

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Press Release No:105 /2020

Date: **September 21, 2020**

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

African Union Nutrition Champion calls on leaders to embed nutrition within the COVID-19 response and recovery

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

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

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

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

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

About the African Leaders for Nutrition (ALN)

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

Download the position paper here : <https://au.int/en/documents/20200909/aln-initiative-embedding-nutrition-within-covid-19-response-and-recovery>

Further information should be directed to:

Dr. Margaret Agama-Anyetei, Head of Division for Health, Nutrition and Population; Social Affairs Department; AU Commission; Tel: +251115162211; E-mail: Agama-AnyeteiM@africa-union.org

For further media inquiries, please contact:

1. Mrs. Esther Azaa Tankou | Head of Information Division | Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission | Mobile: +251911361185 | E-mail: yamboue@africa-union.org
2. Ms. Dorothy Njagi | Strategic Communications, Division for Health, Nutrition and Population | Directorate of Social Affairs, African Union Commission | Mobile: +25194 0559950 | E-mail: njagid@africa-union.org
3. Mr. Gamal Eldin Ahmed A. Karrar | Senior Communication Officer | Directorate of Information and Communications (DIC) | E-mail: GamalK@africa-union.org

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@africa-union.org | Website: www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia Follow Us: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#)