law enforcement*

Key actors: MS, RECs, AUC, [AUDA-NEPAD](#), concerned AU Organs, AfDB, concerned UN Agencies and other international organizations NGOs & CSOs, other Non-State Actors.

9. FORMAL LABOUR MARKETS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

With an estimated 25 million job loss in Africa, there is need for policy measures to stimulate the economy and employment; support enterprises, jobs and income; and protecting workers in the workplace-. . Many of COVID-19 laid off workers will look for other salaried job opportunities or will start businesses in the SMMEs or informal economy. Other effects can be increased child labour and forced labour in view of coping with the loss of income resulting from COVID-19 jobs and income destruction.

Enterprises are subject to various losses in profit related to COVID 19 challenges resulting in workers' layoffs. There is need for subsidies to keep workers and to create an environment to sustain livelihoods, In many countries, stimulus packages contain measures to alleviate the economic effects of COVID-19 on the world of work. Social dialogue (bringing governments, employers' and workers' organizations around the table can be more instrumental in the design of rescue packages in order to maintain and enhance social stability needed during and after COVID-19 crisis.

In ECOWAS, banks and financial institutions provide assistance to the private sector, especially small, micro and medium-size enterprises (SMMEs); and microfinance institutions are providing support to the informal sector.¹⁴

Challenges to Formal Labour Markets and Entrepreneurship in view of COVID19

Under COVID-19 crisis, the world economy has ground to a halt, and GDP losses are predicted at high percentages (up to 40% in many African countries). However, formal business adapted within weeks with the use of ICT media, and working from home in a focused manner with virtual meetings guiding further actions, especially in the service sector. African countries should reposition themselves to take full advantage of the changes expected to happen in the aftermath of COVID-19 crisis, as major economies will diversify their centers of production by shifting parts to other regions. This will involve developing its skills base needed to attract Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) and other global trade players. This will benefit local transformation and effective transfer of technology in the AfCFTA context.

Short-medium term disruptions in the labour market will change the landscape for years and will therefore require adjustments in labour, employment and social security policies. The Ouaga+10 Declaration and Plan of Action, as well as their First Five Year Priority programme (2018-2021) will need to be reviewed under the light of this short-medium term impact. Social security institutions will be impacted by the increase in unemployment resulting from the huge layoffs of workers. There is a need to explore the possibility of having an African Agency of Social Security Institutions to support cooperation among Member States.

Low wages are a result of low labour productivity which will be impacted by the COVID-19 measures in the short and medium term, in particular in SMMEs that contribute significantly to jobs creation while experiencing huge gaps in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH). Labour intensive sectors will need to be supported to sustain and improve their productivity levels. The ILO's SCORE (Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises) programme, which is geared to SMMEs, and the KAIZEN Programme will assist Member States to promote resilience in enterprises in view of the crisis.

Diaspora and economic migrants face challenges in the labour market of countries of destination with risks of ending their contract and social services, in particular for domestic workers dominated by women who are in very precarious situation without protection. It is foreseen that, as a result of job losses, the Post-COVID 19 will trigger more labour migration flows, particularly to outside the continent, and will also increase flows of returning migrants to African countries for the same reason. Appropriate measures must be taken to address the specific needs of migrant workers, in line with the AU policy frameworks and the ILO Policy Brief "Protecting Migrant Workers during the COVID Pandemic."

¹⁴ African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). 2020. *Governance Response to Covid-19 by African Union Member States, Preliminary Report* ,April 2020, African peer review Mechanism (APRM), Midrand, South Africa.

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Formal Labour Markets and Entrepreneurship

- *Review of the labour, employment, productivity, social security and informal economy transformation policies to adapt them to the medium term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the landscape of the labour market;*
- *Implementation of One Comprehensive Labour and Employment Policy aligned to the AU Ouaga+10 Policy;*
- *Operational Integrated Labour Market Information System in place in Member States;*
- *Strengthen social dialogue as key instrument in the policy making process for the deliberation of fiscal packages in response to impacts and shocks of COVID-19 during and after the crisis.*

Immediate Relief actions regarding Formal Labour Markets and Entrepreneurship in Africa impacted by COVID-19

