

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Consultative Dialogue with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on the African Union Theme for 2022 on Nutrition



The African Union Commission (AUC), African Union Development Agency - The New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) and other stakeholders working on human capital and Early Childhood Development convened a two-day consultative dialogue from 25 – 26 April 2022 in Johannesburg, South Africa with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on the Year of Nutrition.

The meeting was organized against the backdrop of the endorsed African Union year of nutrition under the theme “Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on African Continent: Strengthening Agri-Food Systems, Health and Social Protection Systems for Acceleration of Human, Social and Economic Capital Development”.

The consultative dialogue provided a platform to exchange and share experiences and good practices for eliminating malnutrition in all its forms. The dialogue aimed to support the efforts of African countries through the investments in early childhood development among the Regional Economic Communities and key partners at regional and national levels.

“Nutrition is key to social, economic and overall development of our continent and thus it is a priority in key policies and strategies at the African Union. The Regional Economic Communities are encouraged to take advantage of the 2022 AU theme of the year on nutrition and food security to increase accountability amongst members states in the areas of nutrition and food security in order to advance human capital development,” said Dr Margaret Agama-Anyetei, Acting Director, Health and Humanitarian Affairs Directorate at the African Union Commission.

According to the World Health Organization’s [Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development](#), early childhood is a critical stage in human life where investments in a child’s health and nutrition play a significant role, particularly in developing the child’s brain, forming a solid foundation for future life. The first 1,000 days of life (from conception to the child’s second birthday) lay the foundation for optimum health, growth and neurodevelopment. However, in Africa and many other countries globally, poverty, malnutrition, poor health, conflict, drought, and other challenges deprive children of this important human right. This lost potential affects the social economic and human capital development, impacting African communities' health, wealth, and economic prosperity.

To address these challenges, children and their caregivers need a range of inputs and support during this critical stage of development, including good health care and adequate nutrition, a stimulating and safe environment, and emotional support and care.

“Nutrition is the bedrock of all that we are and aspire to be. We have Agenda 2063 and the Malabo Declaration to guide us. We should, therefore, by 2025, be moving the needle on early

childhood nutrition,” stated Ms Bibi Giyose, AUDA-NEPAD’s Senior Advisor, Food and Nutrition Security.

The African Union Cost of Hunger in Africa Study (COHA) underscores the need to increase investment in nutrition because African countries are losing around 1.9 to 16.5 percent of their Gross Domestic Products due to child undernutrition. The AU has taken key steps to improve food security and nutrition and eliminate hunger in Africa by 2025. These policy recommendations are provided in the [African Regional Nutrition Strategy \(ARNS 2016-2025\)](#) and the [Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme \(CAADP\)](#) and its [Malabo Declaration \(2014\)](#).

The representatives from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and stakeholders, agreed that the early years must be given due attention within all regional policies, plans, programmes, campaigns and reports as these years are a critical foundation upon which a healthy, well-nourished and prosperous Africa will be built. Through this consultative dialogue, priority actionable solutions at regional economic community levels to address early childhood development with a focus on combating malnutrition were identified. A joint roadmap for the implementation of achievable actions and activities was developed.

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