- *Review the labour, employment and social security policies to adapt them to the medium term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the landscape of the labour market, including the development of a COVID-19 version of the AU Ouaga+10 Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development, and their First Five Year Priority Programme (2018-2021))*
- *Create a Labour Market COVID-19 Observatory in the Ministry of Labour in Member States,*
- *Labour inspections to establish a database workers laid off by COVID-19 and identify their job prospects for career guidance, establish partnership with micro finance institutions and TVET institutions for retraining/reskilling; in establishing the database, labour inspectors will develop a questionnaire to be filled by human resource services of enterprises (coordinated with social security institutions and the micro finance department/unit in the Ministry of Finance).*
- *Conduct evidence based research on the impact of COVID19 on SMMEs and the informal sector in Africa, with a component on employment, social security, social protection, productivity, etc.*
- *Facilitate online tripartite meetings (video conferences) on the preparation of enterprises for a well balanced and successful post-COVID-19 recovery*
- *Current fiscal rescue packages should also support Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises with financial packages to safeguard jobs and prepare for re-opening of industries in all sectors in the post COVID-19 recovery and for maintaining the required employees.*
- *Implement rights-based and gender sensitize policy responses for the protection of migrant workers and members of their families, and ensure safe return and effective reintegration of returning migrants into labour markets, with reference to the AU policy frameworks and ILO instruments¹⁵.*
- *Engage social dialogue institutions in the policy dialogue for the development of stimulus fiscal package in response to the impacts of COVID-19.*

Medium term – 2-3 years

¹⁵ African Union Commission. 2019. *AU Migration Policy Framework*. 2019 AUC, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- *Promote Safe, Secure and Healthy: Occupational Safety and Health with focus on SMMEs*
- *Promote creation of unemployment insurance systems in Member States;*
- *Accelerate the establishment of the Employment and Social Cohesion Fund (ESCF)*
- *Leverage labour intensive programmes, focusing on the labour intensive sectors*
- *Develop and implement productivity frameworks with focus on SMMEs, leveraging programmes such as the ILO's SCORE (Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises) and WISE programmes, 5S and the KAIZEN Programmes, and Turnaround solutions, led by the Pan African Productivity Association (PAPA);*
- *Invest in supporting small, micro and medium enterprise development and facilitating cross-border trade, in particular supporting informal cross-border traders in the Post COVID-19 era;*
- *Develop the AU Digital Work Africa and the AU Social Business Strategy as output of the AU First Five Year Programme on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive development (2018-2022);*
- *Explore the possibility of creating an African Agency of Social Security in the spirit of the recommendation adopted by the Extraordinary Session of the STC on Social Development, Labour and Employment (Abidjan, December 2019);*
- *Engage the Social Dialogue Institutions to mitigate impacts in COVID-19 and to develop recovery strategy in Post COVID-19;*
- *Negotiate labour migration cooperation mechanisms with main regions of destination of migrant workers from Africa (EU, Middle East, Gulf region, etc.);*
- *Encourage the private sector to scale-up their Corporate Social Responsibility interventions for affected communities they serve;*
- *Eradicate, force labour in general and Child Labour particularly in agriculture, mining, artisans, industry and trade.*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required

All service providers, Government and inter-governmental organizations to work together at highest level to bring economies back on track again.

Organized crime threats to Formal Labour Markets and Entrepreneurship and mitigation thereof

- *Child labour, Forced labour, Human trafficking and Modern slavery Illicit financial flows from African companies and industries, e.g. corruption by underpricing of commodities from Africa*

Key Actors: *MS, RECs, AUC, concerned AU Organs, AfDB, Business Africa, OATUU, ITUC-AFRICA, CIPRES, ECASSA, concerned AU Organs, and other international organizations NGOS & CSOs, other Non-State Actors.*

10. INFORMAL AND RURAL ECONOMIES

Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 envision improved income-generation and enhanced social protection for informal economy and rural workers, supported by gainful and

sustainable employment, regulatory interventions, skills and business development, credit and market access, and targeted rural and urban development.

Challenges to Informal and Rural Economies in view of COVID-19

The ILO (2018)¹⁶ report indicates that the majority of Africa's workforce is engaged in informal and in agricultural employment (85.8% and 97.9% respectively) – characterized by unstable income-generation in the former and a stalling level of productivity of the latter. The COVID-19 crisis impacted negatively income-generation in both sectors, increasing the risk to recourse to coping strategies such as child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery in the informal economy and rural sector. Under normal circumstances, the focus to upgrade these sectors would be on improvement of productivity through training and acquisition of equipment, provision of social protection benefits to motivate informal enterprises to transform into the formal economy. The COVID-19 crisis has now delayed all efforts in this regard and the immediate need is for the informal sector workers to continue generating income to provide for their families. This implies the return to free movement of people in markets.

Unprotected informal workers fall between the cracks, excluded from formal work-related protections and from state social assistance programmes that target the very poor and those outside the labour market. They face the risk of having no income if they have lost even one month of income. They usually lack financial assets to carry them even through short periods of not working and they are affected first by anti-virus measures (e.g. social distancing and to stay at home), having their supply chains interrupted and very few customers to serve. Stimulus packages are unlikely to reach those already excluded from the economic mainstream.

Social and solidarity entrepreneurs are essential actors in the COVID-19 times and should also be considered for the post-COVID-19 recovery era, providing support on food, health, education, sanitation, and protecting livelihoods. They are effective in maintaining social inclusion.

Policy indicators to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Informal and Rural Economies

Implementation of policies domesticating the AUC-ILO Joint Programme on Decent Work for the Transformation of the Informal Economy;

Social security institutions extending their services to cover workers in the informal economy, with MS implementing SPIREWORK;

Existence and implementation of policies and programmes on the social and solidarity economy.

Immediate Relief actions regarding Informal and Rural Economies in Africa impacted by COVID-19

- *Develop informal economy and rural sector-specific guidelines to help reduce the risks and shocks, and increase capacity to cope with shocks;*
- *Open economic opportunities for informal economy units and workers by effective access to public procurement, as an incentive to formalization;*
- *Support the work of micro and small enterprises in the social and solidarity economy for providing basic services to vulnerable persons;*

¹⁶ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_626831.pdf

- *Create an emergency fund for scaling up social protection, especially targeting informal workers who do not have social protection and may be disproportionately impacted by the crisis,*
- *Facilitate the re-opening of open markets under strict COVID-19 prevention measures once lockdowns and State of Emergency has been lifted;*
- *Eradicate Child Labour, particularly in agriculture, mining, artisans, industry and trade, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery;*
- *Establish a partnership with Women in Global Economy and Organization (WIEGO) to conduct joint activities (campaigns, information, etc), engaging national professional organizations and promoting structures for micro, small and medium sized enterprises and for rural workers;*
- *Assess impact of COVID-19 effects of labour market measures on trade agreements, such as the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) and avoid benefit withdrawal due to violation of labour rights provisions.*

Medium-Long term actions: Build and enhance the resilience capacity for Informal and Rural Economies in Africa as impacted by COVID-19 (2-3 years)

- *Promote Safe, Secure, Healthy and Productive Workplace in the Informal economy, in particular the artisan industry;*
- *Engage social security institutions in extending social security services to workers in the informal economy and rural sector;*
- *Support implementation of the AUC-ILO Joint Programme for Decent Work for the Transformation of the Informal Economy (2020-024), including SPIREWORK;*
- *Support Inclusiveness of the Governance of Labour Market Institutions, to provide value added professional services to excluded categories of workers in the informal economy, rural sectors and SMMEs.*
- *Adapt the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to promote harmonized and coordinated rural employment strategies for inclusion and poverty eradication;*
- *Enhance Micro finance policies and institutions to support the creation, growth and development of SMMEs, with AUC and Chair of the Bureau of the STC on Finance, advocating for low interest rate (maximum 5%) loans, targeting key partners (IDB, AfDB, Regional Development Banks, World Bank, IMF, EU, G20, G7, etc).*
- *Enhance the social and solidarity economy sector to promote more inclusive development, equality and decent jobs;*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required

All service providers, Government and inter-governmental organizations to work together at local level to bring informal economy and rural agricultural back to life again.

Key Actors: MS, RECs, AUC, concerned AU Organs, AfDB, Business Africa, OATUU, ITUC-AFRICA, CIPRES, ECASSA concerned UN Agencies and other international organizations NGOs & CSOs, other Non-State Actors

11. Culture

Among the most affected sectors by COVID-19 are the tourism, cultural and creative industries. Beyond the immediate threat to life, the pandemic has seriously affected the plans and work schedules of the cultural and creative sectors. It has also forced cancellations and suspensions of some of Africa's biggest cultural events, i.e. Africa Month, Pan-African Dance Festival (FESPAD) and the All Africa Music Award (AFRIMA). Many arts and cultural venues have closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local community arts and cultural organizations rely on in-person gatherings to conduct their activities. As these can no longer take place, their income have been impacted severely and they will become even more vulnerable. The current challenge is to design public support that will alleviate the negative psychological impacts in the short term and help identify new opportunities in the medium term for different public, private and non-profit actors engaged in cultural and creative production.

Policy Indicators:

- *Culture policy frameworks are implemented.*

Immediate Relief actions:

- *Promote volunteerism in the culture community to assist the mental health care system Organize national songs, or plays to mitigate the social and mental health impacts of COVID-19;*
- *Commission a desktop survey on the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural and creative industries sector including the heritage sector; with a view of identifying the magnitude of the impact and come up with intervention strategy;*
- *Organize a virtual workshop/meeting of cultural policy experts to discuss the impact of COVID-19 and devise a strategy on the way forward;*

Medium-Long term actions:

- *Propose an Artists Emergency Relief Fund to provide relief to individual artists whose creative work and income has been adversely impacted by COVID 19;*
- *Formulate funding/co-corporate sponsorship on resource mobilization to support African culture during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required

Key Actors: *MS, RECs, AUC, concerned AU Organs, AfDB, concerned UN Agencies and other international organizations NGOs & CSOs, other Non-State Actors.*

12. Sports

There is grave concern about the current state of affairs in the sport sectors whereby the economic benefits of sport for a large number of athletes and sports people in Africa, have been severely affected. Genuine anxiety exists about the post Covid-19 period, where sport, which is already under financed by governments, would be a priority for support over other economic activities.

The AUC decided to take the proactive action by mobilizing the Sport Movement in Africa to design strategies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on sport on the

continent. Several teleconferences have been held with the participation of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA), the Union of Sport Confederations of Africa (UCSA), the African Paralympic Committee (APC), the Association of Women In Sport in Africa (AWISA), the Confederation of African Football(CAF), the Confederation of African Athletics (CAA), the AU Sport Development Region Heads, and Experts from Member States The final document will be put to the Ministerial teleconference in late June 2020 for endorsement.

Policy Indicators:

- *Sports policy frameworks are implemented*

Immediate Relief actions:

- *Promote volunteerism in the Sports Community to assist the Health system*
- *Conduct advocacy, educational and awareness campaigns on the importance of Sports in the current COVID-19 crisis and thereafter;*
- *Establish a platform of communication for athletes' voice to be heard on the impact of the pandemic on their life; be it economic, mental health etc...*

Medium-Long term actions:

- *Formulate funding/ co-corporate sponsorship on resource mobilization to support sport during and post Covid-19;*
- *Designate Sport Ambassadors to assist in advocacy and awareness campaigns*

Key Actors: MS, RECs, AUC, concerned AU Organs, AfDB, UNESCO, IOC, FIFA, CAF, NGOs & CSOs, ANOCA, UCSA, WADA, IPC, APC.

13. Governance, Human Rights, Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings (Fragile States)

The COVID-19 pandemic offers a unique opportunity for African Governments to deliver services in a transparent, democratic manner. The socio-economic response to the COVID-19 crisis should be based upon the **human rights approach** as the key principle to promote equal opportunity and treatment for all women and men. The **strategic goal is to build resilience in governance systems and institutions, including under the APRM Framework** thematic areas, to effectively respond to current and future challenges, considering the governance thematic areas of (i) **Human and People's Rights** – particularly in view of restricting freedom of movement; (ii) **Democracy and constitutionalism** – impacting on scheduled national elections in Member States; (iii) **Public Service Delivery** – continuous provision of water supply, food and nutrition, education, health and sanitation, housing, employment, infrastructure development, environmental protection, climate resilience, and human dignity including clothing; (iv) **Humanitarian assistance** – to refugees and asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and stateless persons; and (v) **Accountability and responsiveness**.

Human and People's Rights

Many of the responses by AU Member States to COVID-19 pandemic tended to restrict the exercise of fundamental human rights and freedoms. This is evident from the lock-downs, curfews, state of emergencies and state of disasters imposed by various states. While these emergency measures are justifiable, Member States need to constantly comply with the provisions of the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, constitutional provisions and relevant laws and regulations as articulated by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in its press statement of 24 March 2020 on COVID-19.

Democracy and constitutionalism

There is largely a potential risk that the responses to COVID-19 pandemic may impair constitutionalism and rule of law if actions taken by key stakeholders are not in conformity with the constitutions of Member States. Furthermore, an average of 20 elections are scheduled to take place on the continent. Decisions to hold or postponed elections need to be in conformity with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, constitutional provisions as well as relevant electoral laws. Taking into account risks posed by COVID-19, AU Member States may consider adopting electronic voting (e-voting) platforms. However, these platforms require rigorous regulation to guard against hacking, disinformation, misinformation, digital harassment and fake news through social media.

Public Service Delivery

A major governance predicament in Africa that hinders effective response to COVID-19 pandemic is the perennial marginalisation of the social sector in the policy matrix. This is in part due to the dominant influence of Bretton woods institutions (i.e. World Bank and IMF) since the early 1980s specifically in the rolling back of developmental states and focussing on market forces in the development process. Aspiration 3¹⁷ of the AU Agenda 2063 advances the imperative of building and strengthening the developmental state in Africa.

Today, the right to development lags behind in Africa, hence the existential crisis posed by COVID-19 pandemic on the continent. This has placed a major challenge in the provision of social services to citizens by the State, as per the provisions of the AU Social Agenda 2063. This, in part, explains the entrenched problem of underdevelopment, poverty, inequality, rural-urban migration, unplanned urbanisation and congested informal human settlements. The effective response to post COVID-19 pandemic has to entail enormous investment to social development to address underdevelopment, poverty and inequality within the long-term development blueprints of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Global Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Humanitarian assistance

While the COVID-19 pandemic poses a serious humanitarian crisis for the vast majority of citizens of AU Member States, evidence shows that the most marginalised social groups are at greater risk. These includes refugees and asylum seekers,

¹⁷ African Union Commission. 2015. *Agenda 2063 Framework Document for the Africa We Want*. October 2015. AUC, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and stateless persons. Today, Africa is home to a third of global forcibly displaced persons including a) 17.4 million IDPs; b) 7.8 million refugees and asylum seekers; and c) 172,000 stateless persons. Policy responses to COVID-19 therefore needs a specific consideration of the plight of these marginalized groups in conformity with the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the 2009 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. The year 2019 was declared by the AU as the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa to focus spotlight on these groups. AU Member States need to continue this focus now in the context of COVID-19.

Accountability and responsiveness

AU Member States have to respond swiftly in their response to the COVID-19 crisis. However, this reality poses risks of undermining accountability, inclusiveness and responsiveness which are key principles of good governance. The danger of possible executive overreach needs to be avoided. Separation of powers and checks and balances among the executive, judiciary and legislature should continue to be the norm. This is what horizontal accountability entails. Furthermore, the executive ought to ensure inclusiveness and responsiveness that takes into account citizen aspirations. This is the substance of vertical accountability. As the security forces are deployed, they should restrain themselves from applying excessive force and should all times operate with a human rights lens as their radar. Security forces should be constantly reminded that they have been deployed to save and not threaten lives of citizens.

Community and institutional capacity is maintained through improved access to basic services and institutional capacity building during COVID-19 response.

In conflict-affected and fragile settings, the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are already augmenting vulnerabilities experienced for displaced persons and host communities. In these scenarios, special attention must be paid to i) ensure those with pre-existing vulnerabilities including women, older persons, youth, low-wage workers and small and medium enterprises have enhanced resilience to socio-economic shocks; ii) prevent others from being pushed into a vulnerable state thereby undermining the expansion of the vulnerable person caseload in these settings; and, iii) undermine exposure to vulnerabilities among all affected communities that could flare ongoing, latent or recently resolved tensions and undermine the transition towards sustainable and positive peace.

Community Resilience and Emergency preparedness is essential for building local community resilience.

Policy Indicators:

- *Respect and compliance to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, constitutional provisions and relevant laws and regulations;*
- *Respect and compliance to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, constitutional provisions as well as relevant electoral laws.*

Immediate Relief actions

- *Member States need to constantly comply with the provisions of the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, constitutional provisions and relevant laws and regulations;*
- *Decisions to hold or postponed elections need to be in conformity with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, constitutional provisions as well as relevant electoral laws;*
- *Empowering people to know and claim their rights and increasing the ability and accountability of individuals and institutions who are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling rights, participating in shaping the decisions that impact on their human rights;*
- *Ensuring that both the standards and the principles of human rights are integrated into policy making as well as the day to day running of organizations;*
- *Member States to set rigorous regulation to guard against hacking, disinformation, misinformation, digital harassment and fake news through social media;*
- *Member States may consider adopting electronic voting (e-voting) platforms,*
- *In the context of COVID-19;*
- *Separation of powers and checks and balances among the executive, judiciary and legislature should continue to be the norm;*
- *Monitor, collect data and analyse discriminatory incidents related to corona virus, including people targeted as vectors of the virus. Special attention should be given to discrimination against people suffering the disease, survivors and their families, as well as members of specific racial, ethnic or national groups;*
- *Activate/convene social networks, religious groups, national human rights institutions in order to integrate them in community mobilization and to gather data on the impact of the virus, relay the voices of affected communities, identify communities/people that have been left behind or issues that have not been considered and be equipped based on data to carry out constructive advocacies with authorities;*
- *Contribute to eradicate stigma, discrimination, racism and xenophobia through the dissemination of accurate, clear and evidence-based information and awareness-raising campaigns;*
- *Maintain and enhance the principles of accountability, inclusiveness and responsiveness which are key principles of good governance.*

Medium-Long term actions:

- *Based on community consultations, basic services that were identified during the community consultations are rehabilitated or developed in order to respond to service provision needs and prevent further strain, which could – in turn – generate further conflict or vulnerability;*
- *Map and monitor the activities of implementing partners, partners and other actors to identify gaps in assistance, and prioritize areas of interventions to mitigate the disruption of services;*
- *AU Member States need to continue the focus of the AU Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons.*

Cross-cutting inter-sectorial collaboration required:

Key Actors: MS, AUC, AUDA-NEPAD, concerned AU Organs, RECs, and Regional Mechanisms (RMs), concerned UN Agencies and other international organizations, other Non-State actors.

14. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE RESPONSE IN VIEW OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The same reporting structures applies as indicated in Agenda 2063, with the distinction that local structures will report to provincial structures and then onward to national structures for collation in the report to the Agenda 2063 structure (AUDA/NEPAD, APRM) that will compile the report for the AU Policy organs. The report to AU policy organs will indicate inputs and outcomes of the socio-economic response to COVID-19 in Member States. Indeed, combating COVID-19 will be a national undertaking, as it will be fought in local “trenches”.

The Commission, AUDA/NEPAD and APRM will design the reporting format and guidelines to be used by the stakeholders. The reports are produced annually. At national, regional and continental levels, the process will involve the UN organizations in line with the AU-UN Cooperation framework (January 2018).

The vision is to work in close collaboration with all partners, leveraging on their comparative advantage on the short, medium and long term horizons.

Governments, inter-governmental organizations, international organizations, the private sector and civil society have an equally important role as co-producers of positive socio-economic outcomes, with partners, particularly related to outcomes during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

Participatory Approach: Non-State Actors (NGOs, CSO, Community Based Organizations, Diasporas, Faith Based Organizations, youth networks, religious and traditional leaders, and women’s rights and women-led organizations, etc) should be engaged in all steps from planning to M&E through implementation, and resource mobilization as well. Community engagement and social mobilization, and multi-stakeholder partnerships are key elements. In collaboration with CIDO and ECOSOCC, the modalities of their engagement and participation will be defined.

Coordination and Management Arrangements

The Comprehensive Response by the social and associated economic sectors forms part of the AUC-wide project initiative to mitigate the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa and indicates policy responses by the AU, RECs and Member States. The overall coordination of the Comprehensive Response rests with the Department of Social Affairs of the AUC, which is the custodian and ultimately has the mandate and responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the recently adopted over-arching *Social Agenda 2063* policy framework by RECs, Member States and relevant stakeholders – UN agencies, CSOs, the Private Sector and Social Partners.

For the implementation of the AU Social Agenda 2063, a dedicated unit has been envisaged to be established within the DSA. This unit should be created without delay to take on board the COVID-19 mitigating imperatives promptly, as set out in this Comprehensive Response.

Coordination with international partners will be an important success factor. The coordination will be both (i) between the AUC and the partners, and (ii) between the partners. It will have a general perspective and a sectoral perspective where different

units of the Commission and different partners can jointly coordinate in different sectors or clusters.

The principle of joint planning and joint funding will be applied. The AfDB, the AUC Directorate of Strategic Planning, Resource Mobilization and M&E will facilitate the approach.

Cooperation between AUC and UN Organizations

The collaboration between the two intergovernmental organizations will be based on the AU-UN Framework on Implementation of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 (January 2018). It will also reflect on the principle of “leveraging existing commitments and initiatives”, considering that the Comprehensive Socio-Economic and Environmental Response is underpinned on the AU Social Agenda 2063 as a successor to the Social Policy Framework.

A harmonized and integrated approach to the implementation of the two Agendas will help to minimize duplication, optimize resource use and mobilize the support of domestic and external stakeholders and development partners: Post COVID-19 governance change for greater impact and real impacts/positive changes in the lives of the people of Africa. The links between development, human rights and humanitarian work will be critical to reducing risk and vulnerability, especially among young people and women, including those living with disabilities, and serve as a first step to leaving no one behind. Throughout AUC shall consult UN Organizations for effective alignment and coordination on the basis of the AU-UN Framework on Implementation of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 (January 2018). This also pertains to financing of interventions to minimize duplication, leverage economies of scale and to optimize the use of resources. There is need to enhance the fiscal package for a resilient budget system by combatting corruption, illicit financial flows and other similar practices.

Among activities in accordance with the AU-UN Framework on Implementation of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030, the following are to be prioritized:

- a. Facilitate the dialogue between ministers of finance, labour and social development by implementing the resolution of AU Ministers of Finance of 2015 with regard to financing of social protection, social security and employment creation.*
- b. Organize Multi Stakeholders (AU-UN) Forum on Financing Social Development Policies for Resilience in Africa and other joint resource mobilization activities (Corporate Social responsibility, Philanthropy, etc), building on the AU COVID 19 Fund*
- c. Conduct research/study on promoting innovative financial mechanisms, deepening domestic resource mobilization, and stopping illicit financial flows;*
- d. Appoint Special Envoys to encourage international financial institutions and multi-lateral development banks to provide unconditional debt relief to the low-income and highly indebted poor countries;*
- e. Central Banks should lower interest rates to increase loans to businesses (and decrease their cost) and provide commercial banks with more liquidity to support business activities and activate liquidity lines for central banks to ensure countries and businesses continue the purchase of essential commodities without weakening the banking sector;*

- f. Enhance the fiscal package for resilient budget system by combatting corruption, illicit financial flows and other similar practices.*
- g. IMF to extend Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) a 0-rate loan to all African countries*
- h. Develop a knowledge and experience sharing platform.*

Other Strategic Partnerships

The AUC will establish strong platform of strategic partnerships with other bilateral and other multilateral partners in support to the implementation of the Comprehensive Socio- Economic Response, based on common interests and shared responsibility.

Communication: A communication strategy will be developed and implemented.

- *Develop, translate and distribute information messaging through electronic platforms (e.g., email distribution lists, social media, websites);*
- *Operate hotlines/web platforms and respond to requests for information and support from individual migrants;*
- *Improve the early warning and preparedness of countries and enable them to better respond to future disasters in a coordinated manner, taking into context current disaster preparedness and response to COVID-19;*
- *Making sure community is at the center of the response;*
- *Provision of food assistance or cash assistance programmes in displaced communities;*
- *Engage communities in the identification and response to emerging COVID-19 vulnerabilities on a rolling basis to pivot programming effectively towards emergent needs and vulnerabilities*

15. CONCLUSION

Broad consensus already exists in all communities in Africa that the COVID-19 pandemic will be a challenge that can only be overcome if we all ride this storm together. Africa has all the ingredient values to survive and thrive again afterwards – not to blame, but to rely on our self-reliance, solidarity and hard work.

This life challenge holds the promise of collective prosperity in that economic and societal structures that perpetuate structural poverty and inequality will have to make way for equitable solutions – those who survive, would have recovered from the same hospital or were treated by the same health facility